



From the Margins to the Centre - ACOSS 2004 Congress Papers



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the ACOSS Congress
28-29 October 2004
Alice Springs***

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Foreword

This publication comprises selected papers presented at the annual national ACOSS Congress held in Alice Springs

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ACOSS President's address

Andrew McCallum

Andrew McCallum has held the position of President of ACOSS since 2001. This is a voluntary position and in 'real life' he is Chief Executive Officer of St. Luke's Anglicare in Bendigo, Victoria. Andrew has held many board positions on state and national bodies including five years as President of the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria (CWAV) and Chairperson of the Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia. He is a past President of the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), and was an ACOSS Board and Executive member from 1999 – 2001.

I'd like to acknowledge the Lhere Artepe as the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today.

It is great to see this gathering of people in Alice Springs today, on Lhere Artepe land, because I know that those assembled here share a common interest – that of bringing people on the margins of our society, economy and politics back to the centre of Australian life, and in doing this reshaping the centre itself.

Could there be a more auspicious time for this than just after an election where the people on the margins were rarely heard?

The election campaign did come to reflect the public desire for services rather than tax cuts. Campaigns like Services First and lobbying from our sector also advanced this view. Several services such as health and child care received a boost from electoral commitments. However, many of these funding increases were poorly targeted and still there were many left out.

In all the campaign promises, political debates and news stories where were the voices from the margins? Where were the Indigenous people, the unemployed people, the migrants, and the people with disabilities, to name a few?

Some people working in the community and welfare sector told me they too felt on the margins of the electoral debates. They thought their advice on what might make Australia a fairer country had to compete with louder, more selfish voices.

We all have these moments of despair, but today I would like to remind you of the strength of the community service sector. It is this that has sustained community organisations throughout decades of political and economic changes and has given us a unique role in Australian life.

ACOSS is currently coordinating a project known as Giving Australia which is researching the role of philanthropy. Collated research so far suggests that the non-profit sector is a significant economic force and public support for the community welfare sector is robust.

In fact, of all people who made donations in 1997, the last year for which there is ABS data, 59% gave to community welfare nonprofit organisations. Looking at the total amount given, religious organisations had the most financial support and community welfare organisations had the second most – a total of \$478 million, which is more than education, health, international aid, sport and the arts.

The statistics on volunteering also illustrate that the community welfare sector enjoys substantial public support. Of all nonprofit organisations, community welfare organisations had the most number of hours volunteered in the year 2000 – a total of 181 million hours. This is 33 million hours more than sport organisations which had the second most number of volunteered hours.

We know that the public holds non-profit community service organisations and charities in high regard which gives them leverage to influence the opinions of the public, businesses and political leaders.

The 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes measured confidence that Australians have in organisations and found that charities were the fourth most trusted organisations just behind the ABC, universities and the Defence Forces. Charities inspired more confidence than companies, Parliament, churches, the courts, banks and unions.

Community organisations can only operate with such trust and support for their values from the public. Qualities such as credibility, reputation, trust and integrity are critical for a community organisation because they are the basis on which people who have no experience of the organisation perceive and value it.

Our sector provides a key link between the centres of power and the people on the margins. Community organisations create information flows between the public and governments. They are a major third force in Australian life because they build the involvement of people in political and social issues.

The role of community organisations in scrutinising policy and legislation and challenging poorly conceived proposals will probably need to be honed due to the electoral changes to the Senate.

The Senate has, in recent years, played an integral part in the examination of the impact of legislation on marginalised Australians. Senate Committees have pointed out flaws in legislation. The Senate has tempered the extremes of policy and ensured fairness on national issues such as the introduction of the GST.

With one party dominant in both the lower and upper houses of Federal Parliament, this independent review role is threatened. I hope others here will support ACOSS's call for returning Senators to uphold the review role of the Senate in examining legislation before it is passed.

In order to support those on the margins, we must also look at giving them a louder voice. Democracy dies a slow death when people no longer see its relevance to them, when they no longer seek to influence those in power. It is only activism and advocacy that can break through that apathy – by demonstrating democracy is alive we can give it hope for the future.

As community workers we can help get marginalised. People talking to the media and politicians rather than just being heard when the powers that be choose to listen. We can also use this to break down stereotypes that still haunt the marginalised and those who work for their good.

The eighteen year old boy whose youth allowance leaves him 49% below the poverty line. The Indigenous family raising children on an income of \$300 per week. These are the faces behind figures in a recent NATSEM report which estimated that, using the most stringent definition, 1 in 9 people are living in poverty in Australia.

These things I talk about today – moving the economically marginalised out of poverty, strengthening the capacity of the politically marginalised to be heard – are goals that will take many years to reach and at times seem impossible. But let me give you one example of where sustained advocacy and activism from the community service sector has paid off. That is our family payments system – and its success is illustrated by the fact that it was one of the major subjects of this year's election.

For many years, our sector lobbied for the introduction of family payments that would help the poorest parents with the costs of children. The family payments system, modernised by Labor in the 1980's and built upon by the Coalition, including in its most recent election commitments, has enjoyed bi-partisan support and been an important factor in reducing and preventing child poverty and poverty among families. Research commissioned by ACOSS and others showed that average income for the poorest 20% of families rose by 18.5% from 1997-2004. Considering that three quarters of these people are jobless, the increase in incomes is largely due to the incremental increases in family payments. Without these, our poverty rate would be far higher.

The greatest challenge now is to find sustained solutions to poverty. ACOSS along with major charities recently issued a call for a National Anti-Poverty Plan which would take a comprehensive approach to reducing poverty by working towards clear targets. International experience demonstrates that progress can be made through anti-poverty strategies that are creative, well-resourced and involve collaborations between business, government and community organisations.

The speakers here today and tomorrow are Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians that, in their day to day work, help people step out from society's margins. Particularly after the election, I think it is important that we think about how these steps can collectively change the political landscape.

The question I open up to you, the speakers and participants of this Congress, is: how do we guide the people from the margins back into the centre of Australian life?

Work, participation and community - new community enterprises

Mandy Ahmat

Mandy Ahmat is the Assistant Manager at the Tangentyere Job Shop in Alice Springs and was the Indigenous Employment Consultant up to 2002. Prior to that she worked with DSS/Centrelink as an Aboriginal Liaison Officer focusing on areas such as JET, (Jobs, Education and Training) and SNAP (Support Network for Aboriginal Parents)

Background

Hello and welcome. First I would like to acknowledge the Mbantua People and our traditional owners. Thank-you for allowing me to speak on your land, I speak on behalf of the people I work for at Tangentyere Job Shop and Tangentyere Council.

My name is Mandy Ahmat; I was born in Darwin and moved to Alice Springs in 1986 for work. At that time I was employed by NT Health Service for three years. I then worked for DSS/Centrelink for ten years before taking a year off to complete, further studies at NT University in Darwin. I graduated in 2000 when I received my Certificate 4 in Administration for Project Officers. I commenced working at Tangentyere Job Shop in March 2000, and was employed as the Employment Consultant. Today I am happy to say I am now the assistant manager where my manager Peter (Strachy) Strachan and I manage 14 staff members. This includes the Job Network, and Personal Support Program (PSP). We are proud to say we have 90% all Indigenous workforce.

Job Shop is one of four enterprises within Tangentyere Council; we are a non profit organization.

I would not be standing here today, sharing with you the stories of our success, if it was not for Tangentyere Council. It was Tangentyere Council executive director Mr Will Tilmouth and executive members of the council that took the bold move to tender for the Job Network business, and they were successful in ESC2000. We opened our doors on the 28th February 2000.

Job Shop became a member of JOB *futures* in 2002, when we were one of the first Indigenous Job Network members to join forces with a large national organisation. JOB *futures* are a network of non profit community based organisations. From a group of 26 members in 1997, JOB *futures*, now have 70 members, including a number of Indigenous organisations like Tangentyere Job Shop. JOB *futures* was formed in 1997 to compete for the newly created Job Network business. Its aim was to make sure that community focussed organisations could be competitive in this new employment services market. JOB *futures* aims to combine the resources and

support of a large national organisation, with the community focus on its members, so that we can really meet our local community's needs.

The relationship between Job Shop and JOB *utures* has gone from strength to strength. Job Shop has gained great rewards from being members of JOB *utures*, we network, share best practice, attend training in regional centers, meet with all our other Indigenous workers within our own JOB *utures* networks, gain assistance when tendering and looking at new opportunities for our business, and most importantly we access the resources that have been developed by JOB *utures* to meet the needs of our job seekers.

What has worked for us?

The delivery of the Working Life program to our long term unemployed people.

In Job Shop I have facilitated 3 'Working Life programs' since the start of this contract.

The Working Life program was developed by JOB *utures* as a two week core program targeted to the need of long term unemployed people. Working Life looks at the issues that long term unemployed job seekers need to consider when they are thinking about going back to work: do I really want to work? What type of work? What do employers want? How will I handle the changes in lifestyle and finances that will happen when I go back to work? The program was developed on the basis that it could and would be adapted locally by each organisation to meet the needs of local people.

Information on the Delivery of 'Working Life'

Number of WLP sessions: 3
Target Group: Long term unemployed men and women

Break-down of sessions:

Men's group: 1 (9 attended)
Women's group: 2 (16 attended)
Overall attendance 25

Module's presented:

- Module 1** Do I really want a job?
Working out what jobs to do?
How to learn new skills
- Module 2** Will I control work or will work control me?
Variations in types and forms of work
Personal preferences in relation to
- Types and forms of work
- Work-life balance

- Module 3** Meetings with employers and/or others
Finding out more about employers, jobs,
and industries
Workplace Visits
- Module 4** Reviewing what has been learnt to date
and from meetings with employers etc
What have I learnt so far and what's it mean for me?
Types of jobs
- Module 5** Getting around my obstacles?
What are the obstacles?
Different kinds of obstacles
- Module 6** A career path for me – keeping jobs and advancing?
Your working future?
What's acceptable in the workplace?
The unwritten rules
Review Resume

Additional Information achieved:

- Work skills and motivation
- Healthy lifestyle issues
- Budgeting – Managing Money
- Workplace polices

Statistics

Tangentyere Job Shop/*JOB futures*, has about a quarter of the Job Network 'business' in the Alice Springs area

Of around 500 job seekers who have come to us for Intensive Support, we have found sustained employment for 33.

All of these were twelve months plus unemployed or considered highly disadvantaged.

At the moment we are the second highest performer in achieving outcomes for this group in the area – we are being beaten by another *JOB futures* member – Ngangatjatjata Aboriginal Corporation based at Tulare.

Current Star Rating: 3

Our star employers in the Community are:

Tangentyere Council
CAAPU
NT Health Service
DASA
Congress
Crowne Plaza

ASYASS
Yipirinya School
Stolen Generation

Types of Jobs most placed in:

Administration
Mines
Liaison Officers
Transport – Bus drivers
Housekeeping
Rangers
Bar & Beverage
Porter & Kitchen Steward
Support Worker
Youth Workers
Night Patrol
Interpreters

We ask our job seekers what is that holds you back from getting and keeping work?

- Drivers License
- ID – Birth Certificates
- Transport
- Good night sleep
- Work clothes & boots
- Living with other families

Giving our jobseekers the opportunity to work in industries

- reverse marketing
- Work experience
- On the job training

How do we meet the needs of our job seekers?

- staff are culturally sensitive and have strong links in the community
- some staff members speak different languages
- our community liaison officers play a huge role in locating our job seekers, to bring them to Job Shop for appointments
- staff training
- close liaison with Centrelink and DEWR.

Our aim is to get to the 5 star rating or as close. We strive for community participation and building stronger capacity within our community for all Indigenous people.

As Aboriginal people working at Job Shop we are proud workers, who want equity and equal rights for our job seekers.

Indigenous Women Speak Out - achieving safety for all Indigenous communities

Stephanie Bell

Stephanie Bell is the Director of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, one of the country's largest and longest established Aboriginal medical services. She is also the Chairperson of the Aboriginal Medical Service Alliance of the Northern Territory (AMSANT), the federation of Aboriginal community-controlled health services in the NT, Chair of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum and an Executive member of NACCHO.

I would like to commence by thanking the organisers of this conference for inviting the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress to present at your Annual Congress and to give recognition to the traditional owners, the Arrernte peoples, of this land upon which we meet.

The starting point for my presentation today is to briefly review what are the main health issues confronting Aboriginal women in central Australia and then to pose some solutions.

The approximately 20 year life expectancy gap between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people is an often quoted statistic. These alarming health statistics for Aboriginal people, as Mick Dodson has stated have been, "(so frequently quoted that) most Australians tend to accept statistics such as these as being almost inevitable". [Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 1995:99]

However it is not inevitable. In the NT there has over the last forty years been an improvement in Aboriginal life expectancy. There has also been an improvement in the non-Aboriginal life expectancy and the gap between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people's life expectancy has not closed over that period. The fact that other than in the under 5 year old age group has widened should be noted. Improvements are therefore possible however a much greater effort is needed. I will address what that effort entails a little later.

It is also very illuminating to look at what are the causes of the most years of life to be lost (rather than the most common causes of death). From research undertaken a few years ago now, we know that we are confronted with a chronic disease epidemic, plus high levels of violence leading to injury and death and the devastating effects of motor vehicle accidents.

What this measures is not what the leading causes of death amongst our people are, but what causes the most years of life to be lost. It reflects what many of our people

see as the central tragedy of contemporary life: that young-to-middle-aged adults are dying when they have potentially so many years ahead of them.

So what are the underlying issues that must be addressed to make progress?

I will describe three broad areas for action for delivering health gain. I am going to frame this program within a comprehensive primary health care model. The core elements of this model is that it assumes the community must drive and be in control of the health services, but also the broader determinants of its health. It recognises that not only the health sector, but other sectors such as education and employment have a major influence on our health and therefore there must be collaboration across sectors. That our health services must have a preventative, promotive, curative and rehabilitative approach to health care. And it recognises that social inequalities must be addressed if health gain is to be achieved.

First, we need to empower our people to action to make the necessary social change to overcome the gross inequalities they experience in all facets of their life. This approach must be reflected in all our actions. Aboriginal people today have inherited the colonial epidemic of disempowerment and these colonial relationships still permeate many of our dealings with government and other mainstream structures. In the health sector empowerment aims to have people take responsibility in ways in which they can overcome their own health problems, rather than being passive recipients of services. It encourages people to advocate for systemic reform and more equitable access to services. We must ensure that our own organisations do not end up disempowering people by doing it all for them, a balance has to be struck.

Secondly, in the health sector we took on the struggle to get better access to comprehensive primary health care services. This didn't always win us friends. Sometimes other people covet the gains made and rather than have the struggle for a better deal in their own sector they try to get their programs funded out of the health sector dollar. We believe that this is a short sighted approach, as it means that other mainstream funding sources within government are being let off the hook in meeting their obligations to adequate funding for Aboriginal citizens in say housing or education. The reform agenda commenced in health must be carried through to get a better deal for the other sectors - then we can more effectively collaborate for health gain, when everyone has adequately funded services to coordinate with each other.

What we have achieved, though at this stage only partially funded, is a new health financing model that brings together pooled government grants with the flexibility of access to Medicare and PBS. My colleague Pat Anderson spoke of this in detail yesterday. Today I will just reinforce the point that properly funded comprehensive primary health care services make a difference and that these are a vital part of the greater effort needed that I talked about earlier.

Thirdly, in addition to improved access to education services, reduction in overcrowding and real employment opportunities, we must address the devastating impact of alcohol on our communities. Of those three leading causes of years of life

lost, chronic disease, homicide and motor vehicle accidents, alcohol is strongly correlated to homicide and motor vehicle accidents and is moderately implicated in some of the key chronic disease issues such as Ischemic Heart Disease.

In Tennant Creek the evaluation of their alcohol restrictions, after 4 years, had shown a marked reduction in alcohol consumption (25%). During this period interpersonal violence as measured by Hospital presentations significantly declined for women and men. In Alice Springs, in the same period, without any alcohol restrictions, violence against women especially in the 15-35 age range increased. During the last phase of alcohol trials in Alice Springs there was a small reduction in alcohol related injuries, but due to the poor structure and management of the trial which allowed product substitution, there was no reduction in consumption so the potential benefits of the trial weren't realised. While Alice Springs residents drink twice the national average of pure alcohol per person, we can expect higher levels of alcohol related violence, including homicide and it will play a significant contributing factor to motor vehicle deaths.

The social epidemics impacting in our communities are beyond the individual or their extended family's capacity to control by themselves. The solutions need to be forged through broad community and government partnerships that support individuals to take agency and control over their lives.

It is to support individuals and families in this struggle that over thirty years ago we set up our Aboriginal Community - controlled organisations.

Despite this long difficult struggle where there is a successful track record in delivering Aboriginal community-controlled health services we are still ignored or sidelined on health issues. Why do researchers, governments or other non-Aboriginal NGOs try to circumvent the Aboriginal health leadership instead of work with us? Why can't these institutions and people accept that Aboriginal people are capable of setting the agenda and providing expert opinion? I believe the underlying cause is a form of racism that cannot accept Aboriginal people stepping outside of the mould made for them as victim - rather than as being seen as people capable of exercising control over their lives.

Governments have a responsibility to deliver services to their citizens. When governments fail this responsibility and try to substitute Aboriginal cultural as the answer to our problems or under fund community programs these so called solutions place a further burden on our Aboriginal communities as they expect us to sustain and deliver programs out of our cultural good. Other Australians take these services for granted.

This then creates a situation where government agencies and programs blame us. When the service fails, this maintains a continuing vicious cycle of victim blaming and allows government agencies and programs to remain outside of the problem.

They attempt to put us in the position of either having to choose between culture or access to western services like education. Many Aboriginal people's expectations are

worn down so low that they accept this lack of service. This is based upon disempowerment that this system has created in individuals.

For too long Aboriginal people in the bush have been sold a lie that they couldn't have the sort of services people in cities can take for granted. This is racism. Why shouldn't they have access to doctors, be able to develop substance misuse services? These are the rights of citizens. Under the new funding available through the Primary Health Care Access Program we have started to forge a change. People now increasingly know their rights in regards to health services. We will all keep on pressing governments to meet their obligation to these citizens, to have access to health services, to change the inequalities, whereby the highest serviced populations for health services are on the north shore of Sydney and the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, and Aboriginal people out bush (and elsewhere) get virtually nothing.

We encourage ACOSS and its member organisations to work with us in pursuing these issues.

Breaking the Cycle – investing in future generations

Tim Costello

Tim Costello is currently the CEO of Australia's largest relief and development agency, World Vision Australia. He is recognised for articulating the social conscience of many Australians on tough domestic issues such as urban poverty, homelessness, problem gambling, reconciliation and substance abuse.

Well, like Marcus Einfeld said, I also feel very honoured to be addressing this gathering and I think it comes at a particularly critical time, a watershed time, to regroup, to re-imagine what the commission is for ACOSS.

Unfortunately, I've just missed the last session, but I'm sure it included addressing the issues we face now with a government that has a double majority. The Australian people in the great democratic tradition that we own, have given the Coalition a double majority, and most people are seeing a chance for them to act out their clearly stated policies from the sale of Telstra, to industrial relations reform and centralising it back under the Commonwealth, to a whole range of other stated policies.

So what does this all mean for the sector? How do we take heart, re-imagine the task for ourselves and think about investing in the future? It's certainly going to take commitment – commitment to see through what may be difficult times ahead. If not difficult, certainly it will mean having to do things in different ways.

One of the stories doing the rounds of the churches at the moment goes like this:

A Catholic priest, an Anglican vicar, and a Baptist minister were meeting together in their local church fraternal, and discussing their common problems.

The catholic priest said "Actually, one of the biggest problems we've got is possums in the church roof". The others said "Oh really? What did you do about it?" "Well, I went up there, set traps, caught them, put them in a bag, drove them two hours into the bush and released them, thinking that's the end of them, solved that one!" he said. "Well, I was wrong. These are stubborn, smart possums. Don't ask me how but they found their way back all the way into my church roof".

The Anglican vicar was nodding very empathetically. "Well it's a relief you've said that, because that actually is my problem too. And I did what you did. I went up there, set traps, caught them, put them in a bag, but then I drove them to the zoo. I figured they'll know what to do with them. Well, whatever they do at the zoo, they

were incredibly careless. Those possums escaped, and now they're back in my roof. Within a week they're back, making the same noise".

The Baptist minister nodded. He was agreeing totally with everything they said. "It's my problem too. I'm glad you've shared it. I did what you did. I went up, set traps, caught them, put them in a bag. But I then had a slightly different approach to you. We're a small, struggling congregation. So I decided to baptise them and make them church members. And I've never seen them since!"

Now in church circles, we don't even laugh at that joke. It's a bit too close to the bone. But I suspect it summarises a little bit of what we might be feeling at the moment.

We are people who are going to be committed through what will be some difficult and tough times and we'll need that level of commitment, that level of mutual support, to actually hang together. We know about the forces that fragment, the forces that with competitive tendering see smaller organisations maybe losing out, and the government saying (understandably) "we just want to deal with a few, the big ones". If the big ones win, we know that they will maybe not be too critical. We know how it will take commitment to actually have the conversation across the sector, and to say "Well, what does this mean for all of us? If we go down this path, what are we losing? How are we being co-opted? What will be the agendas that we won't be speaking out on if this keeps occurring? It will take commitment to have trust, trust to actually have these sorts of conversations and to be frank and to talk honestly together which is what I hope that this congress engenders: the relationship, the mutual support, the sense that what we do we must do together and be committed in doing it.

Well I want to suggest to you today that if the agenda is changing, it is important to think creatively and laterally about how as a sector you advance the agenda of speaking for those who are most vulnerable. I was thinking about this - this morning as I had a run. I ran down the street and across the bridge, and as I ran along the other side, I was thinking where is the next bridge? This is a longer run than I anticipated, when will I get there?

And then I thought: wait a minute! Even though I ran across a bridge, the Todd River is dry! Why do I have to wait for a bridge? And I looked and saw all these tracks across and thought 'stuff the bridge, I'm just going across'.

At one level, I was on a track that sort of made sense. You know, I was on the footpath, there were bridges, and you stay on the path you know and keep running. When we think as a sector what we've done, it's often been reacting to what government does and knowing what our lines are. Now, I think it's going to have to be different. We're going to need to say: "Well there have to be different ways we think about getting these issues across, how we actually address the agenda."

For me, I think that - that is about recognising the role of civil society, the role of community, the strengthening of that community to be the voice, not just the professionals being the voice, becomes really, really critical. I think that because the agenda of simply advancing what is sometimes perceived as a material, finance and

resource-based agenda isn't sufficient of itself. Of course, money is really, really fundamental. I like to quote Woody Allen who said "Money is better than poverty – if only for financial reasons".

There's no question about that.

However, that's almost so true to form and expected that there's not a hearing being given, the government is proud of the fact that unemployment, official unemployment, is around 5%. We have all sorts of other figures to say unpack that figure, look at long-term, look at casualisation of jobs, and a whole range of other things that suggest that's not an accurate picture. Nonetheless, that's the picture that is the dominant paradigm now out there.

So when we just react in terms of greater social welfare transfers, a money agenda, it's predictable, it's dismissable, and there are people who just don't give us a hearing, don't see it as being terribly creative. We've got to think what are other ways now across, without just waiting for the bridge that has been our standard route and our standard path.

When we think about the last election, it certainly was an election about money! Here I have to say the Government and my brother had taught us 10 years of being "fiscally responsible", and "tightening our belt" and we'd all sort of begrudgingly learnt these words and thought "discipline" and "surplus" were fundamental to our well-being.

Then along came this election: both sides offering \$14 billion of spending. The Australian community sort of scratched their heads, threw off all the fiscal discipline ideas and straitjacket and said, "Thanks, we'll take it!"

What was tragic was that neither the Coalition nor Labor were addressing the needs of the sector ACOSS represents. They were targeting the middle class. They were putting together whatever constituencies they needed to get that majority, targeting them cleverly, and in the process ACOSS and now the group that I represent, people living in absolute poverty, missed out. (Absolute poverty, by definition, is living on less than \$US 1 a day; purchasing power is different in different countries, a dollar goes further or not so far depending on which country, but the UN parity purchasing says that \$1 US a day is the measure of absolute poverty. You don't live on that. You survive on it. You endure not having safe and clean water etc.)

Well, neither Labor nor the Coalition offered one cent in aid, not one cent!

When the Coalition came to power in 1996, the level of government aid as a proportion of GDP was 0.32%. Since they've been in power, that has dropped to 0.26% of GDP. That is, since 1996, \$3.7 billion that the Australian Government has not given in aid, that it would have given if it had simply stayed at 0.32%. Over that period, most other Western nations have gone up in their level of aid and in their giving, including even America, up in the last year or 2, and it is the lowest of the 22 OECD countries – 0.124%.

We are number nineteen now out of twenty two OECD countries. So much for the country of a fair go! Neither side offering one cent! Labor saying: "Well, as an aspirational goal, *if circumstances permit*, we would again aspire to getting it up to 0.32%".

If circumstances don't permit when you've got \$14 billion of surplus, I'm not sure when they're going to permit. If circumstances don't permit to find far greater resources for those who are unemployed, suffering disability, mental disabilities, when will they ever permit?

When we analyse the election, it's interesting to think about the national cake. We're always talking about growing a bigger cake, wealth creation not poverty eradication, etc. I thought it interesting to consider the language of "cake" because in one of my books I actually talk about a birthday party where the Australian mother has her 10 year old child and his friends all over for the party, they blow out the candles, they rip them off; she starts to cut up the cake and there's an American mum there and the American mum is puzzled about what's happening and she says "What are you doing?" and the Australian mum says "This is our practice – I'm cutting up the cake, each child takes home a piece". And the American mum says "Well, that's not fair". And the Australian mum says "What do you mean it's not fair? Every child's going to get a piece and they're going to get the same size piece. What could be fairer?" And the American mother responds saying "Well it's not fair because you didn't ask the kids if they wanted a piece and you didn't ask them what size piece they wanted. They've got no say. You've just decided it for them".

Now to Australian ears this is a strange sort of notion. We approach life on a sort of instinctive understanding of justice being needs-based – same size, well, that's got to be fair. Of course, a strand of justice is choice. A strand of justice is saying that we actually have a say. And most of our best community capacity building, listening and walking with those who are enduring poverty *is* that principle: let them have input.

When we think of the federal election it's interesting to think about it in these terms. When it came to Labor's education policy, it's very hard I think to argue against a needs-based approach; saying, well, people will get the same amount, and we will take some from the Kings and the Scotch Colleges where they have so much. That's hardly fair that they have such a big piece. Of course, we now know that taking anything away has complications. And we also know that the Coalition were quite effective in saying "But if they have built up those assets, by putting in over and above what they pay in tax, and they haven't had their kids going to state schools using that tax component they've paid, which others get the benefit of, why penalise? Why punish? There's choice. There's initiative. There's growing a bigger cake. More people going to private education should mean more resources for state education because the state isn't having to pay the full amount for them. Both strands actually are true.

When we came to Medicare Gold, the grand gesture, called "Whitlam-esque" of it not being means-tested meant that it failed what is always I think the key test in

Australia – it’s called the Kerry Packer test – so Kerry Packer would actually also qualify for Medicare Gold. Here was the notion, when it comes to Medicare Gold, once you’re 75 everybody gets the same size bit of cake in terms of access to the public health system. And this seemed to, at the end of the day, not be able to sell, to float.

Well, these are issues that push us back to asking:

- what is our vision of justice?
- how do we think about it?
- how do we weight different stands of justice?
- what is the message of ACOSS in trying to have a nuanced message that thinks differently, and comes across differently?

I think this is important when we recognise that simply a material approach, an approach that goes straight to financial need, isn’t sufficient. We are living in a culture where people have swallowed what I call “the wealth to happiness story”. It’s a very seductive, simple, plausible story line that says the wealthier you are, the happier you’ll be. We know for most of our constituency that is true. There is absolutely nothing noble about poverty. For the people I now represent, those in absolute poverty, there is clear correlation that the wealthier you are, the happier you *will* be if it means education, health, safe and clean drinking water. How could it not be?

Now, on September 11th, when the war on terror began, which all of us know about; on that day 15,000 children below the age of five in our world died from preventable disease and malnutrition. And it wasn’t reported. The planes hitting the twin towers which we all saw was a horrific act, an obscenely violent, immoral act, 3,000 lives snuffed out. On September 12th, 2001, there were no more hits on America, thankfully, but another 15,000 children below the age of five died of preventable disease and malnutrition. And it wasn’t reported. And on September 13th, and each day since.

In other words the war on terror was about us: *our* vulnerability, *our* security and the approach since has been about *our* story. We felt vulnerable. Many parents who’ve watched their kids die have felt vulnerable well before September 11th 2001. Terror has been stalking their lives and crippling their lives. But, that’s about them.

Well, now we know that when it comes to even Australia and the election just gone, the appeal to the middle class was an appeal about *you* and *your* needs and Australians in voting may have had good reason in their logic to actually return the Coalition, believing the message of interest rates: they’re highly geared; even though interest rates are low, most Australians are paying more on their mortgages than 10 years ago, because of the size of those mortgages. And when you hear “It’s the economy, stupid!” as Julian Disney says, in the future it might be “It’s housing, stupid!” If the housing boom busts, then the crisis for the middle class here might be great because the levels of private debt are so extraordinarily high. In that world, the wealth to happiness story has absolutely, taken off and seems to be unchallengable.

Clive Hamilton, who has written a wonderful book called “*The Growth Fetish*,” reminds us that Australian homes are all 30% bigger than ten year ago. And we’ve borrowed a lot more to have these bigger homes. I’m not pointing a finger at anyone

else. I'm pointing it at myself. My wife and daughter decided three years ago that the home in which we lived, which had only one bathroom, that for my wife and daughter, sharing a bathroom with me and my two sons was a fundamental denial of their human rights. So we've borrowed and bought a house with two bathrooms, and a bigger mortgage. And if I compare my lifestyle now to 10 years ago, when we had one car, and one TV and had never heard of a DVD and didn't have a dishwasher or a dryer... Of course, we have so many more things.

As the Australia Institute points out, even though homes are 30% bigger, *the* growth industry in this country at the minute is the storage industry. We still do not have enough room to store all our stuff. The incredible escalation and spiralling of ever more needs is quite extraordinary: we are three times richer than our parents/ grandparents in the 1950s. But I don't think many would say we are happier for all that extra stuff. The most stunning statistic in "The Growth Fetish" is when the Australia Institute surveys the top 20% of income earners in Australia asking them the question: "Do you have enough disposable income to buy all that you need?" *Fifty per cent of them said No.* These are the highest income earners. These are the Chief Executive Officers on half a million and more.

Well in this country we have seen CEO salaries blow out over the last five years from twenty times average weekly earnings to nearly 70 times average weekly earnings. When I was debating David Gonski, Chair of Coca-Cola Amatil on this he said yes, well it may be regrettable, but this has happened because of transparency. He said people like me who have demanded that annual reports now list the top five salary earners (which they now must in an annual report under governance rules), means that most companies when they come to fix a remuneration package for a CEO say "Well, we don't want to admit we're in the bottom 50% of companies, we're at least in the top 50%, and we don't want to admit we're in the bottom 25% of that top 50%, we're in the top 25%, and so transparency pushes those packages up.

I said, if it's transparency then what about this: let's make it a governance rule that next to the top five salaries are also listed the bottom five wage-earners' salaries. He didn't think that was a very good idea! Transparency, it seems, only works one way.

However, the wealth-to-happiness story has become so dominant that we know it's not benchmarked to any reality. It's not benchmarked to need. It's not benchmarked to security. We have enough empirical evidence that says more wealth often leads to greater anxiety, to greater stress, to greater driven-ness. The truth is, that happiness has much more to do with our relationships, with the quality of our community, with being able to live consistently with our values, with an alternative vision.

What I'm going to suggest is that ACOSS needs to be perhaps the leader of, but certainly part of, a movement that actively articulates an alternative vision. Not simply a financial vision. That being locked into simply the financial vision gets easily dismissed. I think Barry Jones might just be right in his analysis since the last election when he says we now have in Labor a centre-right party, and in the Coalition a far-right party.

In terms of an alternative vision, where is it going to come from? How is it going to be articulated? It's why ACOSS will need to have some serious and difficult and at times controversial debates within its own ranks.

Jonathan Sacks, *The Politics of Hope*, with a foreword written by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, argues as a Rabbi from a London synagogue that the Jews in the East End who were poor rose out of poverty mainly because of their family, their community and their faith. He says there was a moral consensus, a story, which enriched their lives: family, community and faith; that was fundamental to their own overcoming disadvantage. Not simply a support network, not necessarily labour market reforms and training programs or whatever else we might be advocating for – all fine things.

Sacks argues that what's now called social capital, which really is just fancy words for community or trust (in a capitalist society, if you want to get a hearing, you've got to put an adjective before the word capital – thus "social capital" it seems is the latest discovery). Sacks says we've got to actually re-envision what it means to see that people have stories that are rich and deep and relationships that are fundamental; society and an alternative vision of culture and meaning, alternative to what I've called this wealth-to-happiness story; that it needs to be the vision that underpins how we act and how we advocate.

I think this is very important because it's clear to me that we now have an electorate that have been gingered up just to expect to be bought with promises; and those promises don't include people who are poor – neither side included the absolute poor or the constituency that ACOSS represents.

Sacks says in having this discussion there will be provocative issues. He says that a moral consensus (and by morals he means basically a sense of family and community, a sense of what is the foundation on which we stand) has been abandoned by governments of the left and the right. He says that since the Second World War governments of the left and the right haven't pursued what he calls a liberal vision of society, they've pursued a libertarian vision.

Governments of the left, which is about big government, a maximalist approach, government giving out more resources; and governments of the right, a minimalist approach, leave more resources just in the hands of those people who have "naturally" got them.

But both have said that between the market economy and the state, there is this area of privatised morality, where people choose their own values and make their own way and we can't then have a debate about family and community and what these things mean, which he argues a liberal society would do. And the privatised morality around libertarian choices have actually stripped communities and families and have left what I call the wealth to happiness story as the triumphant story, the dominant story, very materially based. Well, that's a fairly provocative idea. It suggests that we might need to seriously flesh out, what the vision of a good society is.

Sacks argues that you can go on TV and talk about your most erotic pleasure to millions of people, if you're on Jerry Springer or anywhere else, but go into a crowded room and talk about virtue and vice and people will look embarrassed. Talk about what a virtuous society and what virtuous people are and what discipline and commitment are about and what are the norms we might expect and people will tell you to be quiet; that's embarrassing; people just make their own private choices there.

If I were to make one comment about Family First, it may be that they have stumbled into what Sacks has called this libertarian vacuum (a bit naively, a bit unwittingly, there's a number of things about Family First that make me worried), but they may have stumbled into that perceived vacuum, *and* had some response. A response of people saying: we have to have these debates, these discussions. What is the vision for our kids? What are the norms, the values? It goes to the education debates. It goes to a whole range of debates that ACOSS, I think, needs to lead on, needs to think about, needs to hammer out.

Let me pull this together and say we definitely need fresh thinking. When I watched CFMEU unionists down in Tasmania falling over themselves to greet the Prime Minister, I thought, I don't recognise Australia anymore. Will they be falling over themselves when the Coalition's IR policy is brought down to shake the Prime Minister's hand? Where are we now?

When I say to Australians: do you think John Howard lied? And they say: Yes.

Did you vote for him? Yes. Why? Well, he didn't lie about the things that matter to me.

I'm saying: Well, there is time now for another moral consensus, for us to debate "what does this mean to be Australian?"

Let me finish with two stories.

One is about my own son. He started playing for Port Melbourne (which is a very working-class football team still) last year when he was 17 – the Port Melbourne Colts. He came home really excited. He said, "These are fantastic working-class labor-voting people. They're real people, not like you, Mum and Dad. They're real." He's gravitated to his mates down there at Port Melbourne, some of whose parents still work on the docks – some of that last little enclave, because Port Melbourne largely has been gentrified. He was pretty shocked this year, being rather interested in politics himself (he's now 18), playing on the team, to discover, all his mates were going to vote for John Howard. They were all going to vote for John Howard. Why? Because Howard stuck it up to the refugees; and didn't give in with an apology to the Indigenous; and the economy was running pretty well...

The football prize night was the night before the election and my son was runner-up. The guy who won the best and fairest was too overcome with emotion to make a speech, so my son stepped in and made a speech. And I sat there embarrassed as launched into talking about the election the next day and he called these Port Melbourne families back to their values, or at least the values he thought Labour should stand for. Nothing to do with football!

That's the first story. What actually now *are* the foundations? Where are the debates occurring? How do we make sense of the landscape out there? Isn't it time for something new to emerge that actually picks up the moral and the social and the family and the community debates?

The second story is to actually just remind Australians of what has been our history. You know, inventing the secret ballot, called the Aussie ballot, saying the rich can't buy your vote, the powerful can't intimidate your vote because it's secret, called the Aussie ballot because we invented it. We said, "this will be the social laboratory".

The first socialist government in the world, 1899, in Queensland, only lasted seven days I know, but there's the rest of the world, falling about in shock, what is going on down there?

The Sunshine Harvester case; where Mr Justice Higgins includes in the family wage (intervening with market forces, cutting across the Master/Servant Act) not just clothing, education, food, but the cost of a daily newspaper, because the working person needs to know what the Government is doing to shape the affairs in this nation. That working person is included.

The history is pretty impressive. It comes out still in music, in courageous acts in sport: Michael Long who I've got to know, who we're working with, what courage! The Aboriginal Essendon footballer (I'm talking about *real* football here!) who breaks the code of silence which footballers all stand by: *What happens on the field stays on the field*. Long remembers what was said to him on the field. You know footballers when they go to the tribunal, can barely remember their own names, let alone if they were playing. You never break the code of silence, and Long says "Damien Monkhurst called me a black bastard."

So he's broken the rules. He's dobbed someone in. Well, you watch as Collingwood, along with Damien Monkhurst try to work out why this is racist. Monkhurst has always called Indigenous black bastards. And Monkhurst knows he's a good bloke. And he knows, *because* he's a good bloke, if he's called people black bastards, by definition it can't be racism. Get the logic?

So the whole of Melbourne watches as Monkhurst is counselled over a couple of days until finally the penny drops: Oh! So if he feels hurt because I've only referred to him as his colour, that's racism is it? A whole culture in Melbourne, thanks to football, more particularly Michael Long, starting to turn, starting to get it.

Well, those sorts of breakthroughs have been in our history before, they have been there in our films, films like *The Castle*, films like *Muriel's Wedding*, films that actually say we can be a nation of a fair go. But we need now to have a conversation, have a vision, have ACOSS I think being a major stakeholder in that vision, to lead the way in the future.

Australia's Social Progress

The Hon (Justice) Marcus Einfeld AO QC

The Hon (Justice) Marcus Einfeld was formerly Justice of the Federal Court of Australia and the Supreme Courts of NSW, WA and the ACT. His Order of Australia was awarded for services to international affairs and the promotion and protection of human rights. He received a United Nations Peace Laureate 2003 and has been named as a National Living Treasure in Australia. He was the foundation President of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and is currently a patron of Australians for a Just Refugee program.

I am very honoured to be here and to be welcomed by such a large and committed group of people who give their lives to help disadvantaged, discriminated and marginalised people around the country.

We have a challenging time ahead of us in the quest for social justice in Australia. Whatever one thinks of the present political state of the country, the fact is that a government has been legitimately elected who may not always share the same goals as many in this room. It is therefore a challenge to all of us to present our arguments in a way which makes them appealing and irrefutable. It is not a question of bludgeoning on doorsteps any longer or calling people names or for that matter marginalising those with whom we are dealing, it is a matter of putting our arguments strongly, passionately, logically, intelligently and appealingly. We must succeed - the people on whose behalf we act depend upon us. They are a constituency without a voice and the only voices they have are the voices of people in this room and I wish you well and congratulate you on the extraordinary achievements you have had up to now.

Let me set the historical context for what I want to say today in this connection. Almost 56 years ago a war-ravaged and war-weary world ushered in a new international order with what was called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was a bold and brilliant document with words, phrases and concepts that everyone wanted to hear. It spoke of recognising the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. It observed that the disregard and contempt for human rights had resulted in barbarous acts which had outraged the conscience of mankind. It called for the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from fear and want as the highest aspirations of the common people. It declared as essential that human rights should be protected by the rule of law. As a consequence a common standard of achievement was declared for all people and all nations. Every individual and every organ of every society was required to strive by teaching, education and effort to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and to work to secure their universal recognition and effective observance.

It was too late to save the 20 million civilians in Russia who had died in the freezing winters of 1942 and 1943; it was too late to save the other 15 million civilians in Europe who died as the innocent victims of the power hungry, half crazed lunatics of the Third Reich and their sympathisers. It was too late to save the 17 million allied soldiers who had died in defence of the gravely imperilled frontiers of freedom and their German, Italian, Japanese and other counterparts who hardly had a stake in the causes that sent them to their inglorious deaths. And it was too late for the 6 million Jews and the hundreds and thousands of Gypsies, Communists, Social Democrats, Catholics, non Aryans, homosexuals and humanitarian sympathisers among whom were no less than one and a half million children who were subjected to the rifles, the preposterous death camps and the Zyklon B gas of the SS.

The atrocities of the Nazi era and the horrors and devastation of a Second World War compelled the international community to unite and vow to create a world free of war, persecution and injustice and never again to allow such horrors to darken the lives of human kind. On the 10th of December 1948, the General Assembly of the newly created United Nations under the chairmanship of an Australian, proclaimed this extraordinary declaration of humanitarian principles. The pen had hardly written the declaration when the Iron Curtain descended on Europe.

Behind this almost impenetrable barrier, for another 40 years the so-called Workers Revolution, against the evils of capitalist materialism, held sway. Under the guise of establishing an egalitarian proletariat Soviet and Eastern European communism constructed a secret society of repression, fear, inhumanity and nuclear might. They built the monstrous Berlin Wall, attempted to blockade and perhaps obliterate the United States by carpeting Cuba with nuclear missiles and armed ruthless regimes repressing their own peoples, from North Korea to Angola from the Middle East to South America. They paralysed the United Nations with their infamous veto and built an environmental legacy from which to this very day hundreds perhaps thousands die every year just by breathing the air and drinking the water.

In response the Western world built armies, parliaments and armadas of ships, planes, bombs and rockets. Amongst other places we fought in Korea, Indo China and the Persian Gulf - as it turned out for very elusive results. We ignored and not infrequently funded ruthless dictators because they were seen as friends of the West or anti Communists, even when they butchered their own people. Yet when first the Polish Solidarity Movement, and then Mikhail Gorbachev, brought the Communist house of cards crashing down and then the tragic followers of the evil Saddam Hussein gave up their unequal struggle in the first Gulf War 12 years ago we cried out victory.

Forty years ago with the first one virtually still born, the second new world order of our era was born. This one was alive, or so our politicians told us. There was no Universal Declaration Mark II. We had done such a good job ignoring the first version and it was so well expressed that there was no point in trying a new exercise in grandiloquence. The world had come a long way in that forty years - colour television, people on the moon, space research and travel, the Salk and Sabin vaccines and other phenomenal medical advances prolonging life and alleviating suffering. We had seen the end of colonialism, the US Civil Rights Act, progress for

Aborigines in Australia, a Human Rights Charter for Canada and subsequently of the United Kingdom and New Zealand (leaving only Australia of the industrialised world without one), mobile and car phones which can telephone Aardvark as easily as Alice Springs and so on.

But while all this was happening people were getting swamped by the tyranny of bureaucracy, the policy of the unprincipled or the negligent, and even of the dishonest, and the effects of massive national debt brought about simply by bad government. Millions became beset by famine, poverty and persecution by new warlords. The allies spent \$150 billion in the first Gulf War to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, without removing the evil man himself or achieving a skerrick of democracy in Kuwait where women still cannot have a driver's licence let alone a vote – and then we permitted him to murder starve and freeze to death thousands of his Kurdish and Shiite citizens. Indeed, we actually allowed him to remain in power until last year so that he could go on oppressing his own people and go on doing mischief and mayhem, just as we have allowed the Turks to persecute the Kurds from the other side of the border while we in Australia gave an AC to a former President of Turkey.

All over the world today there are signs that we have failed in all our efforts to bring humanity and justice. I have been in most of the hotspots, of the war spots in recent years in my capacity as UNICEF Ambassador for Children and Austcare's Ambassador for Refugees. I was in Bosnia to see children housed on an abandoned airstrip being shot every day by Serb gunners in the hills. I was walking in Kosovo with lines and lines of people who were being ethnically cleansed, that is forcibly removed from their homes without a dollar's worth of compensation, forced to get on trains where there were supposed to be 150 in a carriage and there were 700 or 800 and then take the train - not to the border so that they could trot over - but five kilometres before the border so that they would have to walk with their small children five kilometres in boiling hot sun in order merely to escape being shot. And who were they being guarded by but Serb gunners, not the International community, firing their repeating armaments into the sky. I walked with them on one occasion just to get a feeling of the agony. I gave out candy to the children (I had pockets full), until I myself was under threat from the Serb guns. *This is the 21st century indeed.*

There was a refugee camp on the Zambezi River, one of the big rivers of the world wholly polluted. The people had set up a market garden in order to try and feed themselves but were using the bore water, which was needed for drinking, to water the garden. Nobody had thought to give them a pump to pump the water from the river to water the garden so that the people could have the bore water, and the bore water was running out so the children weren't getting enough water. And how easy it was for me to come back to Australia, buy them two pumps, send them there, to transfer the water from the river to the garden so that the increasing number of refugees could get access to the water from the river and the bore.

In India to this very day children are being enslaved in bonded child labour camps, one of them 45 minutes from Delhi – and only 45 minutes because of the traffic. If you go in the middle of the night it is only 15 minutes. I tried to get the Australian

Embassy people to come with me to that camp. I am a patron of the organisation that looks after them, The Bonded Child Labour Front. The children have been there for years. Not a single member of our Embassy could find the time to come and look and of course they hadn't been there at any time of their own. I helped to prepare a case in the Indian Supreme Court in 1992 to have this outlawed as unconstitutional. We won the case but the children are still there and when I led a group of Indian NGOs to the Indian Human Rights Commission to find out why they hadn't done anything to get those children out of the camps I was told they would get around to it, it was a problem with the State Governments, "we will get around to it and we don't need foreigners to help us anyway". *This is the international community in the 21st century.*

I've just come back from the Solomon Islands where after years of conflict people are enjoying the first times of peace. 70% of the people who live there are under 25 and more than 80% of them are unemployed. What a prospect for peace, harmony and useful activity in the future.

And in Sri Lanka there are hundreds and hundreds of children in gaol to this day, who should not be there. They are being convicted of minor offences and have only been put in gaol because of corrupt systems which do not give them bail and because somebody prescribes 5000 rupees of bail, when the people don't earn 5000 rupees in five years. Nobody would ever think of taking their garden hose, their donkey or their favourite toy as surety, all perfectly permissible under the law – but no, they impose conditions which are inhuman and unachievable.

While a global economic order now outstrips the Bible and the Koran as the guiding faith of today's world, sadly the remoteness of global humanitarian reform is truly great. There is simply no sign that at last economic equity and social equanimity are about to supplant the essentially selfish and aggressive pursuits of most nations. There is not even a whisper of a world united in its commitment, as opposed to its rhetoric, to redirecting its abundant skills and resources towards taking up the real challenges facing humankind.

These challenges include alleviating hunger and disease, removing torture and cruelty, attacking prejudice and discrimination, confronting, exposing and overcoming exploitation and corruption and addressing constructively the human imbalances and inequities which are found everywhere.

For most of these last 56 years since the Universal Declaration, Australia has been one of the leaders in implementing the humanitarian standards it identifies. As a middle power with a respected human rights record Australia has been looked to and listened to by the international community on human rights issues. At many an international conference that I have attended, we have been asked to advise, we have been asked to assist. This proud tradition of support for human rights and dignity casts upon us a great responsibility. As the largest developed democracy in our region, indeed the sixth oldest democracy in the world, Australia not only has an obligation to speak out and act against persecution running rampant in other societies, we have an obligation to remedy human rights abuses on our own soil and the standards we must observe are those we set for ourselves, not alien credos which

we loudly and rightly reject. The driving force for the enthusiastic adoption of these inspiring principles of human behaviour in Australian terms is the evolution of our nation into a society where laws, employment and human relations reflect decency and honour, where legitimate controversy is fought and resolved with a passion devoid of stereotypes and of minority, group or racial defamation. Where a fair sharing of our country's resources and benefits is open to every sector of the community - and perhaps above all where decisions of all kinds stem from considerations of merit, free from misconceptions, prejudice and pre-judgements.

However, in my perception we Australians of today are in serious danger of forgetting these goals. Continuing to recall and nominally respect human decency is one thing, it is quite another to ensure that our governments and people actually honour these concepts and have been taking notice. At present our society represents a mixed bag of the good, the bad and the positively ugly. While we can be justly proud of among other things our scientific, technical, manufacturing and sporting triumphs and indeed the exceptional skills and dedication that all of you give to us, our insidious treatment of our asylum seekers and continuing neglect of our Indigenous peoples, of children, of women (especially those in poor circumstances), of people with physical disabilities and mental impairment and others, require us to examine and prise open our consciences as we question both the substance and direction of our nation today. Surely our generation has a responsibility to ensure that Australia is, and continues to be, a champion of honourable and humanitarian conduct in practice at home as well as abroad. Yet we appear as a nation not to be questioning our societal constructs today. We are at best wandering aimlessly, permitting our development to be steered in many directions, not all of them desirable.

Of all our failings, and there are many, there can surely be no doubt that the continuing disabilities and disadvantages of Indigenous Australians are our most grievous and long standing shame - and the deprivations endured by the children, some of which you saw in the video, are the very worst aspect of that shame. It is not possible for me today and it is not my purpose to attempt to analyse and expose the full story of our dishonourable approaches to Aboriginal dispossession and disadvantage - that is another speech altogether and Des Rogers will be talking about aspects of it himself as will others in the course of this Congress. All I will say for now is that despite advances in some fields, in some parts of the country, Australian Indigenous peoples still face gross inequality deeply rooted in history and in the prejudiced, intolerant or stubborn attitudes of the white community. I pay a tribute to the women in Aboriginal communities who almost alone carry the burden which the rest of the community refuses to undertake. But the fact remains that whichever social indicator is looked at, whether it is health, education, justice, employment or housing, Indigenous Australians are identified as the most disadvantaged group in the country. This situation represents a manifest and fundamental breach of Australian and International law. What it says about the morality of our nation I leave you to contemplate.

I was recently in Dubbo in the central west of NSW in the Juvenile Detention Centre. There were 25 inmates, they call them 'clients'. Twenty three were Aboriginal. Of the twenty three, 19 had been there at least once, sometimes three times or more.

When I inquired what happened after they finished their terms, I was told that the government in its generosity provides a bus to take these people seven kilometres back into Dubbo, where they leave them without money, home, food, job or anyone to love them. Is it any wonder that they come back to the Centre where all those things are provided? That is Australia and Australians, right now, on this very day, in this prosperous, supposedly happy, contented society. In short, we continue to deny Indigenous people an equal opportunity to a fair chance in life which we Australians like to call "a fair go for all". That is not to say that Australia is not a wonderful country and that we are not generally a kind and generous people, it is just that we are not as good as we say or think we are. Indeed while this situation persists we are engaged in an empty untruthful boast about our supposedly superior standards. The things we are still doing to and not doing for our Aborigines should not be happening. The things done in the past should not have happened. Together they are human wrongs not for blame in the crude sense, but for the deepest regret and for a commitment to put them right, as a matter of the utmost urgency. If they represent what some have called "*a black armband*" view of history, I for one wear it as a mark of sorrow and as a commitment to reconciliation. *Rather a black armband than a white blindfold to shut out the truth.*

Much has also been written and said about our recent and current treatment of people seeking asylum, refuge and rescue in our country. Last year I was honoured to preside over a unique coalition of health care organisations, including all or most of the specialist medical colleges, in a major submission to the Human Rights Commission's Inquiry into Children and Immigration Detention. For anyone interested the submission may be found still on the website of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. It is a remarkable document – and I can say that because I had little to do with its writing. I wrote the beginning and the end, but in the middle there is the section of the on-the-spot findings of health workers who go into the detention camps and talk to the people, especially the children. It is harrowing reading but should be, like the Stolen Children report, compulsory reading for every Australian. Without the efforts of the health care profession, the mental, psychological and physical health of the unfortunate detainees would be even worse than it is and the secrets of Australia's gross inhumanity to children, pregnant women, elderly people and others, all innocent of any offence at all may never have seen the light of day. On the issue itself, I say only this for today, that no-one has ever suggested that anyone or everyone who wants to come here should be allowed to do so. Of course countries have to regulate their migration and population numbers. No-one has ever suggested that anyone but we Australians should determine who should be allowed to join what is I believe one of the great multicultural societies of the world.

Until recently we had a policy of border controls and refugee protection – for some reason I do not understand, we have now changed to border protection and refugee controls. Border protection is in fact a propaganda catch phrase, not a national problem. Our borders are not under assault, least of all from the Captain of the Tampa who should have been recognised as a hero, as he was back home in Norway and New Zealand, for risking the lives of his crew in rescuing helpless people in danger of drowning in the sea. Instead, he was lambasted here by politicians and

some media for, as they put it, invading Australia's sovereignty, as if the King of Norway had set his sights on declaring war on Australia with a container ship.

I am shocked that we kind, generous Australians living in almost unparalleled comfort and tranquillity have been prepared to allow our hard won reputation for compassion to be demolished at a stroke - that so many Australians including far too many who should and do know better have been willing to inject in our everyday language of kindness a term like "illegal migrants" when asylum seekers are neither illegal nor migrants. I am shocked that we are prepared to accuse people seeking rescue from torture and terror or allow them to be labelled as queue-jumpers, when the very concept of queues of people escaping with their own and their terrified children's lives only has to be thought about for a moment to be revealed as a canard of gross order. When we are punishing the helpless innocent victims of people-smuggling for the sins of its avaricious and unscrupulous perpetrators, when a manicured term like "mandatory detention" has been substituted for what it really is - compulsory, permanent or long-term gaoling of women, children and elderly people in remote harsh places in appalling conditions of inhumanity without crime, charge, bail or trial. *We give more rights to convicted murderers, drug runners and rapists and to suspected terrorists than we have given to the asylum seekers.* There are still 84 children in detention within or around Australia at this minute, most of them there for more than four years. And we have been spending \$2 billion a year to keep them there, just imagine what that money could have done to help health care, education and Indigenous disadvantage in Australia. And we have eventually permitted 93.7% of asylum seekers to enter Australia on resident visas, so the money was all spent for nothing.

But above all and whatever else we do, there is nothing more urgent and more fundamental to our own consciences and peace of mind than to deliberately and consciously deflect the racial overtones flowing from the asylum seeker debate - away from vengeance and violence to a search for the ways to solve or at least salve as many of the causes of such outrages as we can. It is a tough ask to try to deal with martyr-driven hatred, which intentionally seeks to kill children and innocent civilians generally. Amongst other problems is the ignorance of each civilisation about the other. There is not even a common language of communication readily available - how many non-Muslims have ever read one line of the Koran? What do we know of Muslim poetry and literature, of its music and art, of its culture and philosophies? What efforts are we making to access the personal interests and aspirations of a billion people in the world as a means of building understanding and tolerance? No, we are shooting them dead in the street, thousands of them. A great fuss was made about the 1000 American soldiers who died in Iraq, and rightly so, but do people understand that 60,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed since the invasion last year? They are not all terrorists.

There is in truth, whatever the American political stage wants to tell you on the eve of their election, no sane alternative to a search for peaceful solutions. We simply must find ways to get Muslims in our own community and everywhere to share with us the rich and beautiful elements of their beliefs and practices, rather than the ugly and insane manifestations of the few amongst them who do not wish to live in peace with the rest of us, with all our faults and inadequacies. It is not and cannot

be beyond us. I have been in over 20 Muslim countries in the last few years and have met and talked to hundreds and hundreds of their peoples. I have met none who wanted anyone to be killed, still less to kill anyone themselves. All they want, as Clare Martin said so eloquently, is what we want, the opportunity to live peaceful lives with their families to work for fair reward and to give their children opportunities for happier, safer and more prosperous lives than they themselves have had. I have held in my own arms Muslim children and babies dying of simply-cured diseases like measles and diarrhoea. If only we could have got them the fresh water we throw away every day just cleaning our teeth. I have looked in the eyes of their parents as the lives of their children ebbed away and I have cried with them when I could not answer their pleas to help to save their kids. I could detect absolutely no different level or sense of love and loss than would be the case with any or everyone of us. If we can do nothing else, can we just tone down the arrogance a fraction?

And so I conclude. I wish you every success in the struggles for reform and change to which you are bravely committed. Human rights are, as their most famous declaration says, universal. They are for all of human kind. *No one person is more of a human being than another.* A truly humane nation treats all vulnerable people whatever their ethnic, racial, and cultural origins with dignity, sensitivity and respect and caters for their physical, emotional and welfare needs. It is time for attitudinal, humanitarian and social change across the board in Australia and no-one is better placed to give it than ACOSS and its members and friends. Our generation must lead by example. We are no longer cherishing the principles we have so enthusiastically promised to uphold for our children and for children everywhere. In the process we are forsaking who we are and what we stand for. We must take a step back and remember why we made these promises and what we need to do to keep them. After all, if the children are suffering and the children are the future, what hope is there for the future? Nelson Mandela wrote in an article in an American magazine just over three years ago, "*One of the most difficult things to do is not so much to change society but to change ourselves*". This change will not just happen, it is up to us to make it happen. Our people and our leaders must be made to realise that it takes a stronger nation to admit its errors and to learn from them than to pretend that nothing went wrong in the first place.

This is at its heart a fight for the rediscovery of our nation's soul. We dare not fail. In my opinion we have not a moment to lose. Let us get started.

Working Together – models for Indigenous and non-Indigenous cooperation, management and service delivery. Earning Social Licence - engaging the community

Brian Fowler

Brian Fowler is Manager, Environment and Community Relationships for Newmont Australia. He has worked in the mining industry for more than thirty years in a range of occupations. He has had significant dealings with relationship building and more specifically issues around the employment of Indigenous people within the mining industry. Newmont's Tanami Operations employs more than 11% Indigenous people, many of whom are from the local region. Brian was unable to attend Congress and an edited version of his paper follows.

Introduction

Newmont Tanami Pty Ltd (Newmont) is the dominant tenement holder in the Tanami region, and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the world's largest gold producer, Newmont Mining Corporation. Its main operating assets in the Tanami comprise The Granites Gold Mine, Callie Underground Mine and Groundrush Mine. Newmont Tanami Operations is located approximately 574 kms northwest of Alice Springs. It is linked to Alice Springs by an unsealed road. It is one of Australia's premier underground gold mines.

Newmont Tanami Operations are located on Aboriginal freehold land and as such Newmont operates as a tenant on the land under agreements negotiated with the Central Land Council on behalf of the traditional Aboriginal owners. These agreements provide a framework for the way in which the Tanami mines operate and contain a number of commitments, relating to, for example, economic and employment benefits for Indigenous people, environmental and heritage protection, and the protection of significant sacred sites.

The Company's performance in fulfilling its commitments under the mining agreements is considered one of the significant contributors in the establishment of what looks set to become an enduring and rewarding relationship. Newmont's values provide the foundation for the establishment of long-term relationships with the communities in which it operated: These are:

- act with integrity, trust and respect

- reward an entrepreneurial spirit, a determination to excel and a commitment to action
- demand leadership in safety, stewardship of the environment and social responsibility
- develop the best people in pursuit of excellence
- insist on teamwork and honest communication, and
- demand positive change by continually seeking out and applying best practice.

The Newmont values, together with the strong commitment of the management team at Tanami operations, have helped deliver a cultural change that will ensure the Company's agreements are fulfilled and its relationships with its Aboriginal landlords are fortified into the future.

Aim of this paper

The theme of this session, '*WORKING TOGETHER*' fits well with the case study in this paper. It provides an opportunity for Newmont to share its experiences in engaging with local communities, and more specifically provides an insight into some of the Indigenous employment successes within the operations. The paper aims to:

- provide an insight into the operating philosophy for Newmont's Tanami operations that has seen its relationship with key stakeholder strengthen
- provide some insight into the operating philosophy that has delivered some success in the engagement and employment of Aboriginal people
- identify some of the key factors critical to success and
- highlight some of the pitfalls.

Relationship Building – Engaging Our Community

Newmont has enjoyed some success in building a strong and robust relationship with its traditional Aboriginal landowners, the wider communities in which it operates in the NT, and with the Central Land Council (CLC). This has been achieved in a number of ways:

- The site has adopted a policy of supporting the Northern Territory. It does this primarily by;
 1. Maintaining a local spend policy. This means the operation endeavours to buy local.
 2. Similarly, employees and contractors are encouraged to live in the NT. Newmont personnel are paid an incentive to reside in the NT.

- Understanding fully the commitments made in the agreements and ensuring that the agreements were up-to-date with present operating philosophies. This required renegotiation of the agreements to ensure alignment. Because of the age of the agreements, there was little corporate knowledge in either organisation of why certain commitments or requirements were present. The outcome was the development of an agreement that reflects the nature of the current operation and that will assist the realisation of both parties' expectations.
- Building trust with the CLC and Traditional Owners by meeting regularly, encouraging visitations and communicating regularly and openly.
- Fulfilling commitments in the agreements.
- Being committed to achieving and maintaining compliance with the agreements, and
- Providing sponsorship for key community events and organisations.

Indigenous Employment

Newmont is focused on achieving certain stretch goals around Indigenous employment. The Company believes it has an obligation to foster and promote Indigenous employment and maintain a strong overall Northern Territory employment focus.

Since 2000, a more strategic approach has resulted in a local employment high of 20% Indigenous personnel in the total mine site workforce. Those numbers declined to a low of 9.5% in early 2004 due to changes in mining operations. At present, Indigenous employees make up 10.8% of the total workforce and the numbers are steadily increasing towards the site target of 15% by the end of 2004. It is likely however, that the site target will not be achieved until sometime in 2005. The key issue in achieving the target has been that the 'local community' content of Indigenous employees has been low. Traditional Owners have reasonably expressed their desire to have 'their people working on their land'.

Critical factors to success are partnerships, alignment and commitment.

Partnerships

Newmont cannot achieve local Indigenous employment success without the assistance of the CLC. The employment section of the CLC has worked collaboratively with Newmont staff in a partnership with one desired outcome: employment for Aboriginal people. Newmont also ensures that all its contractor partners prepare prequalification assessments in the areas of Safety, Environment and Community Relations. These assessments are used in the evaluation process.

Alignment

The Tanami operations' workforce is made up of about 650 people – 250 of these are Newmont employees with the balance being contractor employees. To ensure that contractor partners share Newmont's vision, the Company has been insistent that its contractors work to achieve similar Indigenous employment outcomes to that of Newmont. This has been done by having contact clauses included in contracts ensuring all contractors participate in Newmont training and employment programs and report and monitor outcomes.

Commitment

Newmont and its contractor partners are committed to the vision of Indigenous employment and compliance. They are included in training programs, apprenticeship schemes, community visitors, provision of assistance, cross cultural training and mentoring programs. They are aligned, share the Newmont vision and are committed.

Is there one recipe to success?

No, it is a process of continual improvement, change, refocus and new ideas. Some of the leanings from the Tanami operations include the importance of preparing the workplace and workforce.

What we have done to prepare our workplace

Critical mass at Tanami operations is vitally important in the successful transition of local Indigenous people gaining employment which has historically, been perceived as a threatening environment. Tanami operation has more than 70 Indigenous people working in many different occupations throughout the operation. The same rules apply to everyone.

A critical factor is the culture of the workplace. There must be acceptance by all that Indigenous people are capable and willing workers. There absolutely must be integration, no tokenistic jobs.

It is mandatory at Tanami operations for everyone, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to attend a 2-day cross cultural course. This course confronts issues and myths surrounding both cultures to allow participants to explore misconceptions that they may have. Parts of the course are 'in your face' and participants are encouraged to explore or challenge their particular beliefs without prejudice.

The successful management and a clear understanding of the cultural obligations of Indigenous employees have been key factors in making Tanami operations 'people' friendly.

The operation has established mentoring programs that support Indigenous employees. There are a number of trained mentors who either work for Newmont or contractors at the mine who either provide direct support to employees or work through our Community Relations Department as a conduit to Indigenous employees.

Appropriate measures are in place to ensure equitable opportunities and fair treatment for the Tanami operation's Indigenous employees. Culturally-appropriate protocols are in place to enable supervisors and managers to resolve issues that arise. A dedicated team of Community Relations people work to provide assistance to employees, provide advice to departments and assist visiting Traditional owners.

Racial harassment is absolutely not tolerated. All claims are investigated and stern action is taken if needed. In the past two years, only two matters have been raised and both have been settled expeditiously.

Our New Employment Process

To address this issue of local community employment opportunities, the site is working collaboratively with key stakeholders and has designed and is implementing a pre-vocational program specifically targeting local Indigenous communities. The program currently has eight people from a number of local communities undertaking a training program on site, with a view to moving into mainstream employment, traineeships or apprenticeships at the completion of the program in November 2004.

To date, the program is progressing well. Programs have been run in the past which have had limited success. A new approach was taken this time, so as to overcome previous limitations:

- Sat down and critically analysed what had been done in the past and determined what had worked and not worked
- Looked at the communities to gain an understanding of the key issues likely to arise and the issues potential new employees might face as a result of employment at the mine
- Recognised of expertise limits at Tanami Operations, so engaged the resources of Newmont to assist Human Resources, Training & Learning and Community Relations and collectively devised and committed to a strategy. As part of this, key stakeholders were invited to this forum, CLC and DEET.

Once a strategy had been agreed, the process of implementation began. The new strategy consists of the following:

- Collaborative approach with CLC and DEET.
- Screening process at selection and interview time using ACER test to assess potential candidates and identify their literacy and numeracy levels.

- The trainees would be guaranteed permanent long-term employment on successful completion of the pre-vocational course.
- A 9-week prevocational program was designed to give the participants good transferable skills should they decide to leave at completion of the pre-vocational course. Most elements of the training are nationally accredited training. The program is being delivered on site by accredited trainers, well skilled in working with Indigenous students.
- Many of the modules are being reinforced outside the classroom as the trainees are completing building projects for the operation.
- Payment of training wage during the first phase of training (9 weeks). The wage component has been deliberately incrementally stepped to provide an incentive to complete the program.
- At successful completion of the 9 week pre-vocational course, the trainees move into a labour pool. They are able to move between departments until they identify the area they are best suited for or interested in. In this pool, the trainees move to a higher wage as they are now working longer hours and completing work rather than training. Once a trainee finds their niche, they may have to wait for a permanent position but they are able to remain in the pool and be paid. Once they move to full employment they receive a wage at the appropriate level for the job. If a trainee wishes to move into a trade area and is assessed as competent, this will be organised and they will enter into either an apprenticeship or traineeship jointly funded by Newmont and the Government.
- The trainees have worked on a 9/5 roster, 8 hours / day for the first 2 blocks and are now on a 9/5 roster, 12-hour shift for the balance of the program. This was decided to enable them to return home every other weekend to enable the families to better adjust to the partners' absence.
- Mentoring support is available as a Program Coordinator has been employed to coordinate the program, modify where required, provide tutoring where needed and to assist the trainees to adjust to the mining lifestyle.
- Social Security Officer visits site to speak with the trainees to resolve any issues they may have around wages and payments and a Tax Consultant has been arranged to assist where required.
- The CLC Employment Unit is closely involved to ensure that participants return to site after R&R as is the Yuendumu Mining Company which is assisting with transporting and organising trainees before and after R&R breaks.

Eight of the original ten who commenced the program, are progressing. Feedback from the training provider is that six of the eight are doing really well and two require some additional tutoring.

Such a result could not have been achieved without assistance from Newmont's Regional Community Relations and Human Resources departments, and especially the CLC's Employment Unit. This is a very exciting program and if successful at the Tanami, the model may be used for other Newmont operations within Australia. The program also involves various government agencies in a collaborative process to provide appropriate skills, training and community support mechanisms with agreed employment outcomes at the end.

Conclusion

Newmont's commitment to Indigenous employment is exemplified through the program described above. It is hoped that successful participants will act as role models in their communities so that future programs will be even more successful.

This initiative at the Tanami is helping Aboriginal people realise employment and economic opportunities from the mining activities occurring on their land. Of course, the site and contractors are realising opportunities from having a local, stable and committed workforce working for them.

How do we know if we have it right?

It is too early to tell but the feedback from participants and the trainers is very positive. They are learning new skills, enjoying the course and have passed all modules so far. All are returning from R&R breaks and are enthusiastic in the classes.

Planning for the next course is underway, and the local Lajamanu community will be engaged in that intake of trainees to ensure equity within the local area and the Walpiri community. Other communities are hearing what is happening and have been making contact, wanting to visit and see how the program works.

The process is not easy - there is no magical prescription but the rewards are obvious. It is great to see some bright, enthusiastic people getting an opportunity to enter our culture, learn new skills, develop and gain the rewards that they deserve and have earned.

There are some key messages from this case study:

- don't set people up to fail
 - do and mean what you say
 - form the right partnerships
 - align your organisation, and
 - be committed, committed, committed.
-

Democracy, Governance and Service Delivery – beyond ATSIC

Jackie Huggins AM

Jackie Huggins is Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia and Deputy Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit at the University of Queensland. She is currently a Council member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and was a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Review Panel. She is a noted author and historian and received an AM for her work with Indigenous People, reconciliation, literacy, women's issues and social justice.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and pay respect to those who have gone before us.

I would also like to thank Andrew McCallum and the team at ACOSS for inviting me to speak this morning and to share the platform with a distinguished Maori sister, Josephine Karanga, who will offer you a fascinating insight on this topic from across the seas.

By asking me to speak at a session on where we're at now in Australia in the "Beyond ATSIC" phase, and to concentrate on democracy and governance, I'm going to take it for granted that I've also been asked to speak about reconciliation and about community development in general, two topics which are very closely interconnected.

There are some great examples of where that's happening in Australia – examples that provide important lessons for the people putting the new national Indigenous affairs structures in place.

But before I get on to that, let me start by acknowledging the important role of organisations like ACOSS to reconciliation.

For the reconciliation process to be successful, it must have the involvement and commitment of communities across Australia. The movement must recognise that while Australians from many different backgrounds suffer disadvantage, that disadvantage differs depending on people's circumstances and histories.

It's all very well to speak of the "ladder of opportunity" but for too many Indigenous Australians, the first rung of that ladder is way out of reach.

ACOSS provides the research and the conviction required to demonstrate what governments and others need to do to meet the differing needs of needy sections of the population.

ACOSS speaks and people listen.

And the Council's work – your work - goes beyond words and theories to involve communities in positive action.

And that's what it takes to build one, cohesive, healthy community. That's what you have to do if there are problems in the community. There's no value in blaming others or looking for outside solutions. You have to get stuck in and do it together.

Which brings me back to where we find ourselves today – post ATSIC and with the return of the Howard Government.

The decisive result on October 9 provides an historic opportunity for Mr Howard and the Government to implement its policies and programs.

Politicians on both sides were criticised during the campaign for not speaking out more about Indigenous affairs, but our view at Reconciliation Australia is that that may have been for the good. It is hard to imagine that anything very positive would have come from debating these complex issues in that divisive context.

It would also be a mistake for supporters of reconciliation to use the re-election of John Howard as an excuse to keep whinging about what's not possible rather than doing something worthwhile and meaningful within the context in which we find ourselves.

The good news is there is a surprising amount of common ground about the way forward and a good deal of it is being discussed during the two days here in Alice Springs.

It's easy to think of Indigenous affairs in terms of law and order, stopping substance abuse and ending welfare dependency. These are important issues but none of them offers complete or long term answers.

So the fact that governments across Australia have found common ground on some really gutsy new stuff suggests there is a way forward, and that democracy and good governance are at the heart of it.

The Prime Minister spoke of the essence of this new approach in an interview on the ABC's Lateline program during the campaign when he said:

“... when you listen to the remarks of people like Noel Pearson and you hear their solutions in areas such as the Cape, you begin to understand that if communities are given the power to run their own affairs and to impose their own internal disciplines you will, over time, see an enormous improvement. We ought to be listening a lot more to those who believe that self responsibility and personal empowerment in Aboriginal communities and the end of the welfare mentality are essential before we bring about a profound change for the better.”

This new, broadly accepted direction in Indigenous affairs is based on two fundamentals: better coordination in the work of governments and, most important,

engaging and empowering Indigenous communities to run their own affairs and find their own solutions.

Those of us who are working to engage constructively with government in these uncertain times are urging political leaders to allow enough time for effective Indigenous governance structures to be developed regionally and nationally which will be central to the success of the new framework.

And that includes legitimate, representative voices for Indigenous Australians at the regional and national level.

It is clear to all of us that this year's congress is taking place at a pivotal time in Australia – when there is a good deal of uncertainty around national Indigenous affairs policy and representation, and how it relates to the appalling statistics around Indigenous disadvantage.

Our failure over so many years to deliver on what people thought were good ideas would suggest that the translation of ideas into results is where it all gets difficult.

And that's why it's so important that conferences do more than talk about academic theories and worthy ideals – ACOSS has always shown up those kinds of conferences with its direct approach to community issues.

Community development is an essential ingredient of reconciliation, as is the need to recognise that achieving equality sometimes involves unequal interventions.

For Indigenous Australians, community development and, more particularly, governance, provides the link between all the other issues, all the other priorities and concerns that can affect our citizenship and our experience of human rights.

Governance, or the lack of it, affects everything that happens to Indigenous Australians.

It is an absolute pre-requisite to community development for Indigenous Australians.

If we are truly committed to the notion of strong, integrated communities, we cannot begin to create them if Indigenous parties do not have proper instruments of governance.

If we do not have these structures, we cannot engage with government or business or community organisations other than on an ad hoc, individual basis that leaves us vulnerable. We cannot engage in partnerships, we cannot benefit from the essential nature of our communal identity as Indigenous people.

To make this aspect of our identity work for us rather than against us, we need to have effective governance structures.

Which is why Reconciliation Australia, in partnership with BHP Billiton is coordinating a groundbreaking project to identify and promote all the different aspects that constitute good Indigenous governance in Australia.

The research component of the project will map the current state of community governance, identify existing governance structures and processes, and analyse what works, what doesn't, and why. It will identify gaps in community governance capacities, and investigate the links between community governance and sustainable economic development.

Our hope is that in the first five years, we can build up a body of work that demonstrates the value of working with communities on their own terms and over time to generate sustainable improvements for Indigenous people.

Whoever is in government needs to be sure that reforms to national Indigenous governance structures are aimed at improving the social and economic circumstances of Indigenous Australians, and are based on the wishes of Indigenous people.

Because the idea of self determination does not run counter to that of building one cohesive community – not at all. Stronger Indigenous governance gives stronger identity, self esteem, a sense of belonging which gives Indigenous citizens the tools and the incentive to be part of the wider community.

And we need our leaders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to be leaders. If their objective is not the improvement of people's lives, then they are not leaders at all.

The onus is on all of us – community organisations, governments, business, Indigenous communities and those who represent them - to get creative about this, to target solutions and go for them.

This congress provides one opportunity to set the tone. Do so in a spirit of empathy so that ideas are no longer worth discussing unless they are judged against their capacity to produce outcomes for people who have been waiting for them for too long.

The potential of your contribution to addressing disadvantage among this nation's most disadvantaged communities and to promoting true reconciliation is significant.

All things begin at the centre and we have never left it

Jozie Karanga

Josephine Karanga has been actively involved in Maori tribal development for over twenty five years. She is the CEO of Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa an Indigenous Qualifications Authority and Maori NGO which provides education and training programs that contribute to the decolonisation of Maori in Aotearoa. A grandmother and mother, Josephine has advocated for the rights of Maori people within Aotearoa with a focus on the strengthening and protection of the whanau (extended family) as the focal point of Maori society.

He Waiata – A Song

Hear us cry out, all our people we cry out
Hear us cry out, all our people cry out
We the people of the land mourn her taking from our hand we cry out
But the day comes when the shadows they shall pass
Yes the day comes when the shadows they shall pass
When the white man's hand no longer hides the face of our mother from our eyes
So we rise up, to be what we truly are
Yes we rise up to be what we truly are - FREEDOM
Not what the white man made us, but as the spirit moves us - Freedom
Not what the white man made us but as the spirit moves us - Freedom
Tuturu whakamaua kia tina, haumie, huie, taiki e !
Tihei Mauri Ora

(Traditional incantation invoking those gathered to be of one purpose and mind and bind together and acknowledge the source of life)

Mihimihi - Acknowledgements

In starting I wish to make a number of acknowledgements. I must warn you however that Maori have made an art form of acknowledgements as part of the formal greeting process, we call it mihimihi. Therefore you are lucky that the acknowledgements take up only half of my presentation rather than the whole thing!

My first acknowledgement must go to the tangata whenua of this place, the people of the land, specifically the Larapinta and the Arrernte, the customary title holders. We the tangata whenua of Aotearoa - the land of the long white cloud, share a

common whakapapa - genealogical link, with the tangata whenua of this land. That link by blood, and by spirit, ties us to Papatuanuku, the earth mother and Ranginui, the sky father. That link has remained unbroken for all these millennia and is played out through the practices and belief systems that are our collective cultures, these cultures that we have been forced to deny through the process of colonisation. It is our cultures as tangata whenua, Indigenous peoples, that has ensured our survival for all these thousands of years upon this planet and has made us what we are. There is a warning in this and it is that if we are to deny our culture, as some have chosen, because it is too painful to continue, or because we are brainwashed into believing that our beliefs and values are obsolete, an anachronism of modern times, then we do so at our own peril and ultimately at the peril of those upon the planet. We as tangata whenua have a common purpose, we are the keepers, kiatiaki - guardians and stewards of our mother, encapsulated in our whakatauki or wisdom sayings;

'I am the land, and the land is me
We cannot own our mother for she owns us'

We also share a common struggle as tangata whenua as first nation peoples, the first people of the land, and that struggle is for the recognition of our absolute and undeniable right as sovereign peoples, as nations within a nation. Our mana - power and authority, has been denied us, and continues to be denied to us by those who have now become our 'keepers', our 'kaitiaki', our guardians, by those who still continue to treat us as errant children or an irritating nuisance that just will not go away. Our kaupapa, belief principle, instils in us that to share power is to enhance and magnify it for the good of the collective and conflicts directly with a belief system that uses power for the benefit of individual gain.

I leave you with the blessing, 'kia ora' - have life, choose life, for all things begin at the centre and we the tangata whenua have never left it.

My second acknowledgement must of course go to the organisers of this conference, ACOSS, not just because they paid my fare and accommodation, but also because this is a kaupapa, an issue, close to my heart and at the heart of what I do in my own land. I thank you from ACOSS for listening to the inner voice, and the voice of Garth Nowland-Foreman (with whom I have had the privilege of working) and choosing me to come and speak with you today. To Gill Whan and Julia Brooke, whose forays into cyberspace were often in vain, but who finally got me here on a wing, a Qantas one, and a prayer.

My third acknowledgement must go to the organisation who released me to come to this conference, and who continues to pay my wages for doing what I love, Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa Indigenous Education and Training.

My fourth acknowledgement goes to all of you who have gathered here at the centre, the heart of the mother, to share the collective wisdom of many peoples. Maori have a saying that we gather at the call of the kaupapa - also known as purpose, so all of you have obviously been called, because why else would anyone want to come to Alice Springs other than for purely philanthropic reasons.

Finally I wish to acknowledge my own people who have come to settle in this land. I acknowledge them because the reality for us as Maori is that we must leave our life to find a livelihood. For over twenty years now we have been leaving our homeland in droves because in Aotearoa the outlook for us socially and economically is so bleak, there are no jobs, there are no prospects. Our young men fill the prisons, our youth fill the gangs and our women and children fill the hospitals. Australia has become our saviour. I thank the creator, that unlike the journey undertaken by my pakeha ancestors in former times, it's only a three hour plane trip, and a pretty cheap one if you choose Freedom Air, and not a five month endurance test by boat. In fact it's cheaper to come here than to fly to the south island of New Zealand. To you my whanaunga – my relatives, I know that many of you never forget your homeland and that there is a deep yearning that will never be filled. I thank you for at least letting the mokopuna – the grandchildren, come back now and then to keep the connection with the haukainga – the homeland. I speak as a Maori mother who gave her son a one way ticket to Brisbane 'to get a life and a real job'. Unfortunately he never returned, but that is another story.

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa – thrice I greet you all.

Introduction

So what can I tell you about what it is like to be Maori in Aotearoa? Unfortunately it is not a fairy tale that has a happy ending. It is a story about a proud people who have been reduced and degraded to second class citizens in their own land. It is a story that we share with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. We are reduced to the status of third world people in a first-world nation.

There is this perspective here in Australia that Maori people are doing very well. We appear to be practicing our culture, we have our language, why even our national rugby team, the All Blacks, perform a Maori dance before they play (mind you I find it really hard to imagine the Wallabies doing an Aboriginal dance before a game). The reality, however, is far from good. Our statistics, despite the interventions of successive well intentioned governments and philanthropic Pakeha organisations, continue to show ever widening disparities between Maori and non-Maori. In its report entitled '*Progress Towards Closing Social and Economic Gaps Between Maori and Non-Maori*' released at the commencement of the millennium by the Ministry of Maori Development, Te Puni Kokiri, these disparities were highlighted¹. This report has come to be known as the 'Gaps Report'. The Prime Minister herself, Helen Clark considered the situation serious enough to warrant the establishment of a Cabinet Committee to address these disparities. She then went on to chair the committee. In fact the Labour government came into power on this political platform, with the Maori seats holding the balance of power in the coalition government right to this day.

My presentation will go on to provide some background about these disparities both at a national level and at a local Maori community or 'flax roots' level, on the

¹ Te Puni Kokiri, Ministry of Maori Development, 2000, Wellington NZ.

ground. The presentation will then go on to discuss one of the many solutions initiated by the tangata whenua themselves to address these issues. Using the example of my own organisation as a case study, Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa Indigenous Training and Education, I will discuss the strategies they are initiating using Maori models and processes in their training. Working in the area of development for whanau (extended family), hapu (clan), and iwi (tribal nations), Te Korowai is in the business of capacity buildings for Maori organisations that are accountable to whanau, hapu and iwi. Te Korowai Aroha has had to develop its own Indigenous qualifications framework due to the growing realisation, by both state and third sector Maori organisations, that effective interventions with Maori must be based on an organic model derived from the cultural beliefs and values of the people themselves. These interventions must be sourced in an indigenous world view and not ones based exclusively on western theories of social work policy and practice or community development².

Finally, I would like to close with a brief overview of how this framework is being trialled on a national basis by Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa through an initiative known as Project Mauri Ora.

In conclusion the presentation highlights the fact that there is still strong opposition to this type of approach by many New Zealanders, as the funding of Maori initiatives is seen as a form of reverse apartheid.

Closing the Gaps – Identifying the Disparities

The average life expectancy for a Maori man is eight years lower than that of their non-Maori counterpart, even though there has been some improvement over the last decade. The life expectancy of Maori women is nine years lower than for non-Maori. The Gaps Report showed that the higher the deprivation index for Maori people the lower the life expectancy. At the very start of life Maori infants are more likely to die than non-Maori. Infant mortality is an important measure of the wellbeing of a people as it is associated with the health of the mother, quality and access to health services, socio-economic conditions, and public health practice. Up until 1996 Maori had twice the infant mortality rate of non-Maori, and this has reduced slightly in the period from 1996 to 1998 to one and a half times that of non-Maori.

In my opening remarks I talked about Maori men filling our prisons, this is based not only on my own experiences with my many male relatives who have done a stint on 'Her Majesty's services', but is borne out by the statistics. In 1998, the Maori population represented 13% of the New Zealand population aged 14 years and over and yet Maori comprised 40% of all apprehensions, 41% of all arrests and 44% of all people convicted³. More disturbing, however, is the fact that Maori men continue to make up half the prison population. Overall Maori men are disproportionately represented in the Justice department statistics. This has occurred despite the fact

² Lawson-Te Aho, K Literacy Review on Maori Suicide Interventions Palmerston North 1998

³ Pg 13 Te Puni Kokiri Report

that prior to the 1970s Maori men would have made up only 8% of the prison population⁴.

The plight of Maori women has been even more desperate. Up until the turn of the century we were second to none in the world for deaths from lung cancer⁵. We die younger and of preventable diseases, for example in 1997 we were six and a half times more likely to die from cervical cancer than our non-Maori counterparts. More up-to-date figures have not yet come to hand as to whether this situation has changed or not.

Maori women receive higher levels of medical treatment for abuse and that abuse is of greater severity than for non-Maori women⁶. For those of you who may have seen the movie 'Once Were Warriors', for many Maori women this has been their reality.

Maori women aged 15 to 24 are seven times more likely to be hospitalised as the result of an assault than non-Maori women. Maori children are four times more likely to be hospitalised for injuries sustained as a result of deliberately inflicted physical harm, and Maori women are over represented as victims of partner abuse, more likely to report psychologically abusive behaviour, to have experienced physical or sexual abuse in the past twelve months and to have experienced more serious and repeated acts of violence. Quantitative evidence on interventions for family violence is not well reported and recorded and those that are available are often unreliable.

A paper put out by the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services in March of this year revealed the development and growth of a Maori underclass. Statistics gathered in relation to the monitoring of food banks nationally showed that 61% of those attending food banks were Maori.

These are the national statistics, one may argue that this is the result of urbanisation and may be true for those Maori who live in the cities and who have lost touch with their culture and their roots. Let's then look at a typical Maori community still living in their homelands. I have chosen the provincial city of Gisborne which is within the homelands of four tribal nations, Te Aitanga a Mahaki, Rongowhakaata, Ngai Tamanuhiri and Ngati Porou.

Gisborne is an idyllic seaside town situated on the east coast of the North Island and is famous for being the first place in the world to see the sun other than the friendly kingdom of Tonga⁷. Gisborne itself is picture postcard material, nestled in rolling hills peppered with sheep, and long flat expanses of vineyards that produce prize-winning wines. It has the look of a busy provincial city that is generally prosperous, where houses are neatly kept and the streets are well maintained and tidy. I have chosen Gisborne and its outlying districts because it has one of the highest Maori populations per capita in the country, 19,369 Maori within a total population for the

⁴ IHI Communications 'Historical Chronology' unpublished booklet 1988

⁵ Pg 39 Te Puni Kokiri Report.

⁶ TKAA Proposal to TPK unpublished paper 2003

⁷ Turanga nui a Kiwa Community Sept 2003 Profile

Gisborne district of almost 44,000. Gisborne Maori make up 3.7% of the total national Maori population⁸.

Historically Captain James Cook landed here in 1769. When Cook landed here back then he encountered some resistance from the locals, who did not want his men to land and would not co-operate in trading blankets and nails for much needed supplies for Cook's ship. The locals performed a haka to Cook as a sign of their displeasure and were promptly fired upon by Cook's men, causing a number of fatalities. Cook and his men left empty handed and he named the place Poverty Bay. The ruler at the time that Cook landed was a woman, the mighty chieftainess Hinematiaro whose territories stretched within a two-hundred mile radius. Her descendents are still considered leaders to this day. Her home village was recently made famous by the movie 'Whale Rider'. In her time she succeeded in uniting a number of tribal factions and nations into one mighty confederation that enjoyed prosperity and peace up until the end of her reign. To this day the nation of Ngati Porou is renowned for the female leaders.

So what is the situation for Maori like today in this place, what do the statistics tell us?

A recent survey by the local district health board of the Gisborne district had this to say:

- 80% of Maori live in areas of socio-economic deprivation
- 79% of Maori under 12 years of age live in areas of higher than average socio-economic deprivation
- 79% of Maori aged 55 years or over live in areas of socio-economic deprivation
- local communities that are among the most deprived in New Zealand are Gisborne Airport, Gisborne Central, Te Hapara, Kaiti, and Te Karaka.

And what are the economic trends?

- The median income of Maori people in the Gisborne district is \$12,800 per annum
- 71.1% of Maori people aged 15 years and over in the Gisborne district have an annual income of \$20,000 or less
- The unemployment rate of Maori in the Gisborne District is 18.1%, compared with 16.8% for all Maori in New Zealand
- 28% of Maori are employed in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industries (well nothing much has changed)
- 11.6% of Maori are employed in the Education industry
- Whanau today have a lower disposable income
- Employment is seasonal and depends upon the overall growth within the community
- Rural populations are growing as whanau move back to live on whanau land.

⁸ Ibid.

It seems that the picture for Maori who choose to live within their iwi (tribal) homelands is just as grim.

Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa: A Case Study

This is a case study of Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa (TKAA), an Indigenous training and education NGO specialising in the training of Maori social and health workers. Considered something of a leader in this field, TKAA is the only Maori organisation funded by the Children, Young Persons and their Families Service to provide national services of this nature. The basis of Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa training services are the reclamation of cultural values and beliefs and the application of these to the current issues and dilemmas facing Maori. The main focus of our training services is decolonisation of Maori in order to work smarter and safely with these issues.

Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa was founded in 1987 in response to an identified need to deliver culturally appropriate services for tangata whenua. Originally the Maori caucus of Marriage Guidance, Te Korowai Aroha became an autonomous entity in 1991. This caucus recognised that to make any changes for Maori they had to work with the whole extended family or whanau and not just with individuals.

No longer a national office, Te Korowai Aroha chooses to enter into strategic alliances with autonomous Maori organisations as long as they are accountable to their tribal nations. These groups range in type from tribal authorities to community initiatives, youth and women's groups, counselling and self-help organisations as well as those specialising in adult education.

Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa provides services at a regional, national and international level. There has been a growing demand for workforce development and supervision for Maori health and social service providers throughout Aotearoa. These agencies work in the field of community health, suicide prevention, drug and alcohol and gambling dependency, domestic violence, youth at risk as well as primary health care.

Internationally Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa has completed collaborative research projects and capacity building with Pacific NGO⁹ and represented NGO at the United Nations level¹⁰.

More recently, the key priority for TKAA has been the development of an indigenous qualifications framework that qualifies and assesses social and health practitioners against Maori standards of best practice. This has emerged because Maori community practitioners are not being recognised by state services for the wealth of cultural and community expertise that they bring to their role. The

⁹ Commonwealth Foundation 'Mahi Tahī – Working Together: The Aotearoa New Zealand Report on Civil Society in the New Millennium' 2000

¹⁰ United Nations 3rd Conference of Parties on Biological Diversity Buenos Aires Argentina 1996.

organisations they work in rely on people with these skills because they tend to be more effective and accountable to the communities in which they work.

Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa is a signatory to the Mataatua Declaration and is therefore committed to the active protection of Maori knowledge. All training and education programmes are based on maturaanga Maori, knowledge derived from Te Ao Marama (Maori epistemology). The Mataatua Declaration is the 'United Nations Declaration for the Protection of Indigenous Intellectual and Cultural Property'.

Over the last decade Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa has researched and developed Maori philosophies and practices. This research has informed the development of curricula for training programmes required in developing competent Maori practitioners who are validated by whanau, hapu and iwi. It is knowledge given freely and handed down by the ancestors, to put such knowledge onto our country's national qualifications framework would be to treat such knowledge as a commodity to be bought and sold. More importantly, we believe, it would lose its 'wairua' its spiritual essence. Because we have chosen to make this stance our training programmes are not recognised by our Ministry of Education who will not fund us. Despite this the credibility of our training is recognised so we have been successful in securing contracts from our social welfare ministry, CYFS, the Ministry of Health, seven District Health Boards, the Department of Internal Affairs and now the Ministry of Maori Development.

Due to this unique role and function, TKAA has been successful in securing direct resourcing from the Ministry of Maori Development, Te Puni Kokiri, over the next two and a half years for \$4.4 million, to implement Project Mauri Ora, a nationwide programme for whanau (extended family) violence prevention.

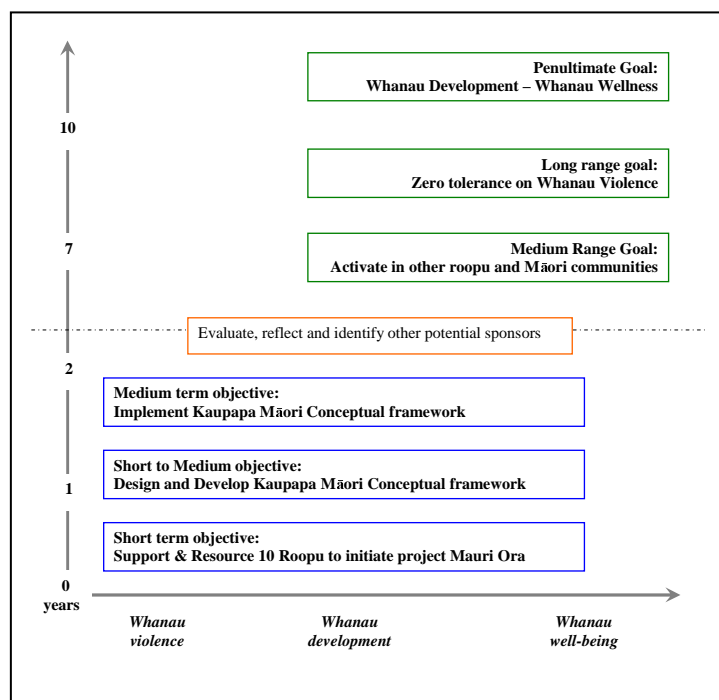
Project Mauri Ora

Project Mauri Ora¹¹ seeks to move Māori communities towards Zero Tolerance on Whanau Violence. This will be activated by supporting and developing ten pilot sites across Aotearoa to design, utilise and evaluate a kaupapa Maori conceptual framework specifically for whanau violence issues in their rohe (territory). Each pilot site has a background in whanau counselling/development and is seeking more support, resourcing and upskilling for their organisation and the whanau, hapu and/or iwi within their rohe to seriously curtail the proliferation of whanau violence in Māori communities. This project derives from the work of the Ministerial Taskforce on Whanau Violence and follows on the heels of the recommendations made in their recently released report 'Whanau Violence: A Māori Conceptual Framework.' It is viewed as the means for initiating a culturally appropriate process to address the sizeable (and growing) number of Māori whanau in abusive and violent circumstances within Aotearoa.

This kaupapa Māori conceptual framework is based on six fundamental Maori values: whakapapa (kin based relationships), tikanga (cultural practices), wairua

¹¹ Berghan, C *Business Case for Direct Resourcing Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa for Te Puni Kokiri 2003* Wtgn

(spirituality), tapu (sacredness), Mauri (lifeforce) and mana (power and authority). The model utilises its 'value based' approach and its restorative perspective to move whanau from a state of abuse (violence normalisation) to a state of wellness. Curtailing violence within whanau will take time and this project does not claim a quick-fix solution but it is one of the few if not the only project in the market place making a direct and concerted effort within Māori communities to address the incidents and the context of whanau violence. Statistics tell us that 'violence normalisation' is on the rise, and more so in Māori. It has a cancerous hold on Māori development; it deteriorates the structure of the whanau and weakens the foundation of the hapu and the iwi.



Conclusion

In closing we will consider the current political climate and the impact of this on Maori initiatives to find solutions for themselves.

Earlier this year Sir Donald Brash, leader of the opposition (the National party), gave an address to the Orewa Rotary club north of Auckland. Brash's speech outlined his party's new policy on race relations. National is advocating the abolition of the Waitangi Tribunal and any government institutions and policies that focus on race rather than need. This situation has its parallel in the challenges being made to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission¹².

The results of political polls earlier this year indicate that these policies appear to have found favour amongst the middle New Zealanders. Post-election 2002

¹² Brash, D keynote address to the Orewa Rotary Club, Auckland January 27 2004.

National was languishing in the polls, being the preferred government of only 25% of the country's eligible voters. After the Brash speech in January it became the preferred government of almost 50% of the population. The media had a field day airing the views of the previously 'silent majority' who it was claimed had been hampered by 'political correctness'. For them Maori appear to have had special treatment at the expense of the majority of hard-working New Zealanders who had to make it on their own merit. Their outrage extended to such things as special quotas for Maori entry into tertiary institutions, separate sports teams, ie the Maori All Blacks, the funding of Maori education initiatives such as Maori preschools where children are totally immersed in the Maori language, or Maori language schools for that matter, all of which are based on race. Unfortunately Brash's speech came out at the time that Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa was applying for Project Mauri Ora, in fact the proposal was just going through cabinet at that time. This resulted in huge compliances being put on Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa in order for it to implement the project, seven times more than those put on any other programmes of this nature¹³.

Organisations such as yours, ACOSS, are essential because of their huge political influence based on their ability to inform the dominant culture about the issues of Indigenous peoples. They can also provide alternative or 'parallel' interventions to address injustices which become models for social action. Your invitation to me to come here has been invaluable in assisting our organisation, Te Korowai Aroha o Aotearoa, to progress its kaupapa by making links with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters to share our stories with each other and to know that we are not alone in what we do.

No reira e te iwi, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

(Traditional closing phrase of acknowledgement to all those gathered together)

¹³ Te Puni Kokiri Project Team direct quote.

Lessons from the block and the bush – community cohesion and community relations

Susie Low

Susie Low is with the NSW Police. For the past two years she has been Aboriginal Substance Abuse Senior Policy and Programs Officer with the Drug Squad, undertaking research and developing programs for NSW Police to better respond to Aboriginal drug and alcohol issues. She is currently a member of the Working Group arising from NSW Alcohol Summit, August 2003 – *Policing and Preventing Substance Abuse in Aboriginal Communities*, responsible for implementing those priority recommendations of the Summit impacting on Aboriginal people.

Given the appalling history of policing in Aboriginal communities, and the prevailing cultural insensitivity and intolerance of many in the wider Australian community, it's no wonder tension and lack of trust remains today.

Today police officers as well as Aboriginal people carry the scars of what has happened or has not happened. Police and Aboriginal cultures continue to be at odds in an environment of misunderstanding and fear.

This afternoon I will provide a brief overview of some of the lessons NSW Police has learnt along the way, drawing also on experiences in Redfern in February this year. Matthew will expand on his community cultural development work with kNOT@Home and Big hART, and the partnership program we have developed.

Dr Christine Jenner, in her 1999 report to the Australian Institute of Criminology, suggests that police culture both reflects and perpetuates the power differences within the social structure it polices. Any real impact, therefore, on policing in the Aboriginal community will accordingly indicate steady and on-going change in the wider Australian community. Clearly, it's the responsibility of Government and individual departments, to implement policies to bring about positive change.

NSW Police Strategy

The NSW Police Aboriginal Strategic Direction 2003-2006 (ASD) developed by the Aboriginal Coordination Unit provides policy guidelines for policing Aboriginal communities.

The policy is built around concepts such as community consultation, partnerships, self-determination and cultural appropriateness, innovative solutions and respect of elders.

Some of the strategies emanating from the policy document are:

Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLO)

The role of an ACLO is critical to appropriate police responses in Aboriginal communities. ACLOs provide support to street level policing, attending events and sites where Aboriginal people congregate. They advise police on local Aboriginal issues, and contribute to training and development of Local Area Command personnel through police induction and cultural awareness programs. As well as liaising in drug and alcohol related incidents, domestic violence and juvenile anti-social behaviour, they also attend to welfare needs and provide support to Aboriginal persons in custody. ACLOs develop and implement programs to address local issues.

At the time of the civil unrest in Redfern in February 2004, only two of four ACLO positions were filled.

Diversionary programs

The ASD calls for police officers to use diversion options whenever possible. Currently Youth Liaison Officers in each location establish programs for local youth. However, a partnership being established with kNOT@Home aims to provide a statewide approach to assist officers and the community to work together on diversion programs for young offenders.

Aboriginal Consultative Committees

NSWP has established a three-tier advisory committee structure to strengthen relations with Aboriginal communities in NSW.

The Local Area Command Aboriginal Consultative Committee (LACACC) is the first tier of the advisory bodies, and is established to develop and monitor the implementation of Local Area Command Aboriginal Action Plans. Their role includes developing programs for youth, men and women, providing a voice for the local Aboriginal community within the LAC, and providing feedback to the Commissioner of Police through the regional advisory body.

The Regional Aboriginal Advisory Committee (RAAC) looks at issues that cannot be resolved at LACACC level or may have implications across a number of LACs, and provides feedback to the Commissioner of Police.

The Police Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Council (PASAC) meets twice a year and is chaired by the Commissioner. Membership includes the NSWP Corporate Spokesperson for Aboriginal Issues and representatives from the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Ombudsman's Office,

the NSW Aboriginal Lands Council and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

Prior to the Redfern riot local police had not been successful in establishing a LACACC. Since the riot, a newly formed Consultative Committee has met twice, and the first meeting of a Youth Advisory Group met just last week for the first time.

Cautioning Aboriginal Young People Protocol

This protocol was developed in 2001 in recognition that the involvement of a respected member of a young person's community can effectively issue a police caution. Police can jointly issue the caution or hand over responsibility to the nominated or elected community member. The protocol assists police to select and train appropriate community members to issue cautions. This resource has not been widely adopted by police and was not in use in Redfern in early 2004.

Night Patrols

Police have partnered with other government agencies to provide support to Night Patrols at varying levels. Some ACLOs take on an active role, using their vehicle to transport either children or intoxicated persons to a safe place. Some LACs have provided a Night Patrol vehicle to be used by the community. Night Patrols operating consistently reduce crime rates, especially juvenile crime, enhance community perceptions of safety, minimise harm associated with drug and alcohol abuse and reduces the number of intoxicated Aboriginal people taken into police custody. Even more importantly, Night Patrols provide a means for community members to be instrumental in working out their own solutions to their community problems.

Community Partnerships are critical to effective policing in Aboriginal communities

Projects include:

Police & Community Youth Clubs (PCYC)

PCYCs provide well structured and innovative crime prevention and diversion programs for young offenders, youth at risk, and the general community. Through Targeted Programming, aimed at reducing youth crime through implementation of strategies to reduce offending behaviour, police are provided with an alternative approach to juvenile offending. Based on the underlying principles of child protection, equity, partnerships, youth participation, parental involvement and court diversion, PCYCs train police officers working in their clubs in adolescent development, working with youth at risk and program management and development.

Giyaali project, Walgett

Giyaali is a crime prevention project involving the community, welfare, education and police.

A young person at risk is identified and offered the opportunity to take part in a camp. The camp offers activities such as kayaking, climbing, swimming, training in culture and living skills. The young person must sign, and conform to, a behaviour contract before the camp begins. Mentors are drawn from high profile Aboriginal sportspersons, persons trained in the delivery of positive aspects of Aboriginal culture, community and family values; and police officers. High-achieving Aboriginal young people are also invited as positive role models.

Your Shoes My Shoes

This is a project developed with kNOT@Home (Big hART) to address the harms caused by substance abuse in young Aboriginals and inappropriate police responses. The concept is built around the idea that I can only really understand you if I walk a mile in your shoes. Applying a community cultural development approach, the project uses art to focus on drug and alcohol issues in the community. Police officers and Aboriginal youth will work closely together to develop arts products, which will later be used as educational tools for police and community training.

The project aims not only to increase protective factors for young people to resist drug and alcohol abuse, but to reduce fear and misunderstanding between police and Aboriginal youth, encouraging acceptance of each other's stories. The 'buddy system' of police and youth will provide opportunities for participants to become familiar with, and better understand, the circumstances under which each responds to the other, and the impact of drug and alcohol misuse on their lives.

Key priorities

Suitability of police officers

The Aboriginal Strategic Directions 2003-2006 contained recommendations to better recruit and select suitable officers, including interview on location to ensure thorough briefing on the community and policing context in which the officer will work, assessment of levels of understanding and commitment to justice in the Aboriginal community.

Cultural competency

Further development of cultural awareness training that accurately reflects the seriousness of alcohol-related crime, and limited sensitivity of police, is underway. The training packages will cover police officers at all stages of their professional

development and include community members as mentors. Location specific training has also been developed.

While NSW Police has sound policies and procedures to address corporate discrimination, we acknowledge that individuals come to the organisation with their own experiences and attitudes. Our new direction aims to counter ignorance and negative attitudes and rebuild informed approaches to the policing and care of Aboriginal persons.

Community partnerships

As previously emphasised, the experts on the concerns and priorities of Aboriginal communities are the communities themselves. Any attempts by police to reduce crime and enhance safety must be built together with the community.

Moving forward

NSW Police is committed to assisting the community to work towards recovery. Our approach is based on solid principles: open communication, capacity building, community-driven initiatives, self-determination and ownership of problems and solutions, and ensuring policy becomes action.

I suggest police and the Aboriginal community have the same vision in all states and territories of Australia – a safer community.

This becomes a shared vision only when we work together. Together we have the power to bring about change. In Africa they have a saying:

“It takes a village to raise a child”

Will we be responsible villagers?

Working Together - models for Indigenous and non-Indigenous cooperation, management and service delivery

Tony Pietropiccolo

Tony has been the Director of Centrecare WA since 1989 and President of the WA Council of Social Service since late 2000. In 2001 Tony was appointed Chairperson of the State Homelessness Taskforce in Western Australia. He is also a member of the Executive Board of the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS). Tony and Glenda Kickett talked about their experience at Djooraminda.

Djooraminda/Centrecare relationship history

Djooraminda had been established in the 1970s by the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth to provide out of home care for Aboriginal children. The service provides a maximum of 30 places in cottage accommodation for children of school age. However, younger children are also accommodated when they form part of a sibling group. Djooraminda has an Aboriginal manager, Glenda Kickett, and all carers except one are Aboriginal. In 2002 the Djooraminda Board of Management requested that Centrecare Inc. accept responsibility for the management of Djooraminda, due to the ongoing difficulties the organisation was experiencing around governance. The transfer of responsibilities occurred with the agreement of all stakeholders.

Part of the vision for the future is that Djooraminda will return to being an autonomous organisation.

Centrecare was aware of the unique difficulties faced by Glenda Kickett as an Aboriginal manager, especially the governance and service implications of this and of, the relatively large number of Aboriginal organisations in Perth that had closed or were experiencing governance/financial difficulties.

The questions that these two experiences raised were:

- a. Did we know enough about the unique difficulties faced by Aboriginal managers/governance bodies?
- b. Had we inadvertently “set up” some Aboriginal service delivery organisations to fail by not working with them to develop effective governance skills?

We expected effective service delivery without providing the necessary support and opportunities for skills training, ongoing assistance or mentoring programs (where necessary).

It seemed to me that we had not explored these issues enough as a community and that we needed to do so if we were serious about building the capacity and sustainability of Aboriginal organisations and their managers.

It also occurred to me that part of our journey towards reconciliation needed to include the search for those models of service delivery that saw both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal organisations working together towards a common outcome. Developing the trust necessary to help this happen would be part of the journey

The Centrecare Djooraminda experience has been a positive one. This has primarily been due to willingness from everyone involved to work towards one primary goal, the provision of a safe developmental and enjoyable experience for the children who come to stay at Djooraminda.

Centrecare's responsibility to discharge its contractual and moral obligations to the children, the Djooraminda staff and government departments has meant that the agency has worked along with Djooraminda to implement clear guidelines in relation to staff relations, supervision, financial expenditure, accommodation standards, role clarity, and therapeutic supports for staff and children.

Centrecare has had to commit additional resources to the ongoing development of Djooraminda. It has undertaken its own, in depth review of the service with the support and assistance of Glenda – all with an eye on providing the best possible out-of-home care experience for the children that are referred to us and to the development of a strong and viable organisation.

In the last two years a number of things have been learned:

- 1 Glenda, as an Aboriginal managing Aboriginal people faces additional challenges to those faced by our other managers. These include:
 - Issues of kinship and Aboriginality do not allow her much emotional and organisational space in which to discharge her managerial duties.
 - An apparent diminished respect by her Aboriginal staff for her responsibilities, duties and position.
 - Possible out of work repercussions for decisions/actions taken during work time.

Consequently, Glenda needs additional supports to help her discharge her duties.

- 2 Guidelines, policies and procedures (with a view to developing effective governance) need ongoing restatement by Glenda which in turn requires patience and a focus on the long-term goal, while being conscious of not compromising on short term significant issues (eg safety of children). The guidelines are also important as an additional support to implementing change.

- 3 The need for training of staff. The need to identify suitable Aboriginal carers is not helped by the lack of trained carers.
 - 4 Inadequate funding impacts on the ability to provide additional supports for all associated with Djooraminda.
 - 5 The need to create the opportunities and environment within which acceptance, ownership and respect can happen.
 - 6 There is a commitment to retaining the Djooraminda identity but also a respect for Djooraminda staff and their culture. There was no imposition by Centrecare but an encouragement to put in place those practices essential to good governance and quality service delivery.
 - 7 Leap of faith (without being foolish) in allowing the development to take place in an organic rather than mechanical/forced manner.
 - 8 We have had to manage the political environment that at times seems to be driven by ideology, rather than the achievement of small but important steps to the development of a sustainable and strong Aboriginal organisation that delivers services that make a difference in the children's lives.
 - 9 As white men and women we need to be careful that we don't turn our back on the real issues that face Aboriginal people by excusing our non involvement with Aboriginal people and organisations through the mantra of "Self Determination".
 - 10 There is a challenge here for all of us, both black and white, on how to work together with mutual respect to make a difference in the lives of people, especially our Aboriginal people.
 - 11 The Djooraminda experience is teaching us that there is a way of working together that enhances the capacity of the organisations concerned, the people involved in them and the clients they serve.
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Australia's Social Progress – a report card on practical reconciliation “Risky Business”

Des Rogers

Des Rogers is the Chair of the ATSIC Regional Council, Alice Springs. He is an elected representative to the Alice Springs Town Council, only the second Indigenous person to be appointed. He is a member of the Southern Regional Board and an Interim member of Desert Knowledge. Des agreed at very short notice to replace Alison Anderson who was unable to attend.

I would first of all like to acknowledge the traditional owners on whose ancestral land we now sit and stand, the Arrernte people, and thank Aunty Betty Pearce for the traditional welcome. I also acknowledge any elders that are here today.

I apologise for my Commissioner's inability to be here today. I understand she is attending to “sorry business” in the bush and while this is short notice for me, I welcome the opportunity to address you.

Introduction

The ACOSS Conference is an important event on the social policy calendar. I have thought seriously about what I could say today that would help inform your debate about social policy over this couple of days.

I'm sure if Commissioner Anderson were here she would focus on the national scene and provide you with the story of what is happening with practical reconciliation in a way you have all come to expect.

I could also use this opportunity to make a political statement, particularly of being from Afghan and Aboriginal descent.

But my learned friend before me, who is by far, much more intelligent and articulate than me, made a number of very good points in regards to the treatment of refugees and the first Australians in this country. So I won't.

I figure you can read such stories in the report card from ANTAR and others.

What you would not normally get is what I'm going to present today. For me, this is a report card on practical reconciliation at the grass roots level.

Story

All I have are my life experiences, and hopefully a story that's a little bit different from the norm at these kind of conferences. (But I'll let you be the judge of that_.

My intention this morning is to share with you my trials and tribulations of being in private enterprise. You might ask what that has to do with practical reconciliation – let's see.

I have titled my presentation "Risky Business". My hope is to enlighten and demonstrate a few of the "hiccups" that I have experienced that have made my private enterprise venture...interesting.

I will share with you a very personal perspective. I do this not to frighten you, or to seek your sympathy, or for my own ego, and certainly not to impress you.

I do it to highlight a successful approach by an Indigenous business that addresses employment and training, health and nutrition and demonstrates the need to be passionate, committed, thick skinned and above all else - PERSISTENT.

As I said earlier, I will mainly speak of my time in private enterprise, but to give substance to my presentation I will also give you a small peek into my past.

I was born in Alice Springs of Afghan and Aboriginal descent. My grandfather was born at Horse-Shoe Bend, which is about 150 km south of Alice Springs on the banks of the Finke River.

His father was an Afghan cameleer and his mother, my great great grandmother, was a traditional Aboriginal woman born at a place called "Ultja" which is also on the banks of the Finke River.

This is the oldest river in the world.

I'm accepted as a traditional owner for that area. I am of the Pertame Clan. We are also, us mob, referred to as Southern Aranda. I have seen my dances and heard my songs. I know some of my dreamings. I know my culture, my law, and I'm learning our language.

My current place of residence is in Alice Springs. But whenever I can, I go home to my extended family at the community of Wallace Rockhole, which is 120 km west of Alice Springs.

There, I sit with my 98-year-old grandmother, who only speaks our language. She tells me of her life: the trauma, the hardship, and of surviving in a time of what could only be described as pure poverty and despair.

These are my words, not hers. She truly believes that she has had a good life. Nothing extraordinary, or unusual. She has never uttered a harsh word about anyone. Although one time I did see her once ever so slightly, squint her eyes, push her thin lips together and shrug her skinny shoulders. An act of disapproval.

I wish I had her empathy.

But I digress.

As I said before, I was born in Alice Springs but I went to school “down south”. I would only come home at school holiday time and on leaving school at fifteen, I travelled around Australia doing all sorts of labouring jobs.

I worked at a freezer storage in Woolangabba, abattoirs, construction sites and loaded bales of hay for one cent a bale in Western Australia.

Like most Indigenous kids of my era, or maybe I should say, the kids with whom I hung around, I got into all sorts of trouble with the police.

As a young fella I got into all sorts of petty trouble that added up over the years. I went back to Alice Springs when I was nineteen and got into even more trouble with the law. I ended up going to prison.

However, I soon became famous. I was, and I am, the only person to ever escape from the Alice Springs jail. But that’s another story, for another time.

I was sent to South Australia and spent four and a half years in prison. I had plenty of time to think, and I made a vow to never break the law or go back to prison again.

I’m pleased to say that I have been a free man, in one sense, for the last 30 years.

After being released I went back to Alice Springs and scored one of the better jobs I’ve ever had - a garbo with the Alice Springs Town Council.

It’s ironic prison, garbo, and currently an elected representative of my own people – as an ATSIC Councillor - and as an elected representative of all people here in Alice – as a local Alderman!

I continued as a garbo for the next three years.

I then believe I was in the right place, at the right time, and was offered, and accepted, a job as a truck driver for a unit of the Conservation Commission, the Bushfires Council of the Northern Territory. I steadily rose through the ranks to become Regional Manager for the Southern Region of the NT. This was due mainly to natural attrition, resignations, retirement and death, rather than my ability as a manager. The next career move for me was to go to Darwin.

However, I didn’t want to leave my people and my country, and certainly not my large extended family. And with respect to the public servants in the room, I also realised that I didn’t want to be a public servant for the next 20 years.

I think at some stage in people’s lives they think of owning and running a small business. Being independent, being their own boss and having no money problems. I was no different. This is what I wanted. How hard could it be?

I didn’t want to sell art, make music sticks, or paint. I wanted to be different. I wanted a main stream business. But above all else, I wanted to help my people. I wanted to offer employment, training and have an impact in improving their wellbeing.

So we looked around at a number of small enterprises that would suit a family.

We found a small, somewhat run-down supermarket, or as I preferred to call it a large corner store. With my wife’s retail background and my handyman skills we

thought this enterprise had great potential. We set about preparing a business plan. A good business plan is a critical component in analysing a business's Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats. It became evident in the preparation of our business plan that there was a number of drawbacks with this store. Being off the main road, in a suburb that would not increase in size because of the topography and having a major chain store within a kilometre of this small shopping centre were factors that would inhibit the store's growth.

We identified ways of increasing trade through a complete shop fit out, friendly staff and more product lines, but realised that another avenue, to increase our turn over would have to be found. When addressing in our business plan the "Opportunities", I thought of the many years I'd spent in the bush and the Aboriginal community stores that I'd visited throughout Central Australia. I'd seen the appalling management, exorbitant prices and the poor quality of fruit and vegetables. I identified a business "opportunity", I knew what a potato and a carrot was - easy stuff.

Back then there was only one merchant of fruit and vegetables in Alice Springs. I canvassed their customers in town and out bush. There seemed to be a considerable amount of dissatisfaction about their service and quality. We visited the Adelaide and Melbourne wholesale fruit and vegetable markets. We discussed supply and prices with different agents. The "other" local fruit and vegetable wholesaler heard of our intent.

He said to me: "Des, Des there's no room in this town for two fruit and veg. suppliers". I told him that I wasn't leaving town. It gives me great pleasure to now say, after many years, that this business is no longer operating.

I applied to ATSIC for a business funding scheme loan and after much delay it was finally approved.

So after 17 years I left the safety and security of the public service and we plunged into private enterprise.

On the 15th of April 1994 we became independent, we became our own boss. Never more would we have any money problems.

As part of our business plan we had devised a strategy and a budget to redevelop the store and establish a consistent wholesale fruit and vegetable customer base. We had identified in the early stages our own personal strengths and weaknesses, and our roles, although overlapping, were defined.

Our primary focus was the retail store. I set about building new counters and shelving. My wife handled the sales and customer service.

I canvassed customers for the fruit and vegetable part of the business. Our first bush customer was Ininti Store at Mutijulu, or Ayers Rock, or Uluru, or Yulara. I negotiated with Aboriginal hostels and eventually gained their business as our first town customer. I'm pleased to say that these two customers are still with us today.

When I first went into business I was not only enthusiastic and committed, but extremely naive. I thought all of these Aboriginal people and organisations would run to support us. How wrong I was.

The hardest people to convince that you can supply a good product, a good service, and still be competitive, are our own people. Even today, I'm still scrutinised far more closely by some Indigenous organisations than, let's say, a normal supplier. We are far too suspicious of our own. The tall poppy syndrome is now firmly entrenched in Aboriginal culture.

After two years, our five-year plan for the store had been completed.

It was during this period that I became involved with the health and nutrition unit within the Territory Health Service. I actively participated as a member of the steering committee in developing the Health and Nutrition Policy for Aboriginal Communities, the Store Book and the Store Video. The fruit and vegetable business had grown to the stage that we were bursting at the seams.

Our hard work, seven days a week, fourteen hours a day had paid off. We didn't have vast amounts of money, or time to sit back and relax, but we were still able to pay the bills and live in a nice house.

A new plan and a new strategy was now required. Decisions had to be made about whether we wanted to remain as we were, or venture outside our comfort zone. To grow or not to grow was the question!

I decided to get serious. The store had reached its potential. The real opportunity lay in expanding the fruit and vegetable business. We know our consumers. We know they have limited refrigeration. We know they have limited cooking facilities. We know they will live from meal to meal. We know they are reluctant to try unfamiliar produce.

We invented such things as the Vegie Pack - Broccoli, Cauliflower and Brussel Sprouts and the salad pack which is normally, ½ a lettuce, ½ a cucumber, ½ a capsicum and a whole onion. Basically we pre-pack anything and everything, in any configuration for community stores. Today, almost all of our produce to remote communities is pre-packed and on a busy week we distribute around 10,000 packs.

We developed these packs because of the reasons I outlined before, but most importantly this method of presentation presents to the consumer a cheaper alternative to buying whole produce, brings products together for cooking and limits wastage.

Back to the question of to grow, or not to grow?

We advertised the store for sale, and relocated the fruit and veg. to another location - now was the time to get serious.

Through the economies of scale it would be strategically a good move to purchase a business in the Adelaide Produce Markets. Take out the middle man.

I had our accountants look at the viability of such a purchase from a particular wholesale supplier in the Adelaide Markets. They gave a glowing report and we once again prepared a business plan for another ATSIC business funding scheme loan. ATSIC approved the loan and the purchase was completed. The business in Adelaide had a \$5.2 million turnover, eight trucks and eighteen employees.

Due to business commitments in Alice Springs and the lack of interest in the sale of the store I was unable to go to Adelaide to manage that enterprise. The previous

Adelaide owner recommended a current employee that he believed had the potential to run this business. I placed that person in charge on a contract basis.

My wife continued managing the store while I concentrated on expanding Red Centre Produce. Red Centre Produce had now grown significantly and was supplying a large number of community stores, the mining industry, pastoral properties and general food outlets in town. However, we were having a number of complaints about the poor quality of fruit and vegetables from community stores. No one was transporting goods to the bush under refrigeration in those days. I had identified another "opportunity".

Once again, through the economies of scale and the synergies of our business interests we had an opportunity to enhance our operation.

So I purchased a bogie drive flat-top truck and had a purpose built refrigeration unit constructed.

We delivered to communities not only our fruit and vegetables but anything and everything that was required by the community store. I travelled far and wide and gained business in places such as Billuluna, Balgo and Yagga Yagga in Western Australia. We increased our market share in all areas.

However the Adelaide enterprise was slipping. After 12 months an injection of \$100,000 was required to sustain that enterprise. \$40,000 was also required to terminate the manager.

There is a saying that bad things happen in threes. Well that's a myth in my life. They just *keep* happening.

Late one night driving to Nyrripi, a steering arm on the truck broke and the truck was written off. I fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on who you talk to survived. The truck was fully insured so as there was no driver error, a replacement was quickly found and the freight was once more back in business and it continued to grow.

Back in Adelaide we appointed another manager who came from within the Adelaide market and appeared to have the right credentials. We set up a computer system where all accounts payable and receivable were now collated by the Alice Springs office. However, a lot of transactions in the fruit and vegetable business are done on a cash only basis.

Twelve months later we sold the Alice Springs store which then allowed my wife to manage the fruit and vegetable and freight businesses. The Adelaide enterprise had once again been suffering from poor management. I shifted to Adelaide with the intention of staying for twelve months. After only a short period of time it became quite evident that the enterprise was in a dire situation and plan of rescue needed to occur immediately. With the assistance of a business agent we developed a rescue plan, which with hard work and commitment by all involved, the business would become viable in about twelve months.

I had been in Adelaide for four months and I was not a happy man. I was away from my family and my country and I had to make a very difficult decision.

The enterprise could be rescued. But what then? A new manager? More problems? More hiccups?

I took a couple of days off and drove back to Alice Springs. I took my time. I camped in the scrub and visited the Aboriginal community of Indulkna.

I missed the bush and the black faces in Adelaide.

I came to a decision to put the business into what's called Voluntary Administration. I returned to Adelaide to implement the process. I won't go into all the details of what Voluntary Administration is, but basically it means a qualified business analyst takes over the day to day operation of your business. They evaluate the worth of the business and it is either sold as a going concern, or wound up and creditors paid whatever can be generated.

I did not realise it at the time, but due to the structure of the company, Red Centre Produce also fell under the control of the administrator. I estimate that I lost over \$650,000 in two years. I lost my home, my car and eventually my marriage. But I still have my two daughters, and if I do say so myself, the best looking grand-daughter in the universe.

ATSIC and their business agents were fully aware that the success of Red Centre Produce was due to good sound business practice and that the failure of the Adelaide arm was not the result of bad management on our part.

Red Centre Produce had evolved into a very viable enterprise, but was now the prime asset of the Administrator. If I wanted to stay in private enterprise I would have to buy it back.

So the business that we started from nothing was now worth a considerable amount of money. I applied for a loan to buy back Red Centre Produce. This was approved. ATSIC, as the first mortgagee, re-couped all of its money from the Administrator. I, as the now sole owner, received another debt! I set about restructuring our core business, Red Centre Produce. I sold the freight entity and trained my daughter into the management role.

I was then elected to my current, full-time position as Chair of the ATSIC Regional Council. Almost four years on and I'm pleased to say that we survived this minor hiccup and Red Centre Produce is the largest wholesale fruit and vegetable supplier in Central Australia.

I take no credit for this fact. My oldest daughter has been managing Red Centre Produce for the last two years and has been far more successful in private enterprise than I ever was.

I said in my introduction that Red Centre Produce had a focus of improving the health and nutrition and the employment of Indigenous people. I believe that we have been innovative in our packaging and deliver produce that is affordable, fresh and healthy and introduces consumers to a wide range of variety. We have been pro-active in facilitating horticulture on communities such as Wallace Rockhole, where this year they grew 2,500 cabbages, silver-beet and snow-peas. At Amounguna Community they grew tomatoes, capsicums and 2,000kg of rockmelons.

Over the last two years we have, as a top-up to Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), assisted with the employment of another sixteen trainees in horticulture. In the area of employment and training I'm also proud to

say that we have directly employed almost one hundred and fifty Indigenous people over the years in Red Centre Produce, without the assistance of CDEP.

Some have stayed for a long time, some for a short time. Some have gone for smoko and not come back. But maybe that's more of a reflection on my management style than anything else. I don't know.

Everyone knows that anyone who is in private enterprise, becomes an instant millionaire. Relatives and friends you never knew you had will come from all over. They will give you stories of hardship, tragedy and then, like magic, will instantly disappear from this world once you hand over any money. If you refuse, they will call you names and will want to fight you. I use the analogy of people coming into the shop. They buy a box of matches and give you a twenty dollar note. You open the till and they see it full of money. I'm sure that some of these people think that at closing time you simply fill your pockets with the money out of the till. They fail to realise that everything they see is at a cost to you. Wages, power, security, insurance and superannuation are but a few of the other hidden costs.

Why do I think this might be a good practical example of reconciliation?

As a businessman, I could have focused solely on making money. As an Aboriginal man, I figure I can make a difference to the lives of our people through doing good business. White fellas also benefit from my success. My successes are not just my successes, they belong to all of us.

So in closing ladies and gentlemen, I would like to highlight this achievement that we, as a small Indigenous family business, celebrated this year.

Red Centre Produce 1994 to 2004, 10 years, a decade of operation.

A phenomenon? Maybe

A successful example of practical reconciliation? You bet

Risky Business? Definitely.

Indigenous centres in the policy margins: the CDEP scheme over 30 years

Dr Will Sanders

In the early 1980s Will Sanders completed a PhD on the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the Australian Social Security system, including the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme as an alternative to the payment of unemployment payments in remote Aboriginal communities. He is currently a Fellow at the Australian National University's Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research in Canberra and a member of the Social Security Breaching Review Taskforce

Introduction

Centres and margins are all about perspective, both in place and time. From particular places and times, certain phenomena can look quite marginal, while from others they can look quite central. In this paper I want to argue that thirty years ago the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme grew out of some rather marginal policy concerns within the Australian social security system about the inclusion of Aboriginal people in unemployment payments. Those concerns were, at the time, unable to be fully accommodated within the social security system and so the CDEP scheme was established within the Commonwealth Aboriginal or Indigenous affairs portfolio. While CDEP began as a somewhat marginal concern within the Indigenous affairs portfolio too, over time it became the largest single program in that portfolio and a policy centre in its own right. Recently, with the demise of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the 'mainstreaming' of its programs, the CDEP scheme has been transferred to the Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio within the Commonwealth government. So I ask in the later pages of this paper, will this new program location and time in Indigenous affairs lead to a new marginalisation of the CDEP scheme? My answer to that question is possibly, but not inevitably. Indeed I will conclude with a challenge for the Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio; to allow the CDEP scheme to continue as a policy centre in its own right.

The origins of CDEP in the social security margins

Let us return to the mid 1970s. The Whitlam Commonwealth government has just come and gone and the Fraser Commonwealth government is trying to put its stamp on Australian Indigenous affairs. One of the issues to emerge from the Whitlam years is the possible eligibility of Indigenous people in remote areas for unemployment benefits within the social security system. Until now, the social security system has argued that Aboriginal applicants from remote areas do not qualify for unemployment benefits because they do not have a 'work history', and so are not so much unemployed as simply outside the workforce, both geographically

and categorically. But some of these Aboriginal people in remote areas do have a work history, either in the pastoral industry or on government or mission settlements, albeit sometimes at under award wages. And the Whitlam government has recently promulgated a policy guideline which states that Aboriginal people in remote communities do not have to move in order to demonstrate that they are available and willing to undertake suitable paid work. This last, incidentally, along with being unemployed, is the actual eligibility criteria for unemployment benefits. Having a work history at either award or under award rates of pay is only material to eligibility by interpretation and accumulated past practice. Social security administrators are slowly realising that they can not keep Indigenous applicants from remote areas off unemployment benefits for much longer, without being accused of either discrimination or flouting their own rules. Indigenous people in remote areas are learning that some among them are being successful in gaining access to unemployment benefits and the numbers of Indigenous applicants from these areas are slowly increasing. There is even talk of a possible epidemic in which the majority of the working-age Aboriginal population in remote communities will end up on unemployment payments (Sanders 1985).

There is also, of course, much debate in the Indigenous affairs policy community about these developments, how significant they are and what can be done about them. This is reflected in a meeting between the Commonwealth ministers for Aboriginal Affairs, Social Security and Employment and Industrial Relations in March 1976, the outcome of which is to establish an Interdepartmental Working Party on Aboriginal Employment. Term of reference 4 for this working party is:

To consider the impact of the payment of unemployment benefits to Aboriginals living as communities; the extent to which payment of these benefits has created unsatisfactory social problems within those communities; and to recommend ways by which these situations can be remedied, including recommendations as to any necessary changes (IWP on Aboriginal Employment 1976: v).

The Working Party, in its May 1976 report, notes the 'frequent expressions of disquiet from anthropologists, sociologists, and welfare workers.... about the economic and cultural problems' caused by unemployment benefit payments and lists a number of claimed 'adverse effects'. However, it cautions that benefit payments are only a 'contributing factor' to these effects and that 'other factors include the erosion of Aboriginal culture caused by the inroads of western society' (IWP on Aboriginal Employment 1976: 29-30). The Working Party goes on to note that the Department of Social Security:

is in a situation where it cannot refuse unemployment benefit to people who are qualified to receive it but when these people are Aboriginals, residing as communities in remote areas and for whom significant work may never become available, the payment of unemployment benefit to them represents welfare of the worst kind – a handout which increases their dependency on others and undermines the application of the Government's policy of self-management (IWP on Aboriginal Employment 1976: 31).

The Working Party's 'considered opinion' in May 1976 is that the 'only real long-term solution' is the 'creation of useful employment against which a realistic application of the "work test" can be applied to Aboriginal applicants for unemployment benefit' (IWP on Aboriginal Employment 1976: 31). In particular it notes one 'suggestion' that unemployment benefits, rather than being paid to individual beneficiaries, be paid to community councils 'to fund work projects'. However, the Working Party cites 'two major drawbacks' of this 'kind of arrangement': that the Department of Social Security would be accused of discrimination unless the individual concerned gave their approval and, in being employed on such projects, the individual concerned would no longer be eligible for unemployment benefits anyway (IWP on Aboriginal Employment 1976: 31-2).

Here, in the Working Party's report we can see the origins of the CDEP scheme in the margins of the social security system. The Department of Social Security acknowledged some of the issues about potentially wide-spread eligibility for unemployment benefits among Indigenous people in remote areas, but it could not see its way clear to paying such people to work for unemployment benefits. So a year later, in May 1977, when CDEP emerged it was not part of the social security system, but rather was administered by the Commonwealth Indigenous affairs portfolio, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) as it then was. The link with the social security system was notional but still clear, as revealed in the new program's objectives and guidelines. The first objective of CDEP was to 'provide employment opportunities... at a cost approximating unemployment benefits', 'thereby reducing the need for unemployment benefit for unemployed Aboriginals within the community'. While among the new program's guidelines was the statement that each community would be:

encouraged to establish its own method of remuneration for its members who participated in the project provided that:

- (a) all unemployed community members, eligible to apply for unemployment benefits will be given the opportunity to participate;
- (b) each participating community member, provided he contributes the required minimum hours or satisfies other minimum criteria determined by the community, will be guaranteed a minimum income approximating his normal unemployment benefit entitlement (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 26 May 1977: 1922).

CDEP in the Indigenous affairs portfolio: from the margins to the centre

These objectives and guidelines for the CDEP scheme which linked it with the social security system, caused problems from the outset within the Indigenous affairs portfolio. How could all employed community members be given the opportunity to participate when the DAA did not have an open-ended budget like the social security system? How could communities be encouraged to develop their own method of remuneration for participating members, while at the same time only being funded to a level approximating unemployment payments and also guaranteeing participants a minimum income approximating normal unemploy-

ment benefit entitlement so long as they satisfied some minimum criteria? Indeed the very first day that CDEP operated at Barunga in the Northern Territory, almost twice as many people turned up as there were funded positions. And when most of these people kept turning up over the next year, Barunga ran out of funds for CDEP a couple of months before the end of the financial year. At this point the question arose as to whether these CDEP workers were eligible for unemployment benefits for the rest of the financial year.

These sorts of teething problems kept the CDEP scheme fairly marginal within the Indigenous affairs portfolio during the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, over time many of problems were gradually addressed (Sanders 1988). CDEP would not try to offer employment to all the unemployed in a community, but rather would offer a set number of positions. Pay rates were to reflect pro-rata minimum awards, meaning the participants would only be expected to work perhaps 15 to 18 hours per week. Additional support and on-cost funding was agreed to, at first 10 per cent, then 20, then 40 per cent of the unemployment benefit equivalent, in order that work projects could be supported and that higher wages could be paid to some who took on more responsibility or worked longer hours. CDEP organisations were allowed to use other funds, earned perhaps through work activities or service contracts, to supplement the work opportunities and incomes of participants, without those participants losing eligibility for CDEP in the same way as they would within the social security system.

By the mid 1980s, with many of these issues being addressed, CDEP was becoming somewhat less marginal and troublesome within the Indigenous affairs portfolio. Indeed in the Hawke Government's Aboriginal Employment Development Policy of 1986, CDEP became a centrepiece of Indigenous affairs portfolio action. The numbers in the program, which had thus far been restricted to just a couple of thousand participants and less than twenty communities, were allowed to expand quite dramatically. Also the scheme was allowed to expand beyond remote areas into more rural and urban areas all over Australia. In monetary terms, CDEP grew from being about 3 or 4 per cent of the Indigenous affairs portfolio budget in 1980 to being a third of that budget in 1990. Around that time it also passed the 20,000 participants mark and operated in roughly 180 communities (see table and Sanders 1993a).

CDEP was, by 1990, a well established policy centre within the Commonwealth Indigenous affairs portfolio. This is not to say that the scheme did not still have issues which caused it problems (Altman and Sanders 1991), but rather that enough of these issues had been worked through to a point where an established *modus operandi* had been developed which was acceptable to a wide range of stakeholders. Indigenous community-based organisations were keen on CDEP, as it gave them a greater degree of funding security and flexibility in activities undertaken than many other programs. Individual participants liked CDEP because it got them out of the social security system, with its rather exacting bureaucratic requirements, into a less demanding administrative environment which also offered some work and additional income opportunities. Governments liked it because it did something for Indigenous employment at a modest cost and kept Indigenous unemployment

figures down. And government agencies, like the Department of Social Security, had worked out ways of relating to the program which were not inconsistent with their own programs and responsibilities.

The primary stewardship of the CDEP scheme during the 1990s and early 2000s fell to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the Hawke government's statutory creation of both an executive and representative body in Indigenous affairs. CDEP continued to grow significantly during this period, reaching 30,000 participants in 1996 around the time of the fall of the Keating Labor government, and then growing to 35,000 participants under the Howard Coalition government over the next few years (see table). On balance, and on other measures as well as growth, I would argue that ATSIC was very successful in its stewardship of CDEP in the face of some significant threats.

In the mid 1990s, CDEP faced an inquiry from the Race Discrimination Commissioner over allegations of discrimination against CDEP participants in comparison to social security payments (Race Discrimination Commissioner 1997, Sanders 1997). While not finding such discrimination in her 1997 report, the Commissioner did identify a 'lack of consistency in the treatment of CDEP participants by Commonwealth Departments and Agencies', including the Department of Social Security and ATSIC (Race Discrimination Commissioner 1997: 46). Soon thereafter these, latter two organisations devised a new way of treating CDEP participants, which gave them access to 'add-on' social security entitlements like rent allowance and concession cards.

CDEP also in 1997 faced an Independent Review which wanted to push it more towards employment outcomes and to remove any sense of CDEP as just an alternative form of social security payment (Spicer 1997). ATSIC defended CDEP over the next few years as not just about employment outcomes, but also about community development and social support for people and communities who were in some instances not greatly attached to or accessible to the mainstream labour market. ATSIC resisted the idea of dividing the CDEP scheme in two, either geographically or between employment and community development. What was good about CDEP, ATSIC argued, was its devolved regional nature and being able to cater flexibly in one program for a diversity of Indigenous circumstances. Hence in its 2000-2001 Annual Report ATSIC wrote:

CDEP is very significant in Indigenous Australia and the Commonwealth's most extensive Indigenous program. It operates in very diverse social, cultural and economic environments and provides 25 per cent of Indigenous employment. It is a base for training and for enterprise development and may also contribute labour, skills and support to other government-funded activities within Indigenous communities. It is enmeshed with other ATSIC outputs and has always had an impact beyond the income and employment status of individuals.

While CDEP increasingly promotes the transition to mainstream employment, 65 per cent of CDEPs operate in remote Australia where labour market

opportunities and Job Network coverage are limited and access to training providers and facilities is problematic (ATSIC 2001: 157)

In its next two annual reports, reflecting this enmeshing, ATSIC moved towards reporting CDEP across its 'outcome groups', rather than solely in the economic development group. It also identified CDEP outputs under 'promotion of cultural activity' and 'improvement to social and physical well-being'. These may seem minor developments in annual reporting formats, but they were symptomatic of a real and sustained effort within ATSIC to protect CDEP from being pushed into a narrow focus on economic development and mainstream labour market outcomes. CDEP was not only ATSIC's largest program, it was also its most general, diverse and flexible. CDEP had become a major policy centre within ATSIC and the Indigenous affairs portfolio.

CDEP in the Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio: where to now?

With the 'new mainstreaming' of Australian Indigenous affairs policy, as my colleague Jon Altman (2004) has called it, ATSIC is in the process of being abolished and its programs have already been transferred elsewhere. The CDEP scheme was transferred to the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations on July 1, 2004 and so a new era for CDEP is now just beginning. I will boldly predict that CDEP will not sit as comfortably and centrally in the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) as it did in ATSIC. This is partly, and inevitably, because DEWR is a much larger organisation with general as well as Indigenous-specific policy concerns. But it is also because DEWR has a strong employment and labour market focus and could lose patience and interest in the community development and income support aspects of CDEP.

I am not against mainstreaming of Indigenous-specific programs per se. Indeed in the past I have pointed to some of the benefits of mainstreaming and defended it in particular policy areas, like health (Sanders 1993b, Anderson and Sanders 1996). However I do believe that CDEP will be a hard Indigenous-specific program to mainstream successfully, because of its diverse objectives. CDEP could have been mainstreamed into the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (DFACS), as easily as into DEWR, and this too would have had its problems. Neither DFACS nor DEWR, nor for that matter any other general government agency, covers as diverse a range of objectives as CDEP currently does. So the temptation for any such agency may be to try and mould CDEP into something narrower which fits established departmental ideas and practices. But that would be unfortunate, for it is precisely CDEP's multiplicity of objectives which is its strength. The challenge for DEWR is to allow CDEP to be its own policy centre with diverse, multiple objectives and flexible, devolved implementation, rather than trying to mould CDEP into DEWR's established image. CDEP deserves to be a policy centre in its own right, rather than once again becoming some organisation's marginal concern.

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Table: CDEP participant numbers and expenditure, 1976-2003.

	No. of Communities	No. of participants	\$m CDEP Expenditure	Expend as proportion DAA/ATSIC total exp.
1976/77	1	100	0.1	0.001
1977/78	10	500	2.0	0.016
1978/79	12	800	2.9	0.021
1979/80	17	700	3.8	0.027
1980/81	18	1,300	6.9	0.043
1981/82	18	1,300	7.0	0.041
1982/83	18	1,300	7.4	0.037
1983/84	32	1,700	14.2	0.058
1984/85	33	2,900	23.5	0.083
1985/86	38	4,000	27.2	0.092
1986/87	63	6,000	39.5	0.12
1987/88	92	7,600	65.5	0.17
1988/89	130	10,800	98.8	0.22
1989/90	166	13,800	133.2	0.25
1990/91	168	18,100	193.1	0.34
1991/92	185	20,100	204.5	0.32
1992/93	186	19,900	234.4	0.28
1993/94	222	24,100	251.9	0.27
1994/95	252	27,000	278.3	0.29
1995/96	274	28,400	310.5	0.31
1996/97	268	30,100	327.6	0.34
1997/98*	254	30,300	374.2	0.38
1998/99	265	31,900	380.1	0.37
1999/2000	262	30,600	390.0	0.37
2000/01	270	32,600	437.0	0.38
2001/02	270	34,200	445.0	0.39
2002/03	272	35,200	484.4	0.36

* CDEPs in Torres Strait no longer included as Torres Strait Regional Authority no longer included in ATSIC budget and reporting framework.

Juvenile injustice in the Northern Territory- a national disgrace

Sara

Sara has recently become the Manager of the Alice Springs Youth Accommodation and Support Services. She has been with ASYASS since 1998 and was formerly the Youth Services Coordinator with responsibility for projects around the JPET program, SAAP, Emergency Relief and Sexual Health. She has had a broad range of experience in human rights and social justice issues and is currently doing a Bachelor of Laws through Charles Darwin University.

It has long been acknowledged that children and young people have special and different needs to those of adults. Children and young people undergo developmental processes physically, psychologically and emotionally on their journey to adulthood. It is widely recognised that during this developmental phase, individuals, families, communities and society in general have an opportunity, and indeed a responsibility, to engage with young people in ways that will promote and enhance their prospects of emerging into adulthood as happy, confident and respected individuals who are valued by their communities.

This understanding of the special and evolving needs of children and young people has developed into a philosophy of providing appropriate care and support that underpins service delivery to this important part of our population and is evident in most of our societal systems and institutions.

Our health system engages specialist physicians – paediatricians – to provide appropriate care and treatment to children and young people. Our hospitals have paediatric wards that are separate and distinct from adult wards. Our education system provides education on levels that are appropriate to age and developmental stages. Every State and Territory Government has a mandate to ensure for the safety and adequate care of children and young people living within their jurisdiction. Departments such as Family and Children’s Services in the Northern Territory, Family and Youth Services in South Australia and the Department of Community Services in New South Wales have been established to undertake this role.

Another major societal institution in this country, overseeing law and order, is the justice system. A large body of research (both national and international) has been undertaken in relation to the involvement of children and young people with the justice system. Some of the key findings from this research are as follows;

- Many young people will engage in some sort of offending behaviour at some stage of their lives. These offences are generally of a trivial nature and are usually property offences (eg. shoplifting or small scale vandalism – graffiti). If this behaviour remains undetected and no intervention takes place, the

young person either does not reoffend or may engage in this type of behaviour on one other occasion and then desist. It may surprise some people to learn that, if left to their own devices, the majority of young people will simply 'grow out' of this type of behaviour¹⁴.

- Public shaming does not work. Criminologist Katherine Williams cites guilt and shame as major contributing factors to a young person's potential to reoffend. Best results for young people involved in the criminal justice system are achieved through diversion from the public court system to appropriate programs that address causal factors to offending behaviour – eg. care and protection needs and boredom. When it is deemed necessary to bring a young person before the court, the matter should be heard in a specialised, informal children's court that is closed to the general public. This reduces the potential for stigmatisation, shaming and labelling processes that negatively impact on a young person's ability to make positive change¹⁵.
- Young people that are sentenced to a period of detention are seven times more likely to reoffend than those diverted into appropriate programs and offered intensive support from a juvenile justice worker¹⁶.
- Young people who come into contact with adult offenders within the criminal justice system are more likely to be traumatised by their experience – another contributing factor to reoffending.

In recognition of special needs and developmental processes, and in line with other societal systems in this country, most of Australia has developed juvenile justice systems that work towards meeting not only our moral obligations in terms of service provision to young people, but also national and international obligations as set down by:

- the Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators
- the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules)
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and
- the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty.

Recommendations in relation to the treatment of young people involved in the Criminal Justice System were also made in the reports from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody¹⁷.

As previously mentioned, most of Australia has established juvenile justice systems that strive to meet our obligations to upholding the rights of young people in terms of delivering justice. The Northern Territory has not – we are sadly out of step with

¹⁴ Cunneen and White (1995) Juvenile Justice: An Australian Perspective

¹⁵ Williams, K (1995) Textbook on Criminology

¹⁶ Cunneen and White (1995)

¹⁷ Volume 4 Final Report – Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

the rest of Australia. Juvenile justice is not a new concept, indeed the first children's court was established in South Australia in 1895, however the Northern Territory continues to hold on to its archaic practices and fails to acknowledge the special needs and rights of young people in the area of justice.

Are young people in the Northern Territory less deserving of the same rights, standards and levels of care than their counterparts in other parts of the country? I would argue, that due to the historical and ongoing contexts of land dispossession, removal from families, persecution, social disadvantage and racial discrimination, needs of young Indigenous people in the Northern Territory are possibly more complex than those of young people in other places. One would think that this would necessitate a more comprehensive level of support and service delivery – yet:

- The Northern Territory remains the only jurisdiction in Australia that has not established a system of justice for young people that is separate and distinct from the adult criminal justice system.
- There is no separate department administering justice and therefore no specialist juvenile justice workers. Juvenile justice departments in other jurisdictions utilize a different approach in working with young people as compared to working with adults within the system. For example, in Victoria juvenile justice comes under the health department in recognition of the fact that many of the causal factors to offending behaviour are linked to social and care and protection needs.
- When a child or young person is required to attend court in Alice Springs, they do so in a formal, adult and open court. If a young person is in custody at the time the matter is heard they are placed (along with adult detainees) in the back row of the court room. Often they wait for hours before their matter is called. I have known young people to sit through the gruesome details of murders and sexual assaults before their matter is heard. This is in no way appropriate or acceptable.
- There is no specialised judiciary and no court support schemes for young people. Youth services in Alice Springs provide court support where possible, however no service has received funding to do so and it occurs on an ad-hoc basis depending on work load. I have often discovered young people sitting unaccompanied in the court house waiting for their matter to be heard. On speaking to them I discover that they are generally quite frightened and have no idea of the process or the potential outcome.
- If a young person is sentenced to a period of detention, they are usually transported to the Don Dale Detention Centre in Darwin. This is of concern for a number of reasons. Primarily, young people are distanced by 1500km from family, culture and support networks making continued connection an impossibility. This is clearly a breach of our human rights obligations. Article 9.3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

States parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact

with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests.

There are similar provisions within the Beijing Rules¹⁸ and the Rules for Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty¹⁹.

- A further breach is evident in the manner in which young people are transported to the detention centre – in handcuffs on commercial flights. All of the previously mentioned rules and standards have very clear provisions dealing with a young person's right to privacy. This practice contravenes these.
- Of further concern is the lack of qualified youth workers within juvenile detention centres. During the coronial inquest into the death of a young man at Don Dale Detention Centre, the Superintendent was asked about the level of expertise among youth workers at the Centre. His response was that he preferred to employ staff from the university of life. At that point in time, his team of youth workers included people who had been employed as a hair-dresser, a butcher and a shop keeper prior to commencing work at the detention centre²⁰.
- Many of the young people our service works with have been released from juvenile detention without any plans made for follow up or ongoing case management. There have been no positive changes made to the circumstances or environment to which they are returning which does little to address the potential for reoffending and continued involvement with the criminal justice system.
- In addition to Don Dale Detention Centre in Darwin, there is a Juvenile Holding Centre in Alice Springs. This is contained within a section of the old Juvenile Detention Centre – Giles House. This facility was closed over a decade ago – in part due to being declared unsafe following an inspection. The Juvenile Holding Centre contains a number of cells, a slab of bitumen with a basketball ring, an office, a small TV room and a make-shift kitchen/staff room. When I last visited the facility, all meals were being cooked on a barbeque. There are no outdoor facilities and young people are not permitted to venture outside. Recreational activities consist of some fairly violent video games. Young people are frequently the only detainee and are routinely strip searched around visits. A young woman I visited decided against further visits from family or support workers as she chose not to undergo the degradation of being strip searched. According to the correctional services page on the Northern Territory Government website, "It is designed as a short-term holding/remand centre for up to four days". I was recently informed by the Minister for Justice that the Holding Centre is now being used to detain young people for periods of three to four weeks. Again we are clearly breaching our human rights obligations – it is inhu-

¹⁸ Article 26.5 United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice

¹⁹ Article 30 United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty

²⁰ Coroner's Report – Wallace, SM, 2001

mane to hold a young person in what is effectively isolation with no access to fresh air or outdoor activities for any period of time. It is damaging to a young persons physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. The United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty state;

Every juvenile should have the right to a suitable amount of time for daily free exercise, in the open air whenever weather permits, during which time appropriate recreational and physical training should normally be provided²¹.

[The Australasian standards refer to this provision²²]

- As previously mentioned, the right to privacy for a young person involved with the criminal justice system is enshrined within domestic and international standards. The Beijing Rules state:

The juvenile's right to privacy shall be respected at all stages in order to avoid harm being caused to her or him by undue publicity or by the process of labelling. In principle, no information that may lead to the identification of a juvenile offender shall be published²³.

In the Northern Territory there is no legislated suppression of identifying information relating to a child or young person involved with the criminal justice system. Northern Territory newspapers routinely publish names and ages of young people involved in court matters.

- While our police service continues to grow, there are no juvenile liaison officers in Central Australia. There is a juvenile task force to deal with the apprehension and arrest of alleged offenders, however what is needed is a community development approach to crime prevention rather than increased targeting and net-widening methodologies. In 1997 the Australian Law Reform Commission and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission published a report entitled 'Seen and Heard: priority for children in the legal process'. This report recognised that:

Involvement in the juvenile system can have serious social and developmental consequences for children, particularly those who have repeated contact. These consequences can include disrupted education, reduced employment opportunities and family dislocation. There are particular problems in juvenile justice processes for Indigenous young people and those living in rural and remote areas. In addition, relations between police and young people around Australia are generally poor.

With this in mind the report makes a number of recommendations around police interactions with young people, one being:

Each police department should ensure that there is at least one officer trained in children's issues in each patrol. Each major station should

²¹ Article 47 United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty

²² Standard 4.5 - Standards for Juvenile Custodial Facilities – Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators

²³ Article 8.1 United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice

have a specialised youth officer who deals only with matters involving young people. Training for youth officers should include information on

- the rights of young people
 - young people's recreational use of public space
 - the skills needed to deal effectively and fairly with young people
 - the specific laws, rules and policies for the policing of young people
 - desired outcomes in the policing of young people
 - the role of the other government agencies in the juvenile justice system
 - community support services to which young people can be referred.
- The Northern Territory is again the only State or Territory that does not provide a youth specific legal service.

After raising these issues at the National Association of Community Legal Centres conference in 2003, the National Youth Advocacy Network undertook research to compile a comparative table of juvenile justice systems throughout the country. The Northern Territory's column was embarrassingly blank. We have few or none of the policies, procedures, programs, departments, statutory provisions or infrastructures in place within other jurisdictions to provide equity in justice to young people.

When I speak of these issues outside of the Northern Territory, people are outraged, when I speak about it here, people (particularly politicians) adopt an 'oh-well - this is the NT - laissez-faire type of attitude. A year ago I wrote a letter to the Minister for Justice raising these concerns and encouraging the establishment of a separate and appropriate juvenile justice system. The response was 'we can't always have our first choice in priorities' - this leads me to conclude that neither young people nor human rights are a priority to our government.

As many people will remember, the Northern Territory's previous government introduced mandatory sentencing in 1997. Lawyers, youth and community workers and concerned community members campaigned long and hard to have mandatory sentencing legislation overturned. Unfortunately, the event that really raised awareness of the situation in the Northern Territory and sparked public outrage on a national level, was the death of a young man who was serving a period of detention in the Don Dale Detention Centre as a result of mandatory sentencing legislation. He was 15 years of age. I fervently hope that we can raise public awareness and therefore some action to rectify the situation in the Northern Territory before another such tragedy occurs.

I have but touched on the breaches of human rights for young people in terms of accessing appropriate justice in the Northern Territory. If people feel outraged by the situation - good, we should be outraged. If you would like to turn this outrage

into something more meaningful please feel free to contact me (I will leave my contact details with the conference organisers) and we can discuss strategies.

I call now on the Northern Territory Government to acknowledge the special needs, skills, talents and value of young people in the Northern Territory. Allow them the same opportunities, rights and access to services as are afforded to young people in other parts of Australia by establishing an innovative and appropriate juvenile justice system.

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Building Stronger Communities - capacity building in Indigenous communities: principles for success

William Tilmouth

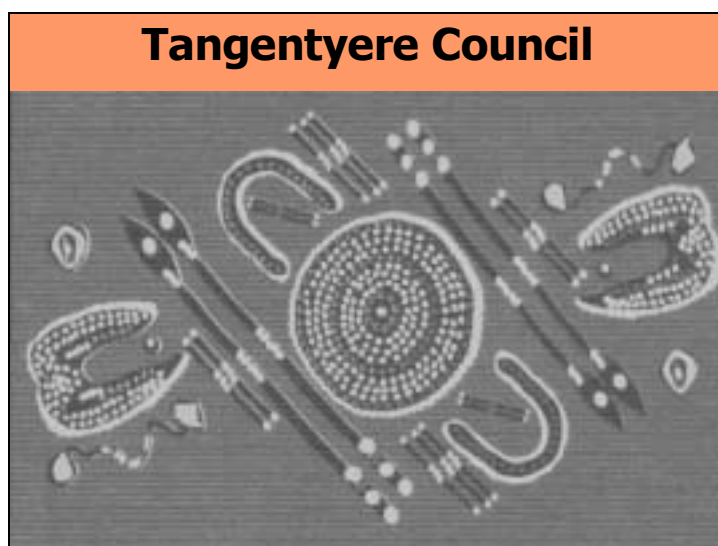
William Tilmouth is the Executive Director of Tangentyere Council, a position he has held since 1997. He believes strongly in ensuring that Aboriginal people have every opportunity to be empowered, to have ownership and control in the decisions that affect them – by offering people the choice in whatever direction they choose to overcome their disadvantage.

My topic today is the principles for successful capacity building in Indigenous Communities.

Capacity building is one of those vague words with multiple interpretations that, in practice, enable a multitude of policy sins.

A review of the literature reveals that there are two main approaches to capacity building:-

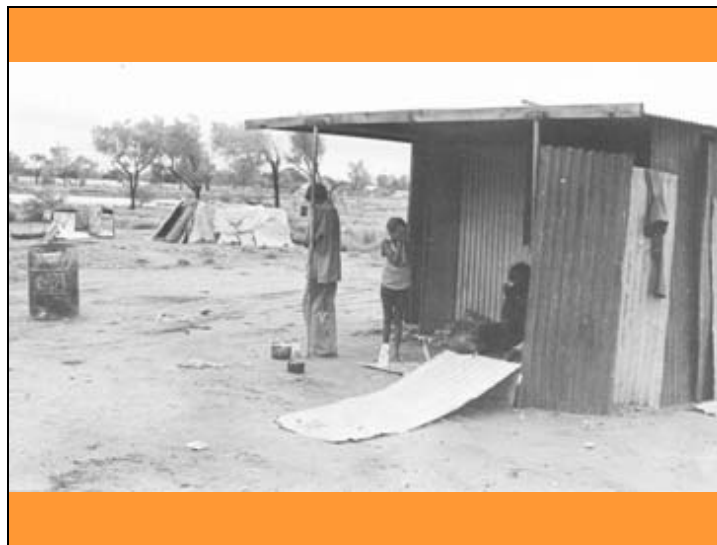
- 1 Public Administration Approach
- 2 Community Development Approach



At Tangentyere we define capacity building as the commitment to build an effective organisation. Ours is a comprehensive approach that marries community and organisational development within an Indigenous self-determining framework.

To explain what this means I am going to give an overview of Tangentyere Council. The principles that I consider crucial to successful capacity building I have distilled from our practice and I hope by placing them into the context of the Tangentyere story I will avoid the sin of vagueness.

I also hope that our practices inform Government policy on this issue, because despite the rhetoric of capacity building, Indigenous organisations are only supported to deliver services. No level of government or agency wants to fund the operational support necessary for organisational capacity building. One of Tangentyere's longest on-going battles has been on this very point – a theme I will return to later in the presentation

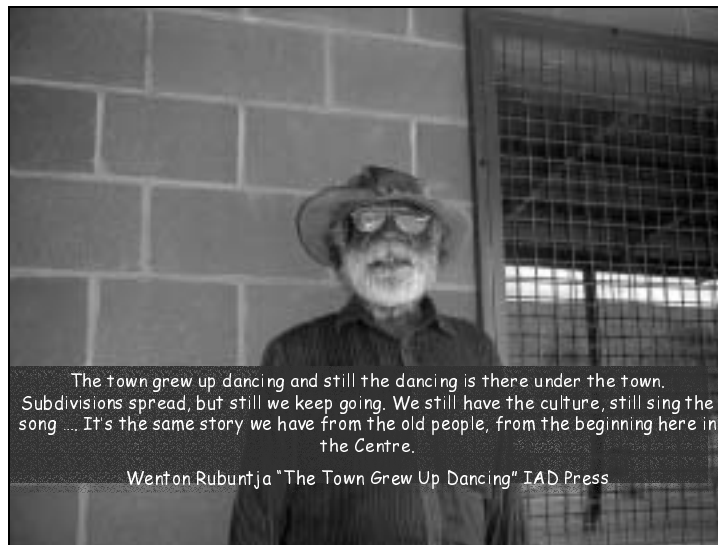


The photo that you are looking at is an Alice Springs fringe camp prior to the advent of Tangentyere. A survey conducted by Congress in 1975 found the population living in humpies, tents and iron sheds with no facilities. Access to water was limited. Only four of the camps had toilets. All had difficulties with wood supplies for heating and cooking.



The 'town camps' as they are commonly known in Alice Springs, had been considered problems since the non-Aboriginal population of the town began to grow. This status meant that 'fringe campers' were subjected to an array of forces intent on removing them from the town.

Despite these efforts and a complete lack of services the town camps remained. In part this was due to contradictory Government policies like taking children away and placing them at the Bungalow, resulting in families relocating to Alice Springs to be near their interned children; but also because town camps were not regimented like the missions and settlements, and represented an escape from the cultural destruction that was being conducted in those places.



For many Arrernte people, living in fringe camps was the only way to remain and look after country. As Wenton Rubuntja says of Alice Springs,

“The town grew up dancing and still the dancing is there under the town. Subdivisions spread, but still we keep going. We still have the culture, still sing the song It's the same story we have from the old people, from the beginning here in the Centre”.

I quote Wenton because not only is he a senior lawman, founding member of Tangentyere Council and an Executive member that has given 25 years of incomparable service to Tangentyere – he also played a key role in the struggle for land rights and was the first Chairman of the Central Land Council and the Council for Reconciliation.



The primary reason for the formation of Tangentyere was to improve the quality of life for people living on the fringes of Alice Springs.

This was a very hard struggle according to Eli Rubuntja, Tangentyere's first President, because the whitefellas in Alice Springs didn't like the camps.

They said they were unhealthy and bad for the tourists. They tried to push us away. But this was our country. Arrernte country, Aboriginal country.

The other people living in the camps – Warlpiri, Luritja, Pintupi, Pitjantjatjara, Anmatjere – had been pushed off their land too. We wanted our own land so we could sit down and not worry about whitefellas pushing us off.



Through the struggle to form Tangentyere, the town campers demonstrated that they were able to unite and stay united. They had a holistic view of their situation and were not prepared to negotiate in isolation from each other. This commitment

to view themselves as part of the 'town camper' movement – rather than as individual and separate camps is an impressive political act.


The name Tangentyere is an Arrernte word meaning - work together. It is both a statement and instruction – a very appropriate choice of name for an organisation – that has abided by this principle from its inception.

18 housing associations (town camps) with 16 Special purpose leases

Two Housing Associations still have no security of tenure and no permanent infrastructure - residents live in Tin Sheds, no running water, no power

There are 192 houses, 10 community facilities, 86 tin sheds

There are approximately 1250 adults and 450 young people living on Town Camps



Today Tangentyere is comprised of 18 housing associations with 16 special purpose leases. There are 198 houses, 14 Community facilities and 70 tin sheds for the resident population of 1250 adults and 450 young people. Overcrowding is chronic.

Two housing associations still have no security of tenure – this means they cannot access any government funding for housing and infrastructure so they live in tin sheds with no running water and no power.

Our inability to resolve the situation of Whitegate and Namatjira Camp really hurts my Executive, because they hold Tangentyere's mission in their hearts and minds as well as in our organisational plan.

Despite these set-backs the achievement of 'town campers' over the last 25 years is impressive.

Principle 1

Commitment

The will to act Community-wide for the common good.

The brief overview of history of Tangentyere Councils beginnings raises the first principle for successful capacity building. That is the commitment to act community-wide for the common good. This commitment is the frame of reference - the foundation on which Tangentyere was built.



Tangentyere Council's Founding Members

Wenten Rubuntja AM, Geoff Shaw OAM, Pastor Eli Rubuntja

On 11th November this year, Tangentyere will celebrate its 25th anniversary.

One of the primary reasons for our success is our governance structure, which reflects the cultural values and beliefs of housing association residents.

85% of town campers speak one of the major Central Australian Aboriginal languages. As a general rule these different language groups live according to the direction of their home countries and their songlines, in accordance with Aboriginal law.

The internal planning of the camps also adheres to Aboriginal culture – camp planning constraints include the need to provide areas for different family groups, temporary accommodation for people who have to leave houses following a death, the need for visitor camping, ceremonial area and sacred site protection.

Executive Support

Approx. 90 meetings per year relating to Governance including:

- Arrange & Support 18 AGM's per year
- Arrange & Support regular Housing Association Meetings for 18 associations

Resulting in

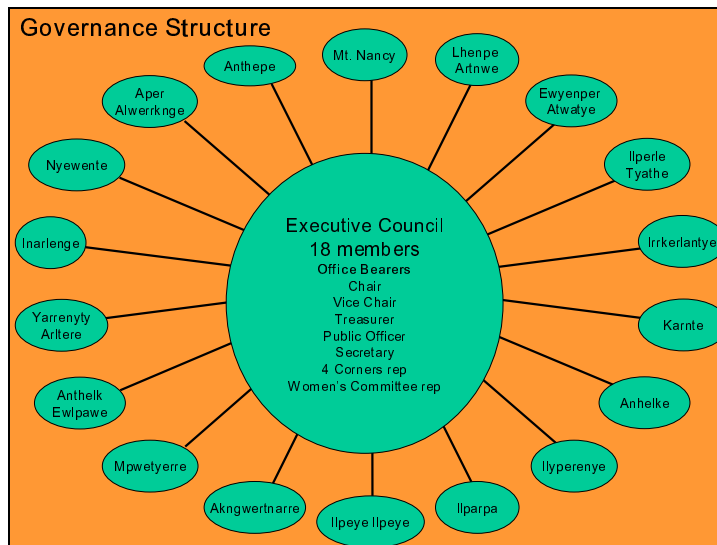
- Minimal internal disputes
- Compliance with NT and Commonwealth Incorporations Act.
- Compliance with conditions of grant
- Community control, responsibility and self management
- Ongoing education regarding government policy direction

At the town camp level, the Tangentyere Housing office provides Executive support to Housing Association meetings and Annual General Meetings for each town camp.

Although this means each year we organise 18 Annual General Meetings and numerous ordinary meetings – a large workload in anyone's language. it is necessary because it adheres to the principles of autonomy and cooperation that is at the heart of our law and is embedded in our name.

This is real capacity building. Decision-making power is vested in the communities and the education process is continual.

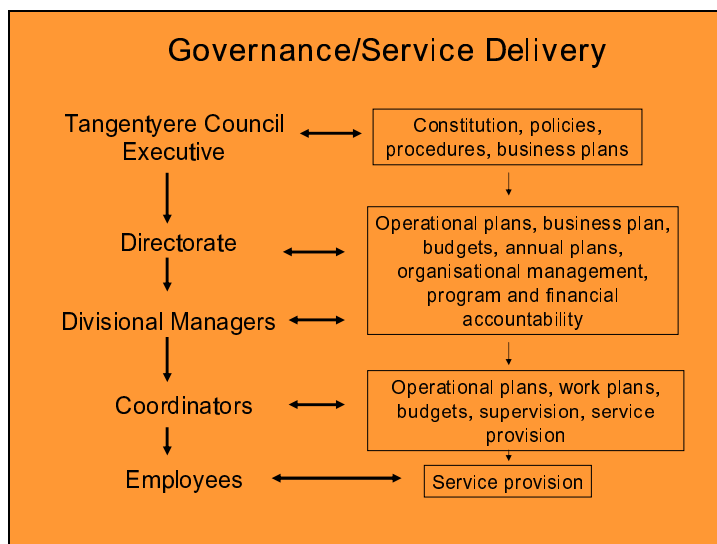
I think the results speak for themselves: internal disputes are minimal and all of the housing associations are compliant with Commonwealth and Territory legislation and grant funding conditions.



Each of the housing associations send elected delegates to the Executive Council.

At the executive each Housing Association has an equal voice. This has allowed the varied interests and language groups across the 18 Housing Associations to function effectively over 25 years to provide leadership and direction to the council.

The delegates from the town camps also make up the Women's Committee and the 4 Corners Council and these two Committees are represented on the Executive. These Committees provide advice to the Council on matters of Indigenous law.



The Executive Council meets approximately every six weeks and there are regular meetings of the four Executive sub-committees that cover Housing, Research, Employment and Finance.

The role of the Executive covers the constitution, policies, procedures and business plans. Over the course of 25 years, the Tangentyere Executive have been creative in fulfilling this role in a way that meets the requirements of Aboriginal law and western administrative legislation and procedures.

An example of this is the Tangentyere award. This award is unique in that it formally recognises and encourages the maintenance of Aboriginal culture through its provisions for:

- ceremonial leave
- Aboriginal language skills
- knowledge of Aboriginal law of equal value to western tertiary education.

Indeed, individuals cannot reach the top of the Tangentyere award without skills in both domains.

Tangentyere Council and the Alice Springs Town Council sign a 'Memorandum of Understanding' on 3rd November 2000.

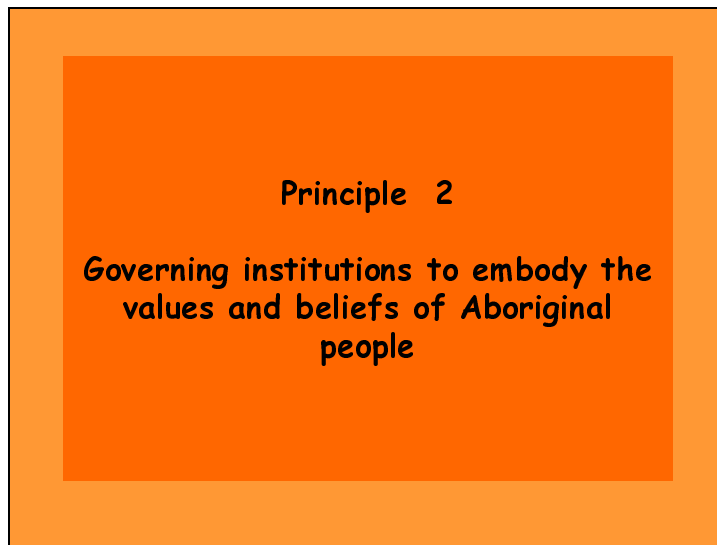
This follows a 10 year legal battle regarding rates – the court found in favour of Tangentyere

This MOU commences a new era of cooperation and partnership between our two Councils.

The Executive has a can-do attitude – a confidence that comes from having an impact in the world.

The clearest example of this is can be seen in the relationship between Tangentyere and the Alice Springs Town Council. In the early years the Alice Springs Town Council was openly hostile to Tangentyere and the town camps in general. This situation degenerated into a lengthy court battle over rates. This court victory gave the Executive a number of choices – they chose to negotiate an MOU that signalled a new era of cooperation and partnership between our two Councils.

I am telling you this story because in the capacity building literature, I have read claims that people who have been involved in protest politics need to move on so that the organisation can mature, and I want to refute that belief. Tangentyere Council has been very fortunate in still having some founding Executive members and staff serving. These very people were also prime movers in pursuing the MOU. The reality is that both people and organisations mature with experience.



Tangentyere has a hybrid structure that marries principles from both laws and as a result is an effective and appropriate governing institution.

The Many Ways Forward Report highlighted the importance of what they called cultural match in successful governing institutions. Cultural match means:-

- embodying the values Aboriginal people feel are important
- reflect Indigenous peoples' contemporary conception of how authority should be organised and exercised, and
- being generated through Indigenous efforts.

And this is my second principle for successful capacity building - Governing institutions to embody the values and beliefs of Aboriginal people.



And now to service delivery.

Tangentyere provides a centralised structure that rationalises administrative costs, providing services to 18 town camps.

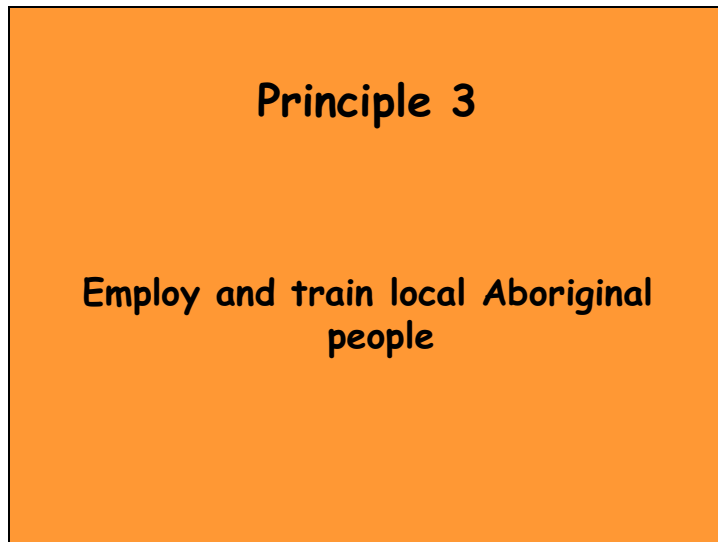
Tangentyere's responsibility is to make sure that the services we deliver are of a high standard, and address the chronic issues faced by Aboriginal people.



Our primary client base is the Housing Association residents.

We also provide some services to the large visitor population from remote communities. During busy periods the population on the camps can reach 4,000 people.

In response to demand a number of our programs deliver services to the broader Alice Springs Community and to remote areas. These services all aim to reduce pressure on the Housing Association Communities.



It is crucial that the current practice of importing labour to run all services on remote communities cease. It is way past time that government programs were restructured to ensure that local people have opportunities for training, employment and professional development.

You cannot pretend to be a capacity building organisation if you are unable to meet this principle.

Indigenous Employment

- 87% of our 127 permanent staff are indigenous
- In addition all CDEP staff (225) are indigenous
- We are one of (if not the largest) indigenous employers in the country
- We advocate professional development and ongoing training for all staff

One of the primary reasons that Indigenous people feel comfortable accessing services at Tangentyere is because they are delivered by Indigenous staff. Eighty seven percent of our permanent staff are Indigenous, as are all our CDEP participants.

Tangentyere Council has a good track record in developing our staff. My Deputy began her career on the reception – she is now an effective Deputy with a Bachelor of Arts and a Masters of Business Administration. Putting the effort into the professional development of staff is rewarding for an organisation – particularly in terms of staff loyalty, commitment and productivity.

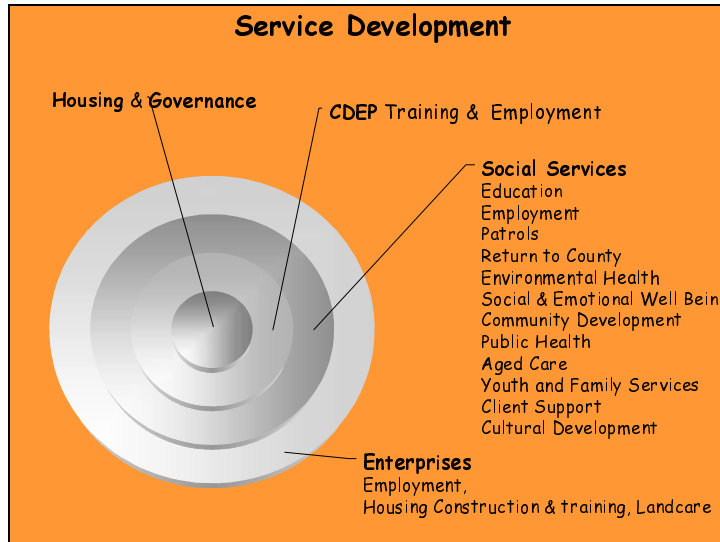
We have also been very fortunate in attracting talented non-Indigenous staff from around Australia. Many of these staff have added greatly to the capacity of our organisation.

Principle 4

Indigenous people themselves should have a central role in the design, planning and delivery of services.

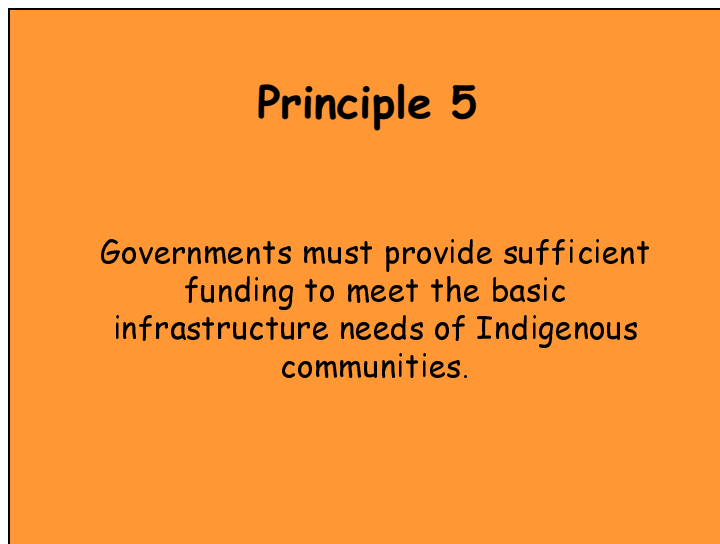
Principle 4 is almost a no-brainer it's so obvious – Indigenous people themselves should have a central role in the design, planning and delivery of services.

Anything else is just assimilation.



Over the course of Tangentyere's history the number of services provided by the Council has grown. These services have evolved in a progressive and logical fashion. As the diagram shows the services are inter-dependent.

Aboriginal People vote with their feet. They will access services where they feel comfortable, respected and have a sense of belonging.



Safe, healthy, affordable housing should be the starting point of any Government effort to address Indigenous need. The failure to provide sufficient funding for this purpose critically undermines their efforts in all other areas, particularly health, education and employment.

This is equally applicable to water, power and communications infrastructure.

Current Housing Need

225 bedrooms short across all Town Camps.
Based on independent IHANT assessment. This
is based on permanent resident numbers.

This does not account for visitor numbers and
stress placed on houses.

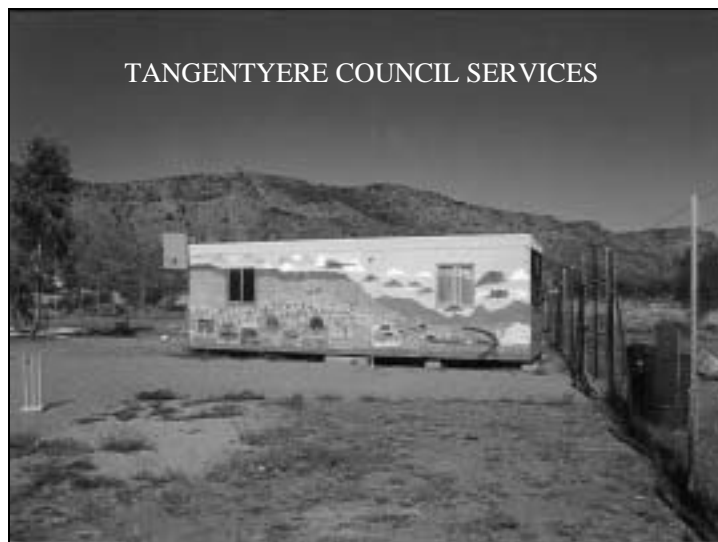
It is not uncommon that some houses support a
population of 25-30 people.

Accessing funding for housing has always been problematic for Tangentyere – there has never been enough funding to meet needs.

The Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory have assessed the housing need of the town camps at 225 bedrooms.

This need is urgent because the 70 tin sheds (that have no power, water or sewerage connections) are filled to capacity. Seven of the Community Centres are also housing families at the moment.

Because of the housing shortage most houses are multi-family households. The pressure on residents sharing a three bedroom home with twenty five to thirty other people is enormous – as indeed is the stress on the house.



Tangentyere Council services are arranged into six Divisions:


- Housing
- CDEP
- Social Services
- Landcare
- Human Resources
- Finance

I am going to give a brief overview of each Department

All of our programs marry Aboriginal and Western knowledge and skills in the same way as our structure. The success of our programs is embedded in this principle.

Housing Division

- o Property Management (rent collection, R&M, new construction)
- o Environmental Health Management
- o Executive support to housing associations
- o Sort and deliver mail



The Housing Office is at the heart of Tangentyere. It carries out the property management functions for the 198 houses and 14 Community facilities. In 2003 this meant arranging 2073 repair and maintenance jobs. The housing office also co-ordinates new construction ensuring the appropriate siting of new houses, maintaining waiting lists etc.

The office also looks after the essential service infrastructure and other environmental health matters on the camps. We hope with the injection of funding from NAHS to upgrade the sewerage and water pipes - under the Connecting Neighbours program - that the work in this area will reduce.

The sorting and delivery of residents' mail has occurred because Australia Post will not deliver to the town camps thus all resident mail is sent to Tangentyere Council premises. Australia Post does not contribute funding to Tangentyere for this function.

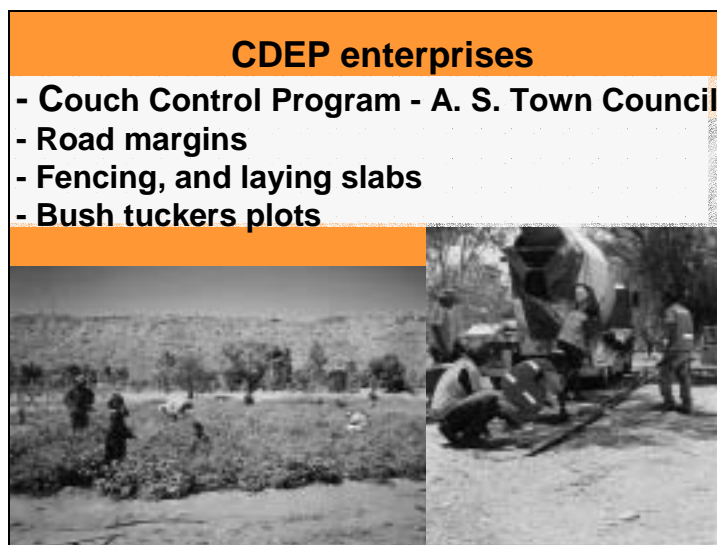


The level of Aboriginal unemployment in Central Australia is high. Official statistics put the unemployment rate at 16% for Indigenous people compared with 4% for the non Indigenous population. And if that wasn't bad enough, consider that 49% of Aboriginal people counted as employed, are actually CDEP participants who work for the equivalent of the dole – you begin to realise the magnitude of the problem we confront.

The Community Development Employment Program commenced at Tangentyere in 1990 to redress this situation. There are two hundred and twenty five CDEP places and the aim of the program is to create pathways to employment, while providing services to the community.

There are sixty five permanent (CDEP subsidised) positions, employed within Tangentyere and outsourced to other agencies.

The remainder of participants undertake activities to increase their employability.



The CDEP Enterprise Arm focuses on creating job opportunities for CDEP participants through the development of small-scale enterprises.



The Landcare Division runs three programs:-

- The nursery propagates plants and is a CDEP work centre for town campers. It is open to all people. The nursery also provides Project support and assistance for initiatives like the bush tucker project or as requested by remote communities.
- The Land and Learning Programs focus is working with schools and Aboriginal traditional elders in remote areas and town to combine Western scientific and traditional knowledge of land. A key role of the Land and Learning Program has been developing material for a school-based curriculum that is recognised by the NT Education Department.
- Landcare Support is an outreach project to support individuals and communities to develop and manage landcare and land management projects. This is centred on the household and community zone. Training, support, education and apprenticeships are also provided through this Division.

SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

Departments:

Youth Services Department

Social Justice Department

Health and Well Being Department

Research Department

The Social Services Division is divided into four main departments.

- Youth Services
- Social Justice
- Community Development, Health and Wellbeing
- Research

As with our other service provision, this division advocates strongly for access and equity, human rights, and recognition of cultural expertise.

YOUTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre
Early Childhood Intervention Program
Youth Activity Services
Safe Families Program
Youth Link Up Service



The Youth Services Department runs programs targeting young town campers.

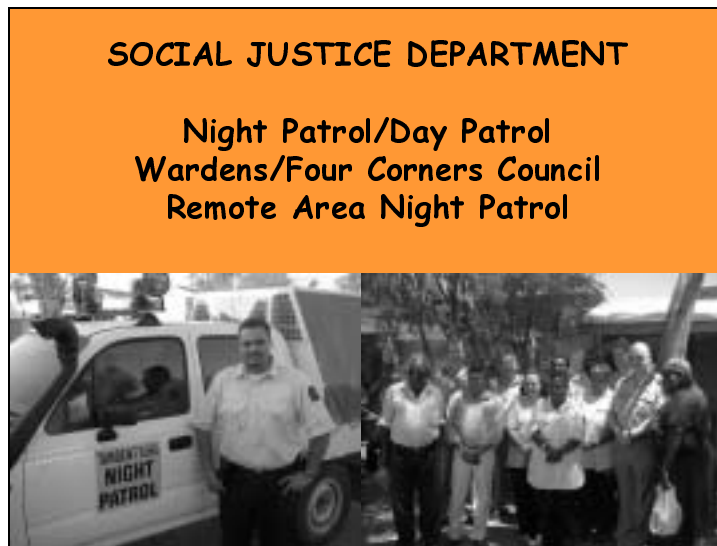
These programs are:

- Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre
- Early Childhood Intervention Program
- Youth Activity Services
- Safe Families Program
- Youth Link Up Service

The youth programs support Indigenous systems of knowledge and family care. We provide education programs, family support, early intervention, and a wide range of youth activities. These programs address issues such as petrol sniffing, family violence and sexual abuse, while providing an opportunity for our young people to develop their skills, self esteem and opportunities for their future.



The Tangentyere Executive place great importance on the care of our children. They are our future and worth the investment.



The aims of the Social Justice Department are twofold:

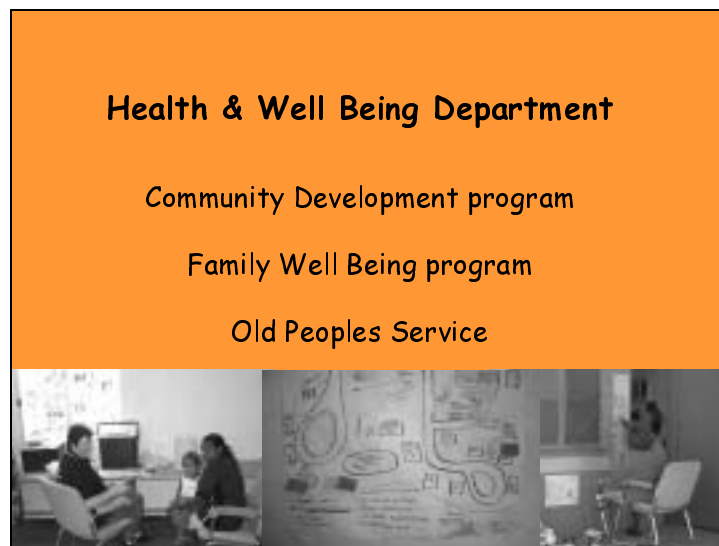
- To reduce family violence, substance misuse and related social stress.
- To reduce the involvement of Aboriginal people in the Criminal Justice System.

There are three inter-related programs:

- The Day/Night Patrol – the patrols operate a regular patrol of the town camps and hot spots in the town area six nights per week. The night patrol also responds to emergency calls from members of the public.
- Wardens/Four Corners Council - assist at risk people to return to country. The Four Corners council oversees this program.
- Remote Area Night Patrol - supports the training, resourcing and documentation (data base training) of Night Patrol activities in twelve remote communities.

These services operate co-operatively with the NT Police and the relationship is covered by an MOU.

Tangentyere Council also developed a database to accurately record incidents and statistics of all these services. The database, developed in conjunction with Curtin University, has improved follow-up and referral to other agencies such as police, hospital, DASA and improved our accountability to our Executive and funding bodies.



The Health and Wellbeing Department is responsible for community development, social and emotional wellbeing and health advocacy.

The Family Wellbeing program is a course developed by the Aboriginal community in Adelaide. Taking thirty six weeks, the course looks at family violence, problem-solving skills and self development. Since the course's inception, forty three people have completed the course and seventeen Indigenous facilitators have been trained.

This year the Family Wellbeing course was run at the Alice Springs jail. The course was very well received. Nine prisoners graduated and seven were granted parole prior to graduation.

The Old People's Service provides support to the elderly and frail, assisting with banking, shopping, health, meals, firewood and homecare. Due to limited funding there are many old people struggling without support.



A new innovation at Tangentyere is the Social Research Department. The purpose of this department is to:

- provide and develop Indigenous expertise in areas of research and social development
- protect Indigenous people's rights in relation to research
- promote research that is meaningful and results in practical change and development within the community
- give Indigenous people ownership in research
- use evidence based research to inform government, policy makers and academic institutions.

We have been able to achieve this by entering into partnerships with academic institutions like the Centre for Remote Health, Curtin University and Edith Cowan University.

The Executive Research Sub-committee approves and oversees all research projects.

Our relationship with the academic institutions is reciprocal. For these institutions the quality of information from Tangentyere researchers in the field is delivering a depth and quality previously unattainable.

For Tangentyere the research department is developing our knowledge and helping us to improve our programs and practices. It is also providing a level of training for our workers that we could not afford to buy into the organisation.

Principle 6

**Access to financial services
underpins the ability to participate
in the social and economic life of
the community.**

The principle is access to financial services. This is really one for Governments. I understand that at the moment FACS is running the Family Income Management Project in Cape York and is hoping to extend this to six communities in the NT.

Really, this is not good enough. A comprehensive strategy to roll out financial services to all remote communities is required.

Tangentyere and the Central Remote Regional Council have a vision for this to occur in Central Australia. The proposal is for there to be one Rural Transaction Centre (RTC) with a branch in all major communities. This approach would achieve "economies of scale" and enable a level of professional oversight of the RTC's operations that an individual community project could not afford.

For more information on this idea I refer you to my speech at the Banking Conference in 2002.

ONE STOP SHOP

Co-located at Tangentyere Council office:

Tangentyere housing office
Financial counsellor
Centrelink Branch
Westpac bank Branch
Tangentyere Job Shop
Food Voucher Program



The One Stop Shop is a suite of services that Tangentyere consider are integral for economic independence. The One Stop Shop is the co-location of the Housing office, financial counsellor, Centrelink branch, Westpac Bank branch, Tangentyere Job Shop and the Food Voucher program. Together they provide a comprehensive and accessible service across housing, income and employment needs.

The Centrelink office and the Bank agency have improved access for many people who otherwise would not access the mainstream services due to cultural barriers.

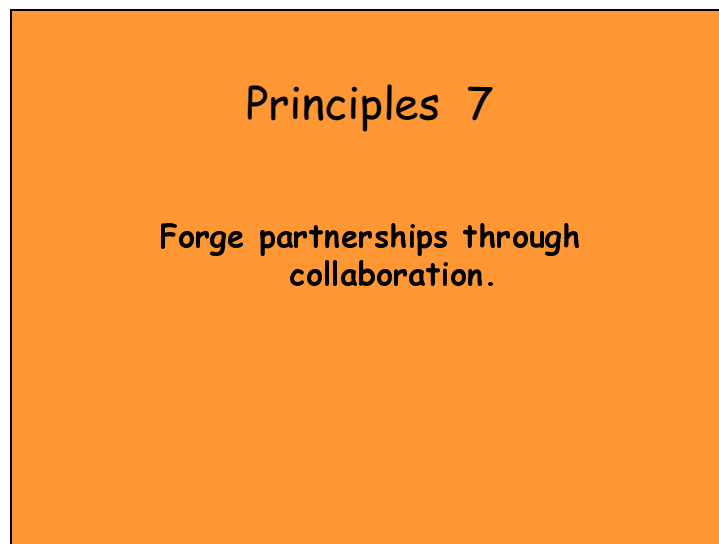
The Indigenous staff, location and relationship with other services such as the food voucher program has decreased the frustration, anxiety and stress normally experienced when dealing with mainstream agencies.

Tangentyere Council heavily subsidises the Westpac Branch for which we receive only \$4,000 per year. We struggle each year to afford this but do so because it is a necessary service. Most users of our bank agency would not access their welfare income if the service didn't exist. Aside from the social turmoil this situation creates, this would have a detrimental impact on our other programs.

I see the lack of financial services as one of the primary forces holding back the development of remote communities. It affects people's ability to buy food, pay rent etc. Then, because rent is not being collected, Communities are not eligible for the R&M grant from IHANT, the houses deteriorate – the downward spiral continues.

People without access to banking services are at an economic disadvantage. Without the ability to save, people are denied a range of economic opportunities and in particular the opportunity to break out of the "poverty trap".

Currently, over 25% of Aboriginal people in Central Australia receive no income at all. This begs the question – how can you be welfare dependent if you don't receive welfare?



Community-based organisations like Tangentyere cannot afford to buy in all of the expertise necessary to run our services successfully. Partnering with other organisations and agencies helps overcome these difficulties.

Organisational Partnerships
Tangentyere works with many agencies across many programs including:

- Alice Springs Town Council (MOU)
- Northern Territory Department of Education (MOU)
- Alice Springs Police (MOU)
- Curtin University National Drug Research Institute
- Centre for Remote Health – Flinders University, Charles Darwin University
- Alice Springs Youth Accommodation and Support Services
- Job Futures
- Department of Family & Community Services
- Centrelink

Tangentyere Council works with many agencies across our range of services. These partnerships have greatly enriched our organisation; they have enabled reciprocal skills transfer and assisted us to continuously improve our service delivery.

Tangentyere Enterprises
Sustainable Employment and Enterprise Development (SEED) Strategy

Design		
Construction		
Job Shop		

The final division of Tangentyere are our Enterprises. This is what we call our SEED strategy. Sustainable Employment and Enterprise Development.

The aim of this strategy is:

- for the enterprises to attain commercial viability
- to encourage Indigenous training and employment in the commercial and competitive arena; and
- to broaden organisational sustainability through potential non-government funding in the future.

The three enterprises are:

- Tangentyere Design – an architectural and project management company
- Tangentyere Construction – developed to provide Indigenous employment and training within the construction industry, and
- Tangentyere Job Shop – a Job Network Provider.

These enterprises operate as charitable trusts for Tangentyere Council.

The lesson that we have learnt relevant to this forum is that when you enter the commercial arena, trust nobody. I am only half joking when I say that. Seriously, I have found that you cannot have too many checks and balances when operating in the commercial sector and this is an area of operations where we have regular oversight of our enterprises, management and finance by personnel external to the organisation.



Tangentyere Constructions project manages the Central Remote Regional Council/ IHANT Builder Trainer Program. This program operates on seven communities training teams of four. Each team builds two houses per year in their community for the duration of their training.

Charles Darwin University provides the off-the-job training.

This program has generated enormous pride in these communities, and I refer again to the importance of investing in Aboriginal people.

I consider the builder/trainer program to be a model for building capacity in remote communities.

The structure of the program ensures that the 'specialist functions' are done within Alice Springs – where the expertise required is available and cheaper than in remote locations.

The proof of this is that the training teams, after 2 years of operation, are building their houses cheaper than mainstream contractors.

The Future

Tangentyere Council faces great challenges. As I alluded to earlier, we have great difficulty in accessing stable funding to support the organisation.

The facts need to be faced – capacity building cannot occur if all Governments shirk their responsibilities in such a crucial funding area.

I am concerned by the direction taken by this Government with the scrapping of ATSIC. I hope it is not a signal that they will mainstream all services – this would be a return to the situation that existed in Alice Springs prior to Tangentyere's advent.

I hope that today you have heard and seen the evidence that significant improvements have been made over the last twenty five years, even though we still have a long way to go.

I also hope that the seven principles I have presented today are taken seriously and the long delayed development of our remote communities can occur.

Current challenges

Have Tangentyere recognised and resourced for our role and responsibility in providing and coordinating Territory and Commonwealth programs, as per the COAG outputs

To secure funding for our administrative and governance structure and create improved security of funding

To further develop our evidence based research approach to report accurately on program outputs and funding need

To secure and increase housing funding to address unmet needs

To continue a strong role in the delivery of CDEP programs and further develop CDEP enterprises to address chronic unemployment

For Tangentyere our challenges are to:

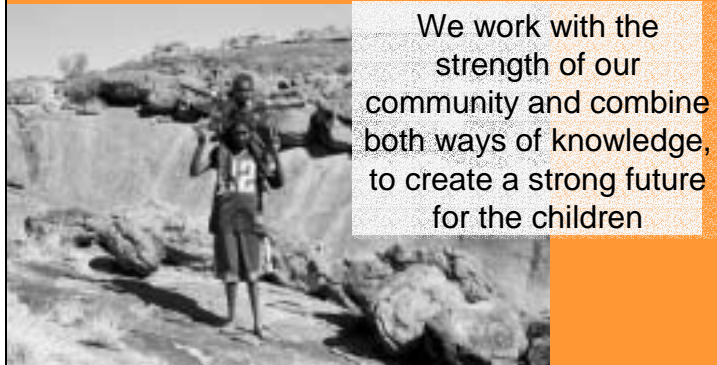
- have Tangentyere recognised and resourced for our role and responsibility in providing and coordinating Territory and Commonwealth programs, as per the COAG outputs
- to secure funding for our administrative and governance structure and create improved security of funding
- to further develop our evidence based research approach to report accurately on program outputs and funding need
- to secure and increase housing funding to address unmet needs
- to continue a strong role in the delivery of CDEP programs and further develop CDEP enterprises.

Even though there are high levels of death and sickness in our community this is a community that is full of life, where the old ways are mixed with new ways, and young people are vibrant and strong and looking for a better future



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We have our experts and our leaders, our teachers and our apprentices.



We work with the strength of our community and combine both ways of knowledge, to create a strong future for the children

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We work with the strength of our community and combine both ways of knowledge, to create a strong future for the children.

Indigenous Women Speak Out - safety for all in Indigenous communities “The Business of Relationship Building”

Kerrie Tim

Kerrie is a Senior Executive in the Australian Public Service based in the Office of Indigenous Policy, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. Kerrie is actively committed to social justice, and for 14 years has been involved in leading edge work on ending racism. Her international experience includes leading peer counselling workshops on ending racism in South Africa, Israel, and New Zealand. She is a Director of the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre.

Introduction

This session is about the factors underlying the violence against women in our community – an Aboriginal health leadership perspective. Stephanie presented a pretty good perspective on this.

I thought I might cover six points:

- the first is to say a couple of things about violence, including its cost.
- the second is to give this some context – tell you what these statistics mean on a daily basis – in the lives of a child, a woman and a man
- the third point is to you give a picture, a clear picture, that Aboriginal people are much more than what is presented in the statistics of disadvantage that Australians know so well, and are so numb to
- the fourth point is a comment on the impact of racism and internalised racism and also a picture that we can end racism and its effects on our lives
- the fifth point covers the advantages of being Aboriginal
- the last point is my vision for our people.

I'm a Murri, so I'm going to do this presentation Murri-way. This means I do the acknowledgements – which I've done. Then I introduce myself, so you have a context for fitting me in to your kinship system and a basis for my relationship with you.

My people are Kalkadoon, just over the Queensland border, my country is Pymarra. We are emu mob and sand goannas. We have strong ties over this border as well as up in to the Gulf country. I am the youngest of seven girls, the second youngest of eleven.

In our family and cultural ceremonies, my role is to support my elders to lead our growth – who we are, where we've come from, where we see our family over the

next five, ten, twenty, fifty years' time. My role is to sit and listen, and speak when and if it is appropriate.

In my paid job I'm a senior executive in the Australian public service, working for the OIPC, DIMIA, based in Canberra. OIPC is responsible for leading the rolling out of the Commonwealth government's reforms in Indigenous affairs. I say we are in the agreement-making and relationship-building business.

I'm on the Board of the AILC.

In my spare time, I'm an international reference person in a world change organisation. I teach and lead a form of peer counselling that has at its foundation a picture of people's humanity as good, smart, loving, intelligent, cooperative. I use my skills to work towards ending racism and all other forms of oppression and internalised oppression. I do this in Australia and I've led workshops in Israel, South Africa and New Zealand.

Relevant to this session, I have more than fifteen years' experience in counselling and I've done over a thousand hours of counselling on violence.

So let me begin to cover the points I mentioned earlier.

Violence

Last weekend I read *The Weekend Australian* and its article headed "\$8 billion cost of domestic violence". This came from a report *The Australian* got under Freedom of Information laws, prepared by Access Economics for the Prime Minister. The report found that almost 90% of victims are women. The report found women had less chance of becoming domestic violence victims if they were older, better educated and employed. Women receiving welfare had a one third increased chance of experiencing domestic violence.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report, based on experiences of Aboriginal and Islander women in Queensland, found that our women are more than 45 times more likely to be victims of violence than other Australian women. This is scary when you put it in context with this report prepared for the Prime Minister.

Sue Gordon prepared a report for the Western Australia government on child abuse in Aboriginal communities that currently drives a pretty concerted effort to redress extraordinarily high levels of abuse in our communities.

Yesterday Minister Scrymgour referred to the unacceptable levels of violence and child abuse in this territory and the institutionalisation of ineffective responses.

Our women and girls just don't fit the stereotype to escape violence – they are young, they are poorly educated, and they are most often not employed, and often have little hope that they could take up meaningful work in their communities. It can be a despairing scenario.

Our women and girls, though, are much, much more than these statistics.

What do the statistics mean?

If it is true that we are the statistics, then a child goes to school probably having not slept, after a night of listening to grog - or drug - induced fighting within the family or community, or having not slept from being abused, or trying to avoid being abused. The child probably hasn't had a bath or had any breakfast and is more than likely in the clothes from yesterday and the day before, probably having slept in them too.

The child is probably one of those "problem kids" at school, little attention, not able to sit still for long, likely to be acting out sexual or other inappropriate behaviours at the teacher or other kids, probably swears and is often "in trouble" or suspended or quick to leave school early. The child is probably smoking, drinking or sniffing, or a combination of all three.

The woman is probably up and ready for work, hoping that the previous night's fighting and maybe drinking doesn't show in her face. She's probably organising her kids and maybe others from the community, she probably holds a leadership position and is involved in more than one community organisation. She is probably functioning on top of being crook, maybe with diabetes or some heart or respiratory disease, and smokes. She probably has no one, or maybe one person, she can confide in. The abuse is kept secret.

The man may be off to work, hung over, or he will be at home opening his next drink. He's probably still feeling angry and looking for opportunities to get this off his chest. More than likely he won't have a job. There will be no one he can confide in.

I'm reminded by my partner that none of these people woke up one morning and said "pick me, I want to be the abused child, or woman" or "pick me, I want to get drunk and flog the crap out of the woman and maybe abuse my kid". If the choice is between a good, clean, healthy, successful lifestyle and one that is abusive, little hope and little support, which one would you pick? Do you think this is a life or career choice for you, or for anyone of us?

More than this

The statistical profile of my people that Australians are presented with, shows overwhelming disadvantage. But as I said earlier, we are much more than this.

Even in the face of these disadvantages, the advantages far outweigh them and our track record shows we can turn the current circumstances to reflect greater advantage.

My people are smart, good, strong, powerful. We are young kids succeeding at school, in sport, with our families and friends. We sing, dance, play, laugh, cry.

My people are good, smart, intelligent. We are women leading families, leading organisations, speaking out for good lives for our families and our people. We are mothers, grandmothers, daughters. We are women proud of giving birth, nourishing our kids, working in every field of endeavour.

My people are good, loving, cooperative. We are men working to give our families opportunities. We play, laugh, lead and much, much, more.

Aboriginal people are doctors, lawyers, teachers, public servants, politicians. We are students, learners, lovers.

We are the first people of this land.

Rich country

We Australians sure live in the lucky country. We live in a country rich with resources – rich with our people and all our diversity, and rich with the wealth that our country delivers. Every Australian is privileged living here and that privilege is directly at the expense of my people.

Our people have suffered the loss of this great land, and all the wealth that it generated, that nourished our people for thousands of years. The rest of Australia is now wealthy from this land with little or no recompense to my people. My people are marginalised in the land of our birth and the land of our ancestors.

But you know, it doesn't have to stay like this. There are enough resources for everyone. It makes no sense that any Australian should live in poverty or oppression. In a country rich as ours no one should go without. We can turn this around but it means giving up the long-held belief that it is OK to take the most resources at the expense of everyone else – do you remember the comment from Tim Costello yesterday – we need to give up the belief that “wealth equals happiness”.

Racism

So what is the hook that keeps the oppression in place? Marcus Einfeld referred to it yesterday – it's the racism and mistreatment, but more importantly, the way we go about our lives pretending it doesn't exist.

So what is racism? It's the daily mistreatment and belittlement that Aboriginal people face. It's being followed in shops, harassed by police. It's being ignored. It's the overt racism, being refused service, being called abusive names, being beaten up. It's the institutionalised racism – those institutions that were set up to help my people, like health and education and others, which often compound the disadvantage by poor service delivery and poor coordination.

And importantly, and probably most damaging to us, is the internalised racism – the place where we now take the hurts out on each other. This is the place where we attack each other, where we pull back any one of us who has the courage to step forward and take on leadership positions. It's where we flog our kids, trying to teach them but leaving them demoralised and hurt. It's where we attack each other about being too black, or not black enough.

Internalised racism is when we try quick-fix-feel-good right now solutions that might take the hurts of racism away for a time but in the long run damage us individually and those we are closest to – it's when we drink, or take drugs or participate in any other addictive substances and behaviours, like violence and other addictive sexual behaviours.

My people have struggled against this for as long and as hard as we dared. Through the sheer force of will many of my people have set up good lives for themselves and

their families and communities, in the face of these daily acts of racism that only serve to keep the oppression in place.

But to eliminate the effects of racism takes concerted efforts. If we undid the building blocks of racism today, if all racist acts against my people stopped today, we would also need to recover from the damage done to us emotionally from these hurts. We need to find opportunities to laugh and cry and rage and shake and tell our stories over and over again. So that we can overcome this emotional damage and take our place as the smart, loving, confident, intelligent people we are.

Advantages of being a Murri

The things I have appreciated about being a Murri include:

- the privilege of growing up in a culture that always has a place for me and for everyone else I know
- the privilege of understanding and applying the concept of proper respect – which Desmond Tutu refers to as “Ubuntu”, or “my humanity is bound up with yours”
- the advantages of being part of a family that no matter what trials are put before you knows that family is central to self
- I love being able to go anywhere in this beautiful land and know that I belong and that the people belong to me
- I love the relationship with the land and know that I am the land and the land is me.

Vision

So what is my vision for my people?

My vision for the next 50 years is a strong, happy, healthy, engaged Aboriginal Australia.

I want see our people lead in every field across every level of our Australian community.

I want to see our kids healthy, going to school, developing their minds, their bodies, their heart. I want them to know they can create the conditions for engaging in a discussion and then shaping the kind of world we live in.

I want to see our people building relationships and acting to create a world good for Murris, for all Australians, for all people of the world.

I want to see my people leading here in Australia and throughout the world. I want us to be building as many relationships as possible across the leadership and people of the world so that we will like each other too much to ever go to war against each other.

I would like to see our people become, in the words of Marcus Einfeld yesterday, “champions of humane and honourable conduct at home as well as overseas”.

I want us to have fresh water to drink, a continually rejuvenated earth to nourish us, and a world where people are committed to treating the earth as we would our most dearest love.

Conclusion

In closing, there is no Murri whose life is not directly impacted in some way by violence, through racism or internalised racism, and who is not fighting the effects of this. There are enough examples of success that we know we can turn these circumstances around. My people are not just “disadvantaged”, we are so much more. We can end the violence.

I’m going to close with a couple of lessons from two of the most influential people on my life, my Mum and Dad. These are just some of their legacies.

The first is from my Dad. Pop died last year and I had the privilege of being left over fifty years of papers – notes he wrote about his life and others he came into contact with. If he met someone, or thought about any issue, Dad would jot down something about the person or the issue. One of the notes is about Mum and her time under the Act in Queensland which governed the lives of Aboriginal people. Pop wrote about doing whatever the whitefella told you and he gave some examples. He also wrote about when the laws changed, he said, “we had no money, no job, no education and no roof over our head”. But after having read so many of Dad’s notes, I could tell he had paused, and he went on to write, “but we had our minds”.

I had the privilege of being raised by this man who thought we could use our minds to create a good world for ourselves and for everyone, even in the face of unjust laws and practices happening around us. The challenge for those of us here is to use our minds to overcome the despair that comes with working towards ending violence and creating good conditions for our people everywhere.

The second is from my Mum. From her I learned that in the hustle and bustle of daily life, in all our priorities and urgencies, we need to treat each other as we would our most dearest love – with delight, compassion and high expectations. Do this in the face of anything that tries to get in the way.

And lastly, for each of us to lead effectively we need to set our lives up well. We need to take care of ourselves. At the very least we need to know that we come home each night to a place where we know we are well loved, where we are cherished, where we know we matter profoundly.

Our leadership in ending violence, in changing the world, becomes more effective and able to be sustained if we are in good shape and we know we aren’t alone in our efforts.

Have a great rest of Congress.

Working together, and being accountable to each other

David Ross

David Ross is currently the Director of the Central Land Council (CLC) in Alice Springs. He has a long history of service to the Council and to the Aboriginal people of Central Australia. He served as Director from 1989 to 1994, then became an ATSIC Commissioner for the Central Region and in June 1995 the inaugural Executive Chairman of the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) based in Adelaide. He was reappointed as CLC Director early in 2000.

There is currently a crisis in service delivery to Aboriginal communities in central Australia. Rather than again detailing the horrific statistics associated with the human aspect of this crisis, I want to spend my brief time today outlining the current approach to mainstreaming service delivery to Aboriginal people. I will also detail some specific strategies I think would improve the outcomes of service delivery to Aboriginal people, to turn around these tragic statistics.

Two major developments have occurred in the federal context of Indigenous service delivery in the last 6 months. First, the demise of ATSIC. Second, the accompanying moves by the Federal government to mainstream service delivery.

I understand that 22 Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) have been established in rural and remote areas to coordinate programs and handle services to Indigenous people. These ICCs will have the responsibility to provide the services previously provided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services. Initially, the appropriations identified for administration by the ICC, and which have been 'quarantined' within mainstream agency budgets, amounts to \$3 billion. A large portion of this amount is the funding for Community Development Employment Projects.

The CLC experience suggests that mainstream services often fail to meet the needs of Aboriginal people in remote communities in Central Australia. Aboriginal people living in remote communities face many barriers in accessing mainstream services.

The outcomes associated with mainstream service delivery will be improved if there is:

- Indigenous control over service delivery
- regional delivery of mainstream services, and
- legislative benchmarking in mainstream service provision.

Indigenous control over mainstream service delivery

One way of improving the outcomes provided through mainstream service delivery is to allow for some Indigenous control over service provision. The Commonwealth

Grants Commission concludes that 'effective partnerships' are what is needed to 'better direct services towards Indigenous disadvantage' (CGC 2001: 93). An essential feature of effective partnerships is:

Indigenous control of, or strong influence over, service delivery expenditure and regional and local service delivery arrangements that emphasise community development, inter-agency cooperation and general effectiveness (CGC 2001: 93).

The CLC is strongly of the opinion that if mainstream services are to deliver improved outcomes to Aboriginal people then there must be a high degree of Aboriginal control over service delivery.

Regional delivery of mainstream services

Mainstream services will be more appropriately and efficiently delivered by an Indigenous-controlled structure operating at a regional level. The importance of regional service delivery is recognised, in part, by the location of the twenty ICC in regional and rural areas, rather than attempting to operate from a centralised Canberra or Darwin-based model.

Too often, in the past, services have been delivered by agencies that have no presence in the remote communities they are attempting to service. Service delivery to remote communities requires expertise that can only be developed through direct association with the communities being serviced.

Regional governance structures provide cultural authority and legitimacy, as well as expertise in terms of the needs of Aboriginal people. This expertise is something the ICC simply will not be able to provide.

The CLC has put considerable effort into the initial stages of designing exactly such an Aboriginal regional structure to coordinate service delivery across central Australia.

Benchmarking in mainstream service provision

Legislative benchmarking of outcomes related to service delivery is another important step towards ensuring that mainstream services better meet the needs of Indigenous Australians.

In its recent report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003*, the Productivity Commission provided a significant volume of data demonstrating the level of disadvantage faced by Aboriginal people. The data is meant to provide baseline information against which to measure progress under various government programs intended to reduce Indigenous disadvantage. But there is nothing that actually compels governments to act to address the indicators of disadvantage. What would happen if the governments were legislatively tied to bring about measurable and defined improvements, over defined periods, in the key indicators measured by the Productivity Commission?

This approach, to legislate with respect to specific outcomes, has been adopted in the United States. In the *Indian Health Care Improvement Act 1976* Congress

legislated a number of specific outcomes designed to bring about improvements in the health of Native Americans (for a full list of these outcomes see Appendix A). For example, the Act includes provisions to:

- 1 reduce coronary heart disease deaths to a level of no more than 100 per 100,000
- 2 reduce the prevalence of anaemia to less than ten percent among children aged one through to five.

Three key features of the *Indian Health Care Improvement Act 1976* are that it:

- provides for a 24-year time period to achieve the outcomes (1976 to 2000)
- stated the United States Government's commitment to the outcomes, and
- required a report be submitted to the Congress on an annual basis reporting on progress towards achieving the outcomes.

The Productivity Commission has provided data on the current situation in Australia for many of the items included in these provisions of the Indian health legislation. COAG has endorsed a commitment by the Australian government to deliver services to Indigenous Australians according to set principles, but with no defined outcomes and measures of progress. Could it be time in Australia to legislatively link the two processes as they have been in the United States for Indian health?

Service delivery to Aboriginal communities in central Australia must improve. Aboriginal people must be involved in delivering services to their communities. In terms of working together, accountability must flow both ways - as Aboriginal service delivery organisations are increasingly accountable to government, so government must be legislatively accountable to Aboriginal people to improve outcomes in service delivery.

I would ask ACOSS and its member organisations to support these strategies that are being developed by Aboriginal people in central Australia – I'm sure we will need some help along the way.

Australia's health challenge. Sifting through the evidence - is Aboriginal health getting worse?

Assoc Prof John Wakerman

Associate Professor John Wakerman is the Director of the Centre for Remote Health, a joint Centre of Flinders University and Charles Darwin University, based in Alice Springs. He is a Public Health Medicine specialist and general practitioner, with a background in remote primary health care services as a medical practitioner, senior manager and researcher. He has special interests in remote health services research and health management education. The Congress paper was delivered by Assoc Professor Wakerman but jointly authored with Nick Raymond.

Introduction

In Australia there appears to be at times a common wisdom, perhaps partly fuelled by the media, that the state of Aboriginal health is in decline [1]. However, the evidence for these claims is either absent or not cited. We set out to sift through the available evidence relating to changes in Indigenous health. We assessed only published data (that is, no primary data were collected or analysed). Only standard epidemiological measures (mortality and morbidity indicators) were examined to assess changes in health status. We did not examine broader indicators of social and emotional wellbeing.

In trying to assess changes in health status, data were sought that showed:

1. changes over time - time trend data were sought so comparison could be made between how Aboriginal health was in the past, and how it is now
2. changes at the national level - where this was not possible, smaller studies, including jurisdictional, regional and individual community studies were included to show pieces of an incomplete picture
3. changes in Aboriginal health compared to changes in health of the total Australian population - that is, has progress made by Aboriginal people in key health areas kept up with progress made by the total Australian population?

This paper presents some of the main findings of our research.

Data Quality

Uncertainties in relation to identification of Aboriginal status, and uncertainty regarding Aboriginal population estimates raise questions about the quality of Aboriginal health data [2]. In 1998, the Australian Bureau of Statistics identified the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern

Territory as being the only jurisdictions with sufficient recording for the purpose of presenting trends in mortality[3]. Translating trends from these jurisdictions to the national level is not straightforward for a number of reasons, not least of which is the fact that in total they are home to just 32.5% of the nation's Indigenous population [4].

Mortality

The NT is the only jurisdiction with published mortality trend data over a period of four decades [5]. NT Indigenous mortality rates declined in all age groups between 1967 and 2000. The decline was greatest in age group 0-4 (85%). In those aged five years and over, NT Indigenous mortality declined by 30% in females and 19% in males. NT Indigenous mortality declined for communicable, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions by 62%, and for injury by 33%, but did not decline for non-communicable diseases.

Relative to changes in the total population over this period, the following two points are of importance:

1. The rate ratio (a measure that allows us to make a comparison of two groups – in this case Aboriginal Territorians and all Australians - in terms of mortality rates) has decreased in the age group 0-4. In other words, in terms of infant and child mortality Aboriginal children are catching up to the rest of Australia, but they still have some way to go. It also appears that progress has slowed since the 1980s.
2. Relatively many more young adult to middle aged Indigenous persons (25-64), especially males, are dying compared to the total population. While there has been a decline in the mortality rate in these age groups for Indigenous people, it is less than the decline achieved in the overall population. As a result the mortality rate ratio for this age group for NT Indigenous people and the total Australian population has increased from around 4 to 6 fold from 1967 to 2000.

Infant Mortality

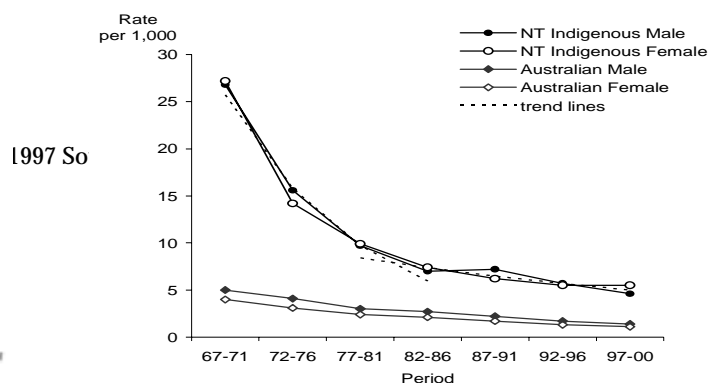
Improvements in infant and child mortality can be explained by a number of factors including reduction of vaccine preventable and other communicable diseases [6,7], improvements in antenatal care [8,9], and acute medical care at time of birth as a result of improved transportation [3].

For both Australia and the NT, dramatic declines in infant mortality rates are represented in Figures 1 and 2 respectively. However, it is worth noting that in both graphs declines had begun to plateau from the early 1980s with the rate still considerably higher than that of non-Indigenous infants.

Figure 1.



Figure 2



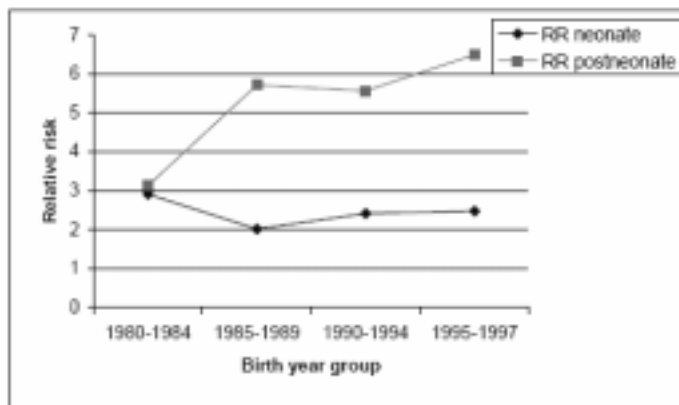
A recent study from Western Australia analyses perinatal (stillbirths + deaths in the first 28 days of life) and post-neonatal (from 28 days to 12 months after birth) mortality for Indigenous and non-Indigenous infants between 1980 and 1998 [3].

Over the study period, outcomes for neonates (0-28 days) improved considerably for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal babies in terms of decreased mortality. While the risk of death was still greater for Aboriginal infants, the relative risk for Aboriginal babies compared with non-Aboriginal babies decreased modestly over the period from 2.9 to 2.5/1000 deaths for this period.

By contrast, for Aboriginal post-neonates (4-52 weeks) there was barely any change in the mortality rate from 1980 to 1997. For non-Aboriginal post-neonates however, there was a significant decrease in mortality over the same period. As a result of this lack of progress in Aboriginal post-neonatal mortality, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates nearly doubled. These trends can be seen in Figure 3 where the relative risk for Aboriginal neonates compared to non-Indigenous neonates has remained level, whereas the relative risk for post-neonates has increased.

FIGURE 3. Neonatal and post-neonatal relative risk (Indigenous relative to non-Indigenous) in WA 1980 – 1997

Source [Freemantle, C.J., 2003]



To explain this difference the author suggests two factors that may operate simultaneously. Firstly, improvements in hospital neo-natal care, and transport to hospital have resulted in improvements in the survival of Indigenous babies. This may particularly be the case for premature births, where survival rates have improved. Secondly, the proportion of deaths caused by infection could explain the excess mortality of Indigenous infants during the post-neonatal period. These largely preventable deaths occur at a significantly higher rate than in non-Indigenous infants. Factors such as poverty, overcrowding and poor environmental health could underlie relatively high rates of infection as cause of death.

The improvements in mortality described in the NT study above and in declining infant mortality rates generally, have plateaued to a significant extent since the 1980s. These may also reflect improvements in medical interventions such as

immunisation programs and improved access to clinical care. Whilst we do not suggest that access to services is yet adequate for Indigenous Australians, it is possible to speculate that we will reach the limit of medical intervention, after which addressing social and economic determinants of health will be necessary to see further improvements in infant and child health.

Chronic diseases

In the NT, death due to communicable diseases and injury declined between 1967 and 2000. In contrast, non-communicable or chronic diseases mortality showed a small non statistically significant rise (table 1) [5].

Table 1. Change in NT Indigenous mortality rates by cause of death categories: 1977-2000

Source [Condon et al. 2004]

Cause of death	% change in mortality rate 1977-81, 1997-2000.
Communicable	-62
Injury	-33
Non-communicable	5
Other	-85
All causes	-20

Chronic diseases include hypertension (high blood pressure), cardiovascular disease (heart attack and stroke) and diabetes. Accurate national data for diabetes related mortality or morbidity are unavailable for the Aboriginal population [4]. Table 2 shows the increase in diabetes deaths in the NT for Aboriginal women from 2.8 times the Australian rate in the first five year period to over 11 times the rate in the last five year period. There is no significant change in the non-Aboriginal female rate [10].

For Aboriginal men in the NT, death rates rise by 50% from the first to last five year periods. There is an impressive rise for non-Aboriginal men from well below the Australian death rate to 1.4 times the Australian death rate over the fifteen year period [10].

Table 2. Diabetes: NT death rate ratios 1981-1995

Source [Codon and Dempsey 1999]

	Indigenous women	non-Indigenous women	Indigenous men	Non-Indigenous men
1981-1985	2.8	1.2	4.3	0.3
1986-1990	11.8	0.6	4.7	0.9
1991-1995	11.5	1.2	6.1	1.4

Conclusion

Is Aboriginal health getting worse? Firstly, there are limitations on the available data. Problems with Indigenous identification in the more populous states results in a dearth of national longitudinal data. In the NT, Indigenous mortality rates have improved over the past four decades. However, apart from the group aged 0-4 years, declines in mortality have not been at a comparable rate to non-Indigenous Australians.

Declines in infant mortality rates nationally and 0-4 years mortality in NT have improved but plateaued since the 1980s. Together with evidence from WA infant mortality, these declines may be due to health service improvements targeting infants, children and their mothers. This may be evidence of the impact of health service improvements, access to which should be extended to both children and the increasing number of adults with chronic diseases. However, whilst health services are not yet at adequate levels for the Indigenous population, improvements in access need to be made concurrently with social and economic improvements to realise better health outcomes.

Whilst overall mortality rates are declining, the differential in death rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous young to middle aged adults has increased in recent decades. There is evidence that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults are dying from an increasing prevalence of non-communicable or chronic diseases, such as diabetes. These are linked to obesity, food availability and intake, and physical inactivity. The prevalence of these diseases is generally higher in the Indigenous population. Improvements in health outcomes with respect to chronic diseases are linked to changes in individual behaviour as well as structural issues such as access to medical care, access to health information and food security.

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