

*Boys from the Bush Projects*

## Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project



Annual Progress Report No.1 (B)

July 2016

# Boys from the Bush Projects

IN-CONFIDENCE

This report contains commercial-in-confidence and client-privileged information.

## Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project Annual Progress Report No. 1

July 2016

This report has been written in a semi-formal style for the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership. It will also be made available to social work practitioners and public policy development officers working in this or related fields of practice, particularly those that are seeking alternatives to youth detention.

A copy of this report will be provided to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection in accordance with Section 140E(1) of the *Migration Act 1958 (Cth)*, which requires Special Programme Providers to conduct an internal review of the effectiveness of the Special Programme every six (6) months (Section 10.2 of the Special Programme Agreement).

### Table of Contents

1.	Aurukun ... a social construct gone wrong? .....	2
2.	What to do with these troublesome youths? .....	6
3.	BFTB Projects approach .....	7
4.	Establishment of the Peterborough group and the decision to relocate after 12 months .....	8
5.	Fijian nationals appointed to the positions of off-site (after work) and on-site (workplace) residential supervisors .....	11
5.1	Performance of the Fijian supervisors .....	12
5.2	Training provided to the Fijian supervisors by Samex Peterborough .....	13
6.	Participation outcomes to date .....	14
6.1	Primary job placement outcomes .....	15
6.1.1	Examination of job placement outcomes .....	15
6.1.2	Consideration given to selection bias .....	16
6.1.3	Consideration given to job substitution .....	16
6.1.4	Consideration given to cultural accord .....	17
6.1.5	Consideration given to cultural context and relatedness .....	18
6.1.6	Provision of peer group employment and production-line work .....	21
6.2	Primary social outcomes .....	24
6.2.1	Creating social capital .....	31
6.2.2	Social inclusion/exclusion .....	35
6.3	Primary economic outcomes .....	37
7.	Area requiring improvements .....	42
7.1	Recruitment — problems and partial solution .....	42
7.2	Community based assessment — problem and solution .....	42
7.3	Community based preparation — problem and solution .....	43
7.4	Cape York Institute engaging in direct discussions with employer — problem and solution .....	43
7.5	Difficulties with Department of Immigration — problem .....	44
8.	Summary .....	47
Appendix 1	Discussion on muddled professionals	
Appendix 2	A word about 'orbits'	
Appendix 3	WPS Developmental Note #13 – Intervention, work and the environment	
Appendix 4	WPS Developmental Note #69 – The horticultural industry cannot grow the WPS whereas the meat processing industry offers more promise	
Appendix 5	The matter of funerals	
Appendix 6	WPS Developmental Note #11 – The use of distance	
Appendix 7	WPS Developmental Note #2 – Suitability assessments	
Appendix 8	Applicant details	

# *Boys from the Bush Projects*

IN-CONFIDENCE

This report contains commercial-in-confidence and client-privileged information.

## AURUKUN YOUTH ORBITING PROJECT Annual Progress Report No. 1

July 2016

The Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project (AYOP) is a joint venture between Boys from the Bush (BFTB) Projects (an incorporated not-for-profit association) and the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership. This project is a new adjunct to the Cape York Welfare Reform (CYWR) Agenda, the details of which can be found on the BFTB Projects website: [www.fromthebush.org](http://www.fromthebush.org) and the Cape York Partnerships website: [www.capeyorkpartnerships.org.au](http://www.capeyorkpartnerships.org.au).

### **1. Aurukun ... a social construct gone wrong?**

There is an urgent need to establish effective solutions for disengaged youths in the remote Far North Queensland community of Aurukun. This need has been highlighted by the CYWR Board.

In Aurukun, there are up to 80 young people of compulsory school/participation age who are disengaged from education, training and employment opportunities.

The likely trajectory of these young people will be, at best, not much different to the lives of their parents and grandparents. These are people with little education and no real marketable work skills. Few, if any, have ever held down a real job. They will say that they want a job. But there are no jobs for them in Aurukun and they are unwilling or unable to leave home to look for a job. What they would like is for the jobs to come to them — in Aurukun. But we know from decades of experience that when jobs are delivered to them few are willing to apply themselves. These people have long ago resigned themselves to a lifetime of idleness and dependency on welfare benefits, public housing and the delivery of welfare services, and many of their children have been quick to follow suit — intergenerational welfare dependency.

Young Aurukun women perhaps face the greatest challenge of all. Many are pregnant at an early age, often moving from one violent partner to another, with each relationship usually producing another child. In addition, many teenagers and young women are actually encouraged to have a child at an early age, as this brings another income to the family with less compliance requirements than other types of income support.

Many girls, like boys, have spent years indulging in drugs and alcohol and have little experience at maintaining sober relationships, and to socialise without drugs and alcohol, and how all relationships need not be sexual relationships. In the communities, there are more and more young single mothers and most of these young girls have little idea about how to care for their babies. Family knowledge and skills on good child-care practices was lost long ago. Today's young mothers have insufficient family support and few good role models.

There are no publically available child protection statistics covering Aurukun. However, the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Enquiry reported that based on 2012-13 data, the trend was that 1 in 1.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will be known to Queensland Child Safety Services, this compares to 1 in 4.2 of all Queensland children. This is an astonishing statistic. And the report noted that the number of Indigenous children in care of the state is likely to continue to grow at an unsustainable rate.

A few years back, one girl said to me, *“The girls here (referring to another Aboriginal community) walk around like raggedy dogs and they treat their babies like shit; they don’t feed them properly or give them any rest. They have babies after babies and just give them to their cousin-sisters to look after”*. This girl went on to say that these girls are all *“good for nothing lazy druggies and drinkers, dirty, with filthy mouths and lovers of boys”*.

I read in a newspaper a few years back, that the Northern Territory police sexual abuse taskforce had investigated two cases involving 12-year-old girls who had fallen pregnant. I knew a mother in Aurukun who allowed her 16-year-old son to bring home a 12-year-old-girl to live with him. A few years back a 15-year-old boy from Kowanyama did not want to join my work scheme because it meant leaving his 13-year-old live-in lover. His mother was a reasonably educated person who held a very responsible position in the community and was seemingly unwilling or unable to do anything about what went on in her own home.

The rate of sexual offences in Aurukun is 6.6 times greater than the Queensland average. The rate of teenage pregnancy is 5 times greater than the national average. Furthermore, between 2000 and 2012 there were 2,934 cases of reported sexually transmitted infections, which was 56 times greater than the Queensland average; 205 of these cases were under the age of 16 years, and 29 cases were under the age of 10 years.<sup>1</sup> Aurukun children are exposed to these depraved social norms and poor role models day in and day out from the day they are born.

Family homes are usually open to extended family. This means that it is not uncommon to have up to 20 people living or coming-and-going in a three-bedroom house with only one bathroom and toilet. These over-crowded, open family homes can become overwhelmed by all-sorts of trouble. As the house is used by everyone, often the effect is that it belongs to nobody and therefore nobody takes responsibility for it — nobody buys furniture, nobody cleans up, nobody carries out maintenance. The house is rowdy and you get little rest or sleep. People steal your food and personal possessions, and invade your privacy. On pension day and CDEP payday, the drinking starts.

Aurukun is supposed to be a “dry community”, but sly grog is a thriving business. The Aurukun style of drinking, like many Aboriginal communities, is to engage in group binge drinking sessions for the explicit purpose of getting drunk. First, the music is turned up full-blast. Then the drinking begins with the obligatory yells and screams for all to hear, followed by the heated arguments. Then comes the fights — the gruesome bloody fights where everyone beats up on each other for no good reason. It is not just the males that carry-on like this; I have seen young girls, mothers, aunties, and even grandmothers, staggering around blind drunk picking fights with whoever crosses their path or has upset them in some way. While all of this is going on, the children must fend for themselves. Some will take off to the homes of sober relatives, others will join older brothers, sisters, cousins and uncles on the streets.

There are two aspects to this that will increase the likelihood of these young people getting into trouble. Firstly, you have a large number of unsupervised youths coming together to form a multitude of both large and small open groups, some roaming the streets, others congregating around favourite haunts, mainly at night, looking for something to do. Some of these groups are closed groups out to create or uphold a certain image or reputation — a defined gang.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Preventing Youth Sexual Violence and Abuse in West Cairns and Aurukun*, Final Report, by Stephen Smallbone, Susan Rayment-McHugh, Dimity Smith, 2 September 2013, Griffith University.



Prisoners being sent to Cairns after the recent riots in Aurukun

STUART McLEAN



An aerial view of Aurukun in far north Queensland, about 100km from Weipa

BRENDAN RADKE

## The lessons of a 1987 death in custody went tragically unheeded in Aurukun

**JAMIE WALKER**  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR



The Boy had come good after the usual trouble with the grog and the police. But just when he was making a go of it, with a job as a stockman waiting for him, the demons reached out and dragged him down.

He was found dead in the Aurukun police lock-up on Friday, April 10, 1987. The Boy was 18. After a night of binge drinking and fighting, he had been arrested for drunkenness and was thrown into a cell to sleep it off. Instead, he knotted together strips of grey blanket and tried to hang himself.

The makeshift noose gave way and the Boy crashed to the concrete floor, biting through his tongue. He drowned in his own blood. People wouldn't say his name — still won't for the most part, all these years later — because the Wik people of Aurukun don't speak the names of the dead until the spirit is released ritually.

But no one in the dusty hamlet of blue and yellow painted homes near the tip of Cape York has forgotten the Boy or what happened to him. While the faces change, the story remains bleakly constant: smiling kids grow into troubled teens as the Boy did, having sex too young, too often drinking and brawling away their youth until they become parents themselves — and the sequence resets, to cascade through another generation.

Had he lived, the Boy would be 47 now. By rights he would have had children, possibly grandchildren, and the evidence suggests their lives would have been no easier than his was until that terrible denouement in the watch-house.

Yet to understand Aurukun and the crisis gripping remote indigenous communities like it, you need to know the Boy's story. A royal commission spent months on the case and in 1990 documented the "complex reality of contemporary life" in the township, a two-hour ride from the port centre of Weipa. For all the inquiries and welfare initiatives that followed, little has changed for the better.

The despair that engulfed the Boy has parallels in the violent, antisocial behaviour of the youths at the centre of a law-and-order breakdown in Aurukun that this week forced the evacuation of teachers for a second time and closed the local school.

Referring to the Boy, anthropologist David Martin tells *Inquirer*: "The true tragedy of this death is that it has been compounded many times, across many families in Aurukun."

Those familiar but searingly disruptive themes are playing out again as the Queensland police move in and the kids attend class under the boughs of the Corroboree Tree. This week *The Courier-*

*Mail* called Aurukun a "village of the damned". Watching the drama unfold, Martin can only shake his head. "This is just an appalling outcome," he says from the township.

His interest is more than academic. The 66-year-old researcher has not only devoted himself to the study of the Wik people and their language, he has lived their life, too. Martin married the Boy's aunt and their son Bruce was the Boy's first cousin. In whitefella terms, that is. In Wik culture, children have several parents, and to the Boy, Martin was his father and baby Bruce his little brother.

When Martin gave expert evidence to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody on the Boy's death, he straddled both worlds, Wik and white, in presenting a nuanced view of the pressures that bear down on young people in Aurukun.

Unfortunately, he says, much of what he said then would be valid today. "Aurukun is a set of disastrous outcomes," he explains. "There are good people here, trying to do good things ... but they are overwhelmed. There are new generations lost to their own society and their own culture, and to the potential of education to empower them."

The metrics that blighted the Boy's life in the 1970s and 80s have barely altered. Born in 1968, he was the eldest of four children, giving him special status in the family. The Boy belonged to the Comprabar clan, one of five tribal groups that were herded into Aurukun when German missionaries founded the settlement in 1904. But he never visited his traditional lands inland of Cape Keer-weer.

Lew Wyvill, who headed the royal commission, reported that what little exposure the Boy had to Wik culture was from his mother's side. He spoke the lilted language, but "there was no single dominant male within his extended kin network who provided a model for him or had input into the crucial period of the development of his masculine self-image".

Noel Pearson, the indigenous leader and thinker behind an ambitious welfare reform trial in Aurukun and other Cape York centres, says the absence of male exemplars is even more acute today, in part driving his scheme to place teens in boarding school or job programs away from the socially "toxic" environment. His experience of Aurukun dates back 25 years. "We have seen time and time again ... young people who have never seen their father work or their grandfather work ... to change their behaviour, they actually need to leave," Pearson says.

The penultimate tragedy for the Boy was that he did get out of Aurukun, and for a time this put him on track. Typically, he had left school as soon as he could, at grade nine. In those days, the Aurukun state school offered classes until Year 10. (The intermediate high school program was discontinued in 2014 after Pearson's Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy took over.)

It scarcely mattered for the Boy

Printed above is an article by Jamie Walker published in *The Weekend Australian*, 28-29 May, 2016, p. 20. Early Sunday morning, 8 May 2016, a group of teenagers tried to break into a departmental house occupied by two female teachers. The Aurukun police were unable to respond so they contacted the Aurukun school principal, Scott Fatnowna, and made him aware of the situation. Mr Fatnowna drove to the teachers' house to try to help. He was confronted by a group of 20 teenagers, one brandishing an axe. The teenagers assaulted Mr Fatnowna with the handle of the axe. They then stole his departmental vehicle and went for a joy ride around the community. On Tuesday 10 May 2016, the Aurukun teachers were evacuated from Aurukun. Several of the young people who attacked Mr Fatnowna had been referred to AYOP only days beforehand.

Breaking into council buildings or the homes of service providers or stealing their cars is a way for individuals or closed groups to create or uphold a certain image or reputation. When they are caught, some members of the community will publically condemn them and insist that they be punished or banished from the community. But privately, others will see it as funny. Some will see them as heroes — young people who bravely stood up to authority, who have taken on and defeated an external foe, who have taken on an oppressive system or an institution that has excluded them. See Section 5.2 - Primary Social Outcomes, for a case in point; the Aurukun boys in Peterborough breaking shop windows in the middle of the night and stealing a charity box.

The second problem with large numbers of unsupervised kids roaming the streets looking for something to do, while their parents snooze away or booze on, with alcohol purchased from the family food budget, is that sooner or later these kids will get hungry and start looking at breaking into storage areas or vehicles in an effort to find money, food and drink, or stimulants (petrol, aerosols, paint, texta pens, glues, etc.) This provides a second opportunity and a strong temptation to steal the vehicle and go for a joy ride.

There is no question about it; Aurukun is a very violent place where no person and their property is safe. In 2014, Aurukun had the highest criminal conviction rate in the nation. And I know that many offences go unreported.

Local doctors report that they spend just as much time dealing with mental health issues as they do with physical injuries and disease. They report seeing almost every day someone who has contemplated, or is contemplating, suicide, resulting from fear, trauma or grief. The suicide rate in Aurukun is outrageously high. The most common killers of Aurukun people are cardiovascular disease, cancer and respiratory illness, with injury and suicide following closely behind.<sup>2</sup>

There are a number of explanations for the ills of Aurukun (and other Aboriginal communities). For too long the dominant explanation has been their socioeconomic and political marginalisation as a result of past wrongs and the shortcoming of government policies. If it is not this, it is blamed on the grog, either as a cause or an effect. Take for example the article titled, “*Smallbone report: Past wrongs to blame for Aurukun crisis*” by Fiona Jose, printed in The Courier Mail, 19 March 2016. The article stated: *We can talk about the many proximate causes of the crisis in Aurukun (grog, welfare dependency, unemployment) but its ultimate explanation lies in government violence starting with the Aurukun Takeover in 1978 by the Queensland government under then-premier Job Bjelke-Petersen. The takeover resulted in the Presbyterian Church being kicked out of Aurukun and replaced by the Queensland government. The Smallbone report is the bitter harvest of this original violence at the hands of the state.* This claim that the violence that exists in Aurukun began when the missionaries left and the bureaucrats moved in, is a comical explanation for the ills of Aurukun.<sup>3</sup> What is more, it attaches far too much importance to exogenous factors.

This is exactly what occurred back in 2002 when Aurukun was in the grips of a petrol sniffing pandemic. In those days, the favoured explanations for this behaviour were; poverty, hunger, illness and dispossession of land. Whereas, my explanation, which was based on actual observations and discussions with sniffers, was that they were sniffing petrol because they **liked sniffing petrol**. To speak to them about the risks involved only added to its attraction. And from this straight forward common sense explanation came the elimination of petrol sniffing in Aurukun — at least while I was there.

Around the same time, Central Australia was in the grip of a petrol sniffing pandemic. This was also brought under control — not by alleviating poverty, or by satisfying any hunger, or by treating any illness, or by the provision of land. It was brought under control by introducing Opal low-aromatic unleaded fuel manufactured by British Petroleum.

---

<sup>2</sup> Apunipima Health Report 2014/15, [www.apunipima.org.au](http://www.apunipima.org.au)

<sup>3</sup> For a more comprehensive and accurate explanation on what took place with these remote Aboriginal missions and settlements in the 1960s and 1970s see my book titled: 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-Picking Scheme — A Critical Evaluation.

In my book titled, *The 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-Picking Scheme – A Critical Evaluation*, I describe a similar situation in relation to binge drinking. An explanation for this behaviour was that this pattern of consumption was established during the period of prohibition. Other more popular explanations ranged from their detachment from land and culture to poverty and prejudice. These are all symptom based theories, much like the explanations for petrol-sniffing and present day explanations for the ills of Aurukun. Here again, my common sense explanation is that **these people drink to get drunk, and they get drunk because they like getting drunk**.<sup>4</sup> And it is this straightforward common sense explanation that forms the basis of my highly effective drug and alcohol management strategy used by AYOP where prohibition is taken seriously. And those that say prohibition does not work, and cite the 1920-1933 USA prohibition law as an example, do not understand that the repeal of the USA prohibition laws was driven by the desire to recover lost taxes and a fear by the corporate rich that the disrespect of the prohibition law could lead to a disrespect of all laws, particularly property law.<sup>5</sup>

As a long-standing social work practitioner, my concern is not only with the abuse and neglect of children and young people, but also how observers have framed their understanding of what had or is taking place. It is from an understanding of how people and environment interact that a clearer understanding can begin and more effective interventions developed.

We know, of course, that much of our behaviour is governed by our environment. A proper study of the Aurukun environment must take into consideration the fact that there are other people and communities around the world that experience far greater socioeconomic and political marginalisation, yet they do not engage in the violence, theft and destruction of personal and public property that commonly occurs in Aurukun. Similarly, there are other people and communities around the world that consume large amounts of alcohol that do not engage in the violence that exists in Aurukun.

It is detrimental to the understanding and development of strategies to deal with disengaged youths when events that took place at different times, and under different circumstances, are just thrown out there willy-nilly and passed off as the reason for the present day misbehaviour of youths. Hard as it is for these people to accept, when individuals commit violent acts that are said to stem from past and present socioeconomic and political marginalisation, they are not legitimising any underlying socioeconomic or political grievance. Improvements in their socioeconomic and political position have not, and will not, stop the misbehaviour of these youths. There is something far more real and straightforward going on here.

## 2. What to do with these troublesome youths?

According to writer and former politician, Gary Johns, “[I]f you are young who are simultaneously attracted to the trappings of modernity but ill-equipped in terms of their education or their values to move fully into the wider world ... are fast becoming a lost generation. They have rejected the world in which their elders find value, but they are not equipped to embrace the alternative. They are caught in a destructive—often self-destructive—limbo.”<sup>6</sup>

This, so called, ‘stuck between two worlds’ explanation is certainly convenient, but I am not convinced that this is the correct, or the complete, explanation. I have been working with Aurukun youths and their families on and off for nearly two decades. Most, if not all, the young people that I have worked with have been poorly socialised. Some of them are seriously disturbed. **It is plain to me that their parents (including members of their extended family) are at fault.** And it serves no good to blame the behaviour of these youths on Joh Bjelke-Petersen’s government, or poverty, or dispossession from land and culture. These things will send naive policy development officers and inexperienced practitioners down a well-travelled road, but a road short of substance, and has failed to deliver any real solutions.

---

<sup>4</sup> I do not agree with the thesis of the Canadian psychologist Bruce K. Alexander and his colleagues that in the main addiction can be contributed to ones living conditions. Here again, I think they have attached far too much importance to exogenous factors.

<sup>5</sup> Levine, H.G. (1984), *The Alcohol Problem in America: From Temperance to Alcoholism*, *British Journal of Addiction*, Vol. 79, pp. 109-119.

<sup>6</sup> Johns, G. (2006). *Aboriginal Education: Remote Schools and the Real Economy*, p. 16, The Menzies Research Centre.

What I have seen in these remote communities is nothing short of parents behaving badly. I have seen so many hot-headed self-indulged parents place their vices before the wellbeing of their children (keeping in mind that this sort of thing is not restricted to remote Aboriginal communities). Worse still, I have seen clear cases of child abuse and neglect being passed off as “cultural”, and where those who stand in judgement or dare criticize them and their children are branded “racists” or said to hold a “cultural bias”. Should the judge be Indigenous, he or she is branded an apostate or a “coconut”.

From the day many of their children were born, they were left to do as they please. This has nothing to do with a cultural difference — this has everything to do with parents walking away from their responsibilities. See Appendix 1 for a discussion on this topic.

The Cape York Institute has come to the realisation that there are no education models that can effectively meet the needs of these poorly socialised and disturbed youths (sometimes referred to as disengaged youths). Education funding models do not fund the level of intensive, holistic support and supervision required for this group. Sending these young people away to secondary school is setting them, and the schools involved, up to fail. It also puts other students at risk.

The Cape York Institute reports that there are many ineffective and partial solutions out there that have, and continue to be, developed and delivered in a siloed manner, most of which are described as “engagement activities” (like free breakfast, art and craft activities, camps, and games) all of which are far from addressing the real problem. Some have made the situation manifestly worse. Sooner or later, someone will again come up with the old crazy idea of sending these troublesome youths out to some remote outstation for a time, and rattle on about this being culturally appropriate. The standard response of these bored youths will be resistance and preoccupation with escape plans. Stories have been handed down about their incredible escapes — young people who had walked for miles across open woodland plains in the sweltering heat, cutting through mosquito and midge infested mangrove swamps, and swimming across crocodile infested rivers, to gain their freedom. And then, having gained their freedom, the cycle repeats itself. But along the way, certain vested interests would have done well as politicians and senior government bureaucrats clamour to buy off any discontent. That is to say, at least one family will end up with a free boat with unlimited supply of fuel, perhaps a free vehicle, generator, camping and fishing equipment, and unlimited supply of food. All of which will end up being used for their own enjoyment. But at least any complaint about the government failing in its duty would have dissipated.

In 2013, the Director of the Cape York Institute, Noel Pearson, asked me if I would return to Cape York, as the situation with Aurukun youths had deteriorated markedly since my departure. Certainly, in the past, I had great success in managing the behaviour of these young people and their parents. The senior sergeant of the Aurukun police station reported that I had virtually eliminated juvenile crime and other social problems such as petrol sniffing.

### **3. BFTB Projects approach**

BFTB Projects is an organisation that works with groups of disadvantaged youths (many of whom are emotionally and psychologically disturbed) and orbits them to real employment opportunities under intensive support and supervision in normal environments well away from their home community. See Appendix 2 for a definition of “orbits”.

A more detailed discussion on the underlying theory of the BFTB Projects approach can be found in Appendix 3 – WPS Developmental Note #13, *Intervention, work and the environment*.

Central to the BFTB Projects approach is the provision of real work. Work has both manifest and latent functions. The manifest function is income. The latent function is that work provides us with an activity, purpose, identity, structure of time and place, an avenue for creativity and innovation, and the enlargement of our social experience. In short, work is the means by which most people play a full and active part in community life. It is where we express our basic humanity and differentiate ourselves.

The BFTB Projects approach is based on the indisputable truth that the best way to change or contain the behaviour of these young people is to change their environment. Offering vulnerable youths the opportunity to remove themselves from the distractions and negative influences of a dysfunctional family and community environment, and providing them with employment and best practice holistic support and supervision in a functional community, can, and does, change their behaviour, or at least contain their behaviour. The fact of the matter is that you cannot be running around the community in the middle of the night breaking shop windows when you are home in bed, sound asleep, exhausted by a hard day's work.

BFTB Projects began developing this approach in 2005 by placing Indigenous youths from Cape York and the Kimberley region into horticultural work in South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. Our results include an unprecedented high employment retention rate and a dramatic reduction in antisocial behaviour. See Section 5 2 - Primary Social Outcomes.

In 2006, I turned my attention towards the meat processing industry. See Appendix 4 - WPS Developmental Note #69, *The horticultural industry cannot grow the WPS whereas the meat processing industry offers more promise.*

In 2009, I turned my attention to placing Aboriginal youths from the Northern Territory into meat processing work in New South Wales and South Australia using a more advanced project design and vastly improved residential off-site (after work) support and supervision. We not only maintained our unprecedented high employment retention rate over a longer period, we also achieved a unique near zero use of drugs and alcohol and a near zero offending rate. See RAWS Progress Reports #3 and #4 at [www.fromthebush.org/papers](http://www.fromthebush.org/papers)

#### **4. Establishment of the Peterborough group and the decision to relocate after 12 months**

The original project design was for the establishment of several meat processing groups and a fruit picking group. However, due to budgetary constraints we could only proceed with a single meat processing group. Peterborough was chosen as an ideal site for a single work group for young Aurukun boys for the following reasons:

- Samex is one of the very few meat processing plants that is willing to employ 15 year olds — the minimum age a child can be employed in full-time work and the starting age of AYOP target group.
- Samex is one of the very few meat processing plants that does not carry out pre-employment drug tests, otherwise most of our target group would not get into this industry.
- Samex is one of the very few meat processing plants that does not carry out pre-employment medical and fitness tests.
- Samex is one of the very few meat processing plants that was willing to employ up to 10 Aurukun youths sight unseen.
- The unique opportunity to lease the Peterborough railway barracks which has 14 rooms, shower and toilet block, lounge and large kitchen and dining room. This facility is a short distance from the main street and within walking distance of the meat processing plant.
- The demographics of the town are ideal. It has no welfare office or Aboriginal community holding to a different set of beliefs and behaviour that would distract our young participants and work in opposition to our project.
- Peterborough is a small country town 3 hours' drive from Adelaide. This is far enough to deter participants from leaving, yet not too difficult or expensive to be the fly in point.

In hindsight, the lack of baseline employment standards compared to other employers, as outlined in the first few points above, pointed to concerns that became evident later, where this attitude was reflected in a range of less functional aspects in the management culture. They were:

- Samex’s promise to employ up to 12 young people never eventuated, with only half that number engaged.
- Despite assurances of full-time employment, Samex could offer only part-time casual employment. The average number of hours per week worked by the Aurukun boys was:
  - Wilson 30.43 hrs pw (36.27 hrs)
  - Jarrod 22.80 hrs pw (22.39 hrs)
  - Rayden 23.46 hrs pw (21.09 hrs)
  - Zantack 20.84 hrs pw (19.82 hrs)
  - Jack 19.92 hrs pw (19.73 hrs)
  - Desmond 14.16 hrs pw (14.13 hrs)

Moreover, since the start of the year their hours were dropping (average hours since the beginning of the year are shown above in brackets). Samex’s promise to provide fulltime employment never eventuated and was tracking in reverse.

- Due to the low number of hours, the boys could never get ahead financially. The average income of the Aurukun boys working for Samex was:
  - Wilson \$12,364.70 ÷ 21 weeks (excluding Christmas holiday) = \$588.79 pw
  - Jarrod \$13,109.13 ÷ 39 weeks (excluding Christmas & sickness) \$336.13 pw
  - Rayden \$13,568.30 ÷ 39 weeks (excluding Christmas holiday) = \$347.90 pw
  - Zantack \$12,661.62 ÷ 35 weeks (excluding Christmas holiday & injury) = \$361.76 pw
  - Jack \$8,194.78 ÷ 30 weeks (excluding Christmas holiday) = \$273.15 pw
  - Desmond \$1,658.10 ÷ 7 weeks (excluding Christmas holiday) = \$236.87 pw

Their living expenses totalled \$250.00 pw.

Samex shut down from 27.6.16 to 17.7.16. Due to the low income of the boys, they were unable to pay for their living expenses over this period. Samex’s “solution” to this was to put the boys on welfare. When I became aware of what Samex was doing, I immediately cancelled their Centrelink appointments.

By way of comparison, in the first week with their new employer, the boys earn the following amounts.

- Rayden \$797.09 pw (5 day week)
- Jack \$747.95 pw (5 day week)
- Jarrod \$566.10 pw (4 day week)
- Zantack \$566.10 pw (4 day week)

- Samex would not sign up to any Memorandum of Understanding that established targets and reciprocal roles and responsibilities.
- Samex’s promise to provide accredited training to the young people did not eventuate. In all the time they were at Peterborough, they received only one 2-hour training session that was delivered on a Saturday.
- Samex is an old meat processing plant using old equipment prone to frequent breakdowns.
- Unreliable stock flow and complications with product buyers resulted in reduced hours at very short notice.
- The blurring of the division between on-site and off-site behaviours by the Samex plant manager had become a serious problem. For more information, see Section 6.2 - Primary Social Outcomes.
- The actions and statements of Samex management staff on occasion were offensive and contradictory:
  - I had personally heard the Samex plant manager make disgusting racist comments about the boys when she appeared to be inebriated, e.g. “*Dirty little black bastards*”.

- The Samex Director stated that if we help any of the boys to move to another employer offering full-time employment, then we can all leave. He said that only after they had been there for an additional 12 months (2 years in total) that he will allow some to move on to another abattoir if they so wish.
- The Samex plant manager said that the boys had confided in her that they wanted to go home and that they had sabotaged plant equipment so that they would be sent home. The boys denied this and no evidence has been provided in relation to these allegations.
- Then on several occasions the Samex management staff alleged that the boys stated to them that they did not want to leave Peterborough so therefore they should stay. Their explanation for the boys denying that they had said this was that the boys are afraid to tell us the truth, whereas they are not afraid to tell them the truth. This counters our experience and what the boys were telling their families. Moreover, it discounts our role to make decisions on behalf the boys, and contradicts their expressed dissatisfaction of the boys.
- A Samex supervisor stated to me that the Samex plant manager asked her to make a false statement against the boys in order to extract a (false?) confession of sabotage.
- A Samex supervisor warned me that the Samex plant manager can be very vindictive if she does not get her way. After we left Peterborough, the Samex plant manager came out with a number of spiteful claims against the Fijian supervisors, the boys and myself. For example, she intimated that she had gone to her local Member of Parliament to say that the Fijian supervisors had borrowed money and received an old wooden rolling pin from a local elderly lady. I was told that the local Member of Parliament referred this “serious” matter to Senator Nick Xenophon’s office, and the Senator’s office in turn referred this “serious” matter to the Cape York Institute. What makes this event more comical is that the Fijian supervisors say that they have never borrowed any money from anyone. Even if they did, it is none of the business of the Samex plant manager and Senator Xenophon’s office.
- I am aware that the Samex plant manager would regularly drink alcohol in the presence of our young people in violation of our strict prohibition rules.
- The Samex plant manager had invited our young people to her house on a number of occasions when she was inebriated and behaved in a most slovenly manner towards our young people.

The main problems in Peterborough were our inability to increase the number of participants, the lack of fulltime employment and low income, and the need for the supervisors to receive greater support and supervision. Many of the other lesser problems provided sufficient cause to relocate the project, but these main problems were going to destroy the project.

To ensure that these problems do not repeat themselves, I decided to divide the group into two smaller groups and place them in two separate abattoirs in south-eastern New South Wales where both the young people and their supervisors could receive greater support and supervision and where the young people will be provided with fulltime employment by reputable employers.

The relocation was carried out with textbook precision and coordination, as outlined below:

- May-June 2016: Discussions took place with Junee and Young abattoirs located in the south-east of New South Wales.
- 8, 15 & 22 June All members of the Peterborough group receive Q-fever blood tests, skin tests, and vaccinations.
- Friday 24 June Samex shut down for 3 weeks.
- Tuesday 4 July: Work vehicle purchased in Adelaide for the second group and driven to Peterborough.
- Wednesday 6 July: The first group (1 Fijian supervisor, 1 Northern Territory role model, and 2 Aurukun boys) left Peterborough for Junee.
- Friday 8 July: The first group attended their medicals and induction training with the Junee abattoir.
- Monday 11 July: The first group started work at the Junee abattoir.

- Tuesday 12 July: The furniture removalist picked up our furniture from the Peterborough railway barracks.
- Tuesday 12 July: The second group (1 Fijian supervisor, 1 Northern Territory role model, and 2 Aurukun boys) left Peterborough for Young.
- Thursday 14 July: The furniture arrives in Junee and the first group moved into their rental home.
- Friday 15 July: The second group attended their medical assessment with Hilltop Meats abattoir at Young.
- Monday 18 July: The second group attended their induction at the Young abattoir.
- Tuesday 19 July: The second group started work at the Young abattoir.
- Wednesday 20 July: Furniture belonging to the second group was transported from Junee to Young.
- Thursday 20 July: The second group moved into their rental home at Young.
- Monday 1 August: Meeting takes place with the management of Gundagai Meat Processors.

To overcome the problem of providing employment for 15 year old youths that test positive for drugs, it has been decided to re-establish a fruit-picking group at Leeton in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area in southern New South Wales. An interesting coincident is that Leeton was the site of the first 1966 Northern Territory Aboriginal fruit-picking group developed by the Northern Territory Administration Welfare Branch.<sup>7</sup>

## 5. Fijian nationals appointed to the positions of off-site (after work) and on-site (workplace) residential supervisors

Having highly supported and highly supervised accommodation and employment is a key component of the BFTB Projects approach. The only supervised accommodation model proven to work for these young people is the **live-in carer/supervisor model**. As demonstrated, any other supervised accommodation model will not meet the need of these young people. See RAWs Progress Reports #3 at [www.fromthebush.org/papers](http://www.fromthebush.org/papers)

The original methodology was based around the horticultural industry (fruit-picking, vine and tree pruning in the South Australian Riverland region and the Murray Valley and Sunraysia regions of Victoria) with on-site (workplace) supervisors who were required to be available for some off-site (after work) support and supervision. After a time, this model gave way to the employment of designated on-site supervisors and designated off-site carer/supervisors. In 2007, the project rolled over to the meat processing industry with off-site carer/supervisors only.

The first trial of a combined residential on-site and off-site carer/supervisor took place in 2006 with the Renmark fruit-picking group. The second trial took place in 2013 with the Peterborough meat processing group. Depending upon to the characteristics/qualities of the supervisor, this proved to be a much more effective model.

My experience has shown that ordinary generic youth workers do not generally hold the same passion, focus and skill-sets to manage these work groups effectively and professionally. Supervision provided by these youth workers has been associated with poor supervision, including the exploitation of the vulnerabilities of our target group and engaging in practices that increase our clients' use and abuse of drugs and alcohol, increase their level of apathy, and increase their derision and victimisation.

---

<sup>7</sup> James, M (2015), The 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-Picking Scheme—A Critical Evaluation, Australian eBook Publishers.

BFTB Projects has pursued various supervision models using Indigenous Australians. However, finding suitable role models with the required skill sets has proven to be impossible.

The use of **Fijian expatriates** as **off-site** residential carer/supervisors was first trialled between 2010 and 2013. They proved to be suitable, however, due to a range of reasons there were very few available.

The use of **Fijian nationals** as **off-site** and **on-site** residential carer/supervisors brought to Australia specifically for the Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project (AYOP) is a trial.

BFTB Projects is an approved Special Programme under regulation 2.60D(d) of the *Migration Act 1958 (Cth)*, and a Special Programme Sponsor with the ability to sponsor Fijian nationals under Class TE (Cultural/Social), Subclass 416 (Special Programme) visa, to the positions of volunteer off-site (after work) and on-site (workplace) carer/supervisor for AYOP.

We are now one year into this three year trial of using **Fijian nationals** as combined **on-site** and **off-site** residential carer/supervisors, and the trial is proceeding well.

There are a number of reasons why these Fijian nationals are proving to be suitable residential carer/supervisors. They are:

- The residential carers/supervisors are carefully assessed prior to recruitment, for the appropriate knowledge, skills, attitude and underlying motivations to undertake the position.
- They are remunerated at a rate similar to what they would receive in Fiji. This is important because Australians remunerated at this rate are likely to be much less skilled than their Fijian counterparts. Moreover, Australians with requisite skills are far less likely to be willing to live with, care for, and work alongside our clients in a meat processing plant.
- They were more respectful to our clients and better able to follow instructions than we have found with many Australian residential carer/supervisors.
- They were not hamstrung by so-called “progressive” ideology that has muddled the minds of so many youth workers, social workers, community development workers, and public policy development officers working in this general field of practise.
- They provide a strong physical presence that reduces outbursts of violence and incidences of bullying and intimidation, which characterises a number of young people in our target group.
- They have a calmer temperament where differences in their upbringing and culture elicit cooler behavioural responses when frustrated or provoked. Yet, quite capable of providing vulnerable and impaired youths with desperately needed behavioural boundaries along with good care and protection.
- They maintained their identity with ancestral land and sea whilst still engaging in work orbits far from home, i.e. economic assimilation/integration has not resulted in the loss of their identity, language and customs.
- They help to remove the division of labour, division of responsibility, and division of authority based on skin colour.

## 5.1 Performance of the Fijian supervisors

Thus far, two Fijian nationals have been engaged — Mr Semi Cagilaba and Mr Toduadua Ratacinaovalasi, to the combined positions of off-site and on-site residential carer/supervisors at the Peterborough work site in South Australia. On 6 July 2016, Mr Cagilaba was transferred to our new group at Juneec in south-

east New South Wales. On 12 July 2016, Mr Ratacinaovalasi was transferred to our new group at Young in south-east New South Wales.

A third supervisor, Mr Waisake Kativerata, was to arrive from Fiji on the week beginning 27 June 2016 to take charge of a third group, but his visa has been delayed bureaucratically with a section of government.

Mr Cagilaba arrived in Australia on his 416 (Special Programme) visa on 10 July 2015. Mr Ratacinaovalasi arrived in Australia on his 416 (Special Programme) visa on 13 November 2015. The personal details of these people can be found in: *Progress report on the use of Fijian nationals as carer/supervisors for the Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project*, Progress Report #1, January 2016.

These front-line workers are of strategic importance. Their work can have a significant impact on the lives of the young people in their charge, and their ability to maintain their employment and acceptance in the host communities.

This report will not go into the detail of their on-site and off-site performance. Sufficeth to say, these Fijian supervisors need intensive support and supervision. Left to their own devices for any length of time, they can become lazy, lose direction, and degrade both the administrative and structural systems and professional practice standards.

It is important to understand that the work of these front-line workers can be inherently difficult to monitor. Their work is often not visible or readily observable or measurable. Furthermore, front-line workers in general are particularly susceptible to providing a narrative, or concealing certain information that better support their actions, or lack of actions. On several occasions the Fijians were pulled up on providing information and a narrative that was not consistent with outcomes (i.e. they were not doing what they were told to do and were concealing certain things). This particularly troublesome, but common, behaviour can, however, be kept in check by intensive professional support and supervision. And as long as this is provided, I consider selected Fijian supervisors are suitable for this sort of work. Without their inclusion, this project could not proceed.

Another immensely important aspect to the use of these Fijian nationals, as combined on-site and off-site supervisors, is the aspect of cost. The Fijians are required to work alongside our young people in the meat processing plant to set the pace and standard of work that is required by their employer, to provide our young people with encouragement, and, where required, to correct any misbehaviour. The only way this arrangement can conform to the strict regulations that govern meat processing plants is for the Fijians to be chronicled as BFTB Project contractors or consultants. BFTB Projects is therefore responsible for their professional training and supervision, including workers compensation insurance. The production-line work that the supervisors perform for the abattoir in the performance of their duties for BFTB Projects is paid to BFTB Projects. It is not paid to the Fijian supervisors. BFTB Projects uses these payments to contribute to the overall costs of the projects, including the training provided to the Fijians and their workers compensation insurance.

This arrangement has, for the first time, enabled us to bring the supervisor-client ratio down to the ideal level of 1:2. With all past projects, I have asked the meat processing plant to contribute to the general operating cost of the project, but they have always refused. They say that there is no benefit or no competitive benefit in employing troublesome Aboriginal youths over other more agreeable sources of labour. This has necessitated our complete dependency on government funding which has always been very difficult to obtain and remains fickle. But under this new arrangement, meat processing plants have agreed to pay for any production-line work that the Fijian supervisors perform for the abattoir in the performance of their duties for BFTB Projects.

## 5.2 Training provided to the Fijian supervisors by Samex Peterborough

It was mentioned in the *Progress report on the use of Fijian nationals as carer/supervisors for the Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project*, dated January 2016, that Samex Peterborough was initially reticent about allowing the Fijians to come on-site as support workers/supervisors of our young workers. But after seeing them in action, the company had become a strong supporter of this innovation.

Up until recently, the Fijians had been restricted to working alongside our young people in the by-products and hides section. I requested that they also be given the opportunity to work alongside our young people on the slaughter floor, boning room, and offal packing areas, but the Samex plant manager said that this would require pre-requisite training and she was unwilling to provide them with this training while they remain on a one-year visa. This, along with other requirements, prompted me to submit an application to the Department of Immigration to grant the Fijian supervisors a 2 year visa. This application was approved. But it turned out that the Samex plant manager allowed them to work alongside our young people in the boning room and offal packing areas without any pre-requisite training.

## 6. PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES TO DATE

BFTB Projects – Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project (AYOP) commenced operation in May 2015 with the arrival of the first Northern Territory role model, Anton McMillan. The first Aurukun boy, Wilson Marbendinar, arrived on the 8 August 2015.

The following graph (Graph 1.0) shows the month all participants arrived and the month they departed or remain in the project up to 30 June 2016.

**Graph 1.0** Names and month individuals joined AYOP and the month they departed or remain in the project up to 30 June 2016.



The primary job placement outcomes achieved and the key events that occurred in relation to the job placement and job retentions are discussed in the following sections.

## 6.1 Primary job placement outcomes

The primary job placement outcomes as of the 30 June 2016:

- 10 young people from Cape York and the Northern Territory were placed into the casual employment of Samex Peterborough.
- 10 (100%) of these young people reached the 3 month (12 weeks) milestone.
- 9 (90%) of these young people reached the 6 month (24 weeks) milestone. The young person from the Northern Territory that left the project in March has asked if he can return.
- 7 (70%) of these young people remain in employment.
  - 4 (66%) of the 6 Aurukun participants remain in the project.
  - 2 (33%) of the 6 Aurukun participants left the project.
  - 1 (100%) of the 1 Coen participant remains in the project.
  - 2 (66%) of the 3 Northern Territory participants remain in the project.

### 6.1.1 Examination of job placement outcomes

The Samex plant manager, Ms Duggan, stated that very few Indigenous people have been employed by her company. The company has neither an Indigenous employment target nor an Indigenous employment strategy. We are therefore unable to compare the outcomes of this project against any prior Indigenous employment program operated by, or in cooperation with, Samex Peterborough.

I am, however, aware of other meat processing companies that have hosted an Indigenous employment program. The only company that was willing to release its results to me was the Brazilian based giant JBS Swift. This company reported achieving a 5% retention rate of Indigenous workers over 6 months. This compares to our 90% retention rate after 6 months. Moreover, AYOP is servicing a far more challenging target group.

And how does this result compare to the outcomes of the BFTB Project 2009-2012 Remote Area Work Scheme (RAWS)?

In 2012, 8 (57.1%) of the 14 participants in RAWS reached the 6 months (26 weeks) milestone, and 7 (50%) of these went on to complete 12 months, with approximately 80% of these completing a second year. What these results show is that AYOP is on track to achieving a better result than this earlier project with Rockdale Beef/JBS Swift – Riverina Beef.

And how does this better result compare to the outcomes of the BFTB Projects 2007-2008 Work Placement Scheme (WPS)?

The Tatiara Meats abattoir group trial paved the way for the development of the Wonthaggi and Albany abattoir groups and the extension of the Participation [Responsibility] Agreements from six months to one year. These combined groups achieved a 68% retention rate (N = 38) over 1 year. It was noted at the time that rarely, if ever, have outcomes of this magnitude ever been achieved with our target group. The majority of those who dropped out did so within the first 3 months (21% of total). Thereafter, the dropout rate remained a low 5.2% of total between 3 and 6 months, 5.2% of total between 6 and 9 months, and 5.2% of total between 9 and 12 months. Three participants remained in the scheme after 12

months. What these results show is that AYOP is outperforming these earlier trial groups in every measure. This stands to reason for our methodology has improved over the years.

This 90% retention rate over the first 6 months achieved by AYOP can also be compared to the general annual retention rate of Rockdale Beef/JBS Swift – Riverina Beef which was approximately 20%.

We can also compare our results with the annual general retention rate of the overall meat processing industry which is approximately 38% over 12 months. Certainly, Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) has stated that the major threat to the sustainability and certainly the continued growth of the Australian red meat industry is the industry's inability to attract and retain an effective, stable and skilled workforce. Meat processing plants, in particular, are feeling the impact of the high turnover rate, especially in the skilled positions such as boners, slicers, slaughtermen and tradespeople. Processing plants in particular are spending a disproportionate amount of time and resources advertising, recruiting and training, only to experience the "revolving door of turnover". Production, safety, morale and the long term sustainability of the industry are all suffering. To a certain extent, this is being alleviated by the 457 visa program.

Based upon these comparisons, AYOP is tracking exceptionally well.

Another interesting comparison can be made with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) earlier Intensive Assistance programs. In a typical year 38,000 Indigenous people were referred to this program. It had been estimated that only 4% of those who entered these Intensive Assistance programs receive a job because of the program. Again, based on this comparison, AYOP is tracking exceptionally well.

### **6.1.2 Consideration given to selection bias**

Another important factor to consider when evaluating job placement outcomes is commonly referred to as selection bias. Selection biases are important in understanding the net effect of employment programs, because they increase the likelihood that outcomes will be skewed upward by those who may have found and maintained employment without intensive assistance. Alternatively, it considers the possibility that this exceptional result was due, at least in part, to the selection of the least disadvantaged job seeker, rather than improved outcomes for the most in need.

This may be particularly relevant for AYOP because such selection is likely to be amplified if participants were selected on their agreement to commit themselves to a minimum of two year in a meat processing plant far from their family and community. Presumably, the least confident and least experienced job-seekers may find this requirement quite daunting and therefore reluctant to join.

The 6 participants from Aurukun that joined AYOP were recommended by Cape York Institute recruitment officers. They were all of compulsory school/participation age. Jarrod, Zantack and Rayden joined the project when they were 15 years old. Jack, Wilson and Desmond joined the project when they were 16 years old. With their parents' knowledge, all had dropped out of school 12 months or more prior to joining the project. All could barely read and write, tell the time, or describe/measure time, weights, volume, and distance. This information alone confirms that BFTB Projects is targeting highly disadvantaged voluntary job seekers. At least one was on target for penetrating deeper into the criminal justice system. See Section 6.2 – Primary Social Outcomes.

### 6.1.3 Consideration given to job substitution

Another important factor to consider in assessing the effectiveness of AYOP is to ascertain if the job retentions came at the expense of other individuals.

Substitution effects are usually an issue when seeking to understand the macroeconomic effects of labour market programs.<sup>8</sup> The following questions need to be asked:

- 1) Had Samex Peterborough already committed to Indigenous employment targets, and therefore, the positions offered to AYOP would have been filled by other Indigenous job-seekers anyway?
- 2) Would these job vacancies have been filled by non-Indigenous job seekers?

The short answer to both of these questions is “No”. The issue here is not the outcomes achieved to date (increased Indigenous employment), but rather isolating the contribution of AYOP in order to accurately assess what additional contribution it is making to the labour market. As mentioned, Samex Peterborough has no Indigenous employment target nor did it have any Indigenous employment strategy. Furthermore, none of these positions were Australian Employment Covenant (AEC) positions or Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) positions.

According to the Samex Peterborough plant manager, the Samex meat processing plant has a very low retention rate, perhaps in the order of 20 - 25% over 12 months. This suggests that AYOP participants had taken up some positions that had been relinquished by non-Indigenous job seekers. Moreover, given that Samex Peterborough has been recruiting job seekers throughout 2015 and 2016, it is likely that AYOP participants were taking up positions that could not be filled by non-Indigenous job seekers.

What this means is that there is little or no job substitution going on. It appears that all positions taken up by AYOP were either new positions or positions that would have otherwise gone unfulfilled.

### 6.1.4 Consideration given to cultural accord

There are very few employment options for those young Indigenous people living in remote communities who would like to work outside the Work-for-the-Dole programme. For young people to be assisted in taking up private sector employment, they must be willing and able to leave home and community for long periods of time.

Hunter and Grey (2004) have argued that young Indigenous people are unable or unwilling to leave their home and community to gain mainstream employment because of their strong social, cultural and spiritual links with their land and the complex social bonds which link Indigenous families and communities together.<sup>9</sup> Back in 2005, BFTB Project debunked this claim, and it has continued to debunk this claim ever since. Indigenous people, particularly young people from remote and very remote communities are definitely willing and able to leave home, similar to that of non-Indigenous people, and they are already doing so. The numbers of young people from all around the country wanting to join AYOP is further testimony of their willingness to engage in economic mobility.

---

<sup>8</sup> Hunter, B.H., Gray, M. and Chapman, B. (2000), ‘An analysis of data from the longitudinal survey of ATSI job seekers, Topic III: Labour market programs and Indigenous Australians’, A Report to Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

<sup>9</sup> Hunter, B.H. & Gray, M.C. (2004). *Patterns of Indigenous Job Search Activity*. CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 263, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

A second common myth is that young Indigenous people cannot cope with the structural and task demands of mainstream private sector employment, after many years on welfare within families who have spent most if not all their lives on welfare. Speaking about welfare dependency, Noel Pearson said that:

*“Passive welfare is now well embedded in Aboriginal society. It is almost seen as the Aboriginal way, part of the culture. Recipients of passive welfare are far removed from the real economy and have been for a long time now. Children who have grown up in this passive welfare economy have little understanding of and have never experienced life in the real economy. Values, expectations and aspirations are limited in this artificial context.”*<sup>10</sup>

Somewhat similar, Gary Johns (2006) says:

*“[T]he young who are simultaneously attracted to the trappings of modernity but ill-equipped in terms of their education or their values to move fully into the wider world ... are fast becoming a lost generation. They have rejected the world in which their elders find value, but they are not equipped to embrace the alternative. They are caught in a destructive—often self-destructive—limbo.”*<sup>11</sup>

The results of AYOP speak for themselves. BFTB Projects have located a large number of young people who are willing to leave home for work in the meat processing industry. In addition, our results confirm that young Indigenous people can successfully work in the private sector and live far from home and community, **provided they are removed from the distractions and negative influences of family and community and provided they receive good support and supervision in their new environment.** If they are not provided with this good support and supervision, most will fail and they will drag others and the project down with them.

AYOP has shown that not all of these young people are yet to have “*Values, expectations and aspirations limited in this artificial [welfare] context*”, and not all of these young people are “*caught in a destructive—often self-destructive—limbo*”.

The results of AYOP also supports our earlier findings that the younger inexperienced participants proved more resilient than one would have expected, and they are better able to accept the structural and task demands of private sector employment than many of the older participants who are more embedded in welfare dependency and have had more exposure to various artificial community-based work and life skills programs.

### 6.1.5 Consideration given to cultural context and relatedness

I selected meat processing work for its ability to engage young disadvantaged Indigenous job seekers that best matches their aspirations and abilities. Plus it’s a labour intensive industry offering three unskilled labouring positions to ever 1 skilled positions.

Many young Aborigines, particularly those from remote northern communities, enjoy this type of work and they can be very good at it for a number of reasons.

A) Young people in good health are usually strong and usually have good eyesight, good reflexes, good fine motor skills and good hand-eye coordination — all necessary attributes for good knife work.

B) Many young males from remote communities are accustomed to the slaughtering of wild animals for food, along with the accompanying sensations (texture, sights, sounds and smells) involved in this sort of work. You can see this taking place in the following pictures I took a number of years ago in the Torres Strait.

---

<sup>10</sup> Pearson, N. (2000a). *Our Right to Take Responsibility*. Noel Pearson and Associates, Cairns Queensland. p.30.

<sup>11</sup> Johns, G. (2006). *Aboriginal Education: Remote Schools and the Real Economy*, The Menzies Research Centre. p16.



Pictured above are Boys from the Bush program participants butchering turtles in the Torres Strait in 2002.

Today, like in traditional times, male prestige is associated with bringing home meat. This can be seen in the Torres Strait and throughout Aboriginal Australia. Having said this, half the Aurukun boys complain that working on the “gut truck” makes them feel sick, dispelling any notion that all of these kids are accustomed to the texture, sights, sounds and smells of this sort of work.



Pictured above is Jarrad Ornyengaia working on the “gut truck” at Samex Peterborough in 2016.

C) The families of most Northern Territory participants have a historical connection to the pastoral (cattle) industry. It is on this point that I draw upon my earlier work in narrative therapy. Narrative therapists believe that people live their lives by stories, and no one’s life story is free from ambiguity or contradiction. The role of the therapist is to help search out more preferred stories from the client’s mass of experiences, and to elevate these alternative narratives to a more central position. When I

recruit young people to work in abattoirs it involves me telling the story of how this type of work is part-and-parcel of what their great-grandfathers, grandfathers, fathers and uncles were doing over the past 125 years, before the time of welfare, CDEP and Work for the Dole programme. Young applicants and their families are shown the above and below sets of pictures as part of the community based suitability assessment interview.



Pictured above are BFTB program participants working at Tabro Meats, Victoria, in 2007.



Pictured above is Djinabudjee Jaffer working on the slaughter floor at Samex Peterborough, in 2015.

It's a return to the 'golden age' when their families were the mainstay of the northern cattle industry. It's this historical connection that gives **context** and **relatedness**. Having said this, few Aurukun people were involved in the pastoral industry.

### 6.1.6 Provision of peer group employment and production-line work

Peer or mutual support is the sixth structural component of BFTB Projects methodology. See WPS Developmental Note #20, [www.fromthebush.org/articles](http://www.fromthebush.org/articles). This was recognised as an important factor back in 1999 when the project was being developed. My 2005 report on the first fruit-picking trial in South Australia, said:

*“To help balance this need for a prolonged exposure to new patterns of behaviour and genuine pleas of homesickness, participants will be given the opportunity to be placed along with a family member or friend. These small peer groups will share a common identity, language, lifestyle and needs and provide each other with mutual support. This mutual support during difficult times is an important ingredient to a successful work placement.”<sup>12</sup>*

Perhaps another way to describe these aspects of the work dynamics is to mention the distinction between **task behaviour** and **maintenance behaviour** used in group work theory. This theory purports that most group activities can be classified as either task behaviours, which are those behaviours directed towards the accomplishment of tasks, or maintenance behaviours, which are those behaviours that are directed towards facilitating and providing emotional/psychological support to each other. Maintenance behaviours include **mutual aid** behaviours. In social psychology, there is a body of knowledge about what makes for an effective group and their potential to serve as a mutual aid system, which is separate to those interactions with the various surrounding social systems, described as task type behaviours. This has been recognised as a crucial factor for participants and is one of the primary structural components of the project. These mutual aid systems include; sharing information, the dialectical process, discussing taboo areas, the all in the same boat phenomenon, developing a universal perspective, mutual support, mutual demand, individual problem solving, and rehearsal.<sup>13</sup>

A third common myth exposed by BFTB Projects is the belief that rural and remote Aboriginal youths are by nature simple people, yearning for the communal, contented to live in the haven of their own people, and therefore not wanting or unable to cope with modern production-line work. This is also false.

In assembly-line work or production-line work, the worker is required to follow a set routine at a constant pace — the line controls both the quality and quantity of the product with physical movement restricted to a few feet from one's station on the line. This work does not require the worker to conceive and plan the work task. It's the line's speed, and the workers' separation from one another, that deters loafing. For young people with limited work ethic, education and work skills, this type of work has proven to be ideal.

---

<sup>12</sup> *A report on the trial of placing young Indigenous people from Cape York Peninsula region into private sector employment picking fruit in southern states*, by Milton James, April 2005.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*



**Pictured above are BFTB Projects participants at their stations on the production-line at Rockdale Beef in 2010.**

In my 2005 report titled: *'Report on the trial of placing young Indigenous people from Cape York Peninsula region into private sector employment picking fruit in southern states'*, I touched upon the issue of participants working collectively versus working individually. I had noted back in 2005 that whenever participants were allowed to co-work or were placed on a collective contract, this would invariably result in a drop in the productivity of the better workers and only a marginal increase in the productivity of less efficient workers. I therefore advised employers to work them separately.

This finding was confirmed with our Robinvale lettuce picking group (pictures shown below) which ran for approximately 7 months in 2006, without a single participant losing his job. How was this possible?

I believe one of the reasons for this was due to the requirement to keep up with a moving machine which objectified the work, similar to production-line work. If any one person started slowing down it would affect the work of others and they would have something uncomplimentary to say about it, including the owner-manager, driver, and other cutters and corers.



Pictured above are BFTB participants picking lettuce at Robinvale in 2006.

They all worked in close proximity to each other, and they all had to perform to a standard where free-loading was not tolerated.

These are some of the learnings that have informed AYOP.

## 6.2 PRIMARY SOCIAL OUTCOMES

This project has been developed by BFTB Projects for the Cape York Institute as a **type 3-4 rural-rural voluntary circular migration** project that provides a number of **accumulative** benefits for the participants, their families, home community, and host community. See Appendix 2 – A word about work ‘orbits’. It has been named the **Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project (AYOP)**. The accumulative benefits include:

Diversion from:

- the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol,
- offences against persons and property,
- family/parental abuse and neglect,
- other negative influence within the community,
- the justice and welfare systems.

Provision of:

- a suicide prevention strategy,
- real employment paid at award rates and under award conditions,
- financial self-reliance,
- savings and investment support opportunity,
- the opportunity to boost family income through remittances,
- pro-employment and pro-social role models,
- good physical and mental health activities,
- 24 hour support and supervision,
- constructive social, recreational and cultural activities,
- life skills and life education, which includes helping to develop a moral character, the expression of gratitude, and framing of desires.

Creation of:

- social capital at an individual level,
- social capital amongst family, friends and community,
- social capital in the workplace,
- social capital in the host community,
- social inclusion,
- reducing the demand on public housing and other public services in their home community,
- paying tax on income.

In 2009, I began using a more advanced project design and vastly improved residential off-site (after work) support and supervision. This more advanced design not only maintained our unprecedented high employment retention rate over a longer period, I also achieved a uniquely, near zero use of drugs and alcohol, and a near zero offending rate. This important outcome is being achieved by AYOP. See article below titled, *‘2800km from home and a step ahead of strife’*, by Jamie Walker, printed in The Australian, dated Tuesday 31 May 2016.



JAMES ELSBY

Aurukun teen Zantack Walembeng at the Samex Meatworks in South Australia's Peterborough, ends each day feeling he has accomplished something

## 2800km from home and a step ahead of strife

### EXCLUSIVE

JAMIE WALKER

There's no doubt where Zantack Walembeng would be had he stayed in Aurukun: under arrest.

The 16-year-old's mates were in the thick of the trouble that engulfed the Cape York Peninsula township — and, once, where they went so did Zantack.

The Aboriginal youth broke the cycle by putting 2800km between himself and Aurukun with a job at a South Australian meatworks, and he has not looked back.

He gets up before dawn in the 6C chill, dons his protective whites and heads for work at the Samex abattoir in Peterborough with three other boys from Aurukun.

Knock-off time is 3pm. They are then driven to a dormitory to cook a meal for themselves.

A bit of television or time on the computer, and it's lights out at 9pm.

The structured routine could not be more removed from life in Aurukun, atop Queensland's Cape York Peninsula, where the kids stay up all hours, sleep through the day and grab a meal when they can.

For most of the township's teens, the prospect of a paying job is as distant as completing high school.

Zantack says he doesn't want to go home. The work is hard at the meatworks, but he's into it now the rude shock of those early mornings and early-to-bed nights has worn off. Whether wielding a knife in the boning room or mak-

**Asked what he would be doing were he still in Aurukun, Zantack said, shyly: 'Stealing and stuff'**

ing blood-and-bone fertiliser in the byproducts area, he ends the day feeling he's accomplished something.

The money is not bad, either. The boys are paid the award rate of \$18 an hour. After expenses and tax, they're left with about \$300 a week — significantly more than Zantack had ever pocketed.

Asked what he would be doing were he still in Aurukun, he said, shyly: "Stealing and stuff"

The "orbiting" program is the creation of Milton James, a former

child protection officer who worked on Cape York and started an outreach project called Boys from the Bush.

Mr James wanted to go further than teaching troubled young men life skills and setting up boutique businesses on the peninsula.

Backed by indigenous leader Noel Pearson, he started placing youths into "real" jobs in agriculture. Zantack and the rest of the contingent from Aurukun have been joined in Peterborough, 250km north of Adelaide, by four others from Cape York and the Northern Territory.

Mr James, 62, thinks Zantack would have been a certainty to be involved in the confrontations and carjackings that forced the evacuation of teachers from Aurukun, and the local school to be closed last week.

He said three youths alleged to have taken part in hijacking the Aurukun school principal's car were earmarked to join the project from July — depending on the outcome of court proceedings against them.

Yesterday, Mr James was in discussions to expand the orbiting program to three other meatworks in southern NSW and Victoria.

Mr Pearson has said the abuse of alcohol and drugs combined with unemployment and welfare dependency made Aurukun so socially "toxic" that the only answer was to send young people away to boarding school or job training.

He has called for the orbiting program to be expanded tenfold following the security emergency in the community.

**The young people that attacked teachers and the principal of the Aurukun school were relatives and close friends of Zantack Walembeng. If Zantack was in Aurukun at the time, he admits that he would have been involved and probably sent to Cleveland Youth Detention Centre.**

Unfortunately, this important outcome was not fully realised with this project. Six months after our arrival in Peterborough, Desmond Kawanka and Wilson Marbendinar were identified by a surveillance video to have been 2 of 4 Aurukun boys who smashed two shop windows in the main street of Peterborough around midnight on 7 February 2016. They were filmed entering one of the shops and stole a charity box containing a small amount of cash.

It was revealed that 4 of the 5 Aurukun boys got it into their heads to sneak off in the middle of the night to go over to the main street and break into the hairdresser salon to steal a charity box left on the counter. It was Wilson Marbendinar that smashed the window and grabbed the charity box containing a small amount of cash. The charity box was set up to help cover the cost of life-saving treatment for a local child suffering cancer. While another, Desmond Kawanka, kicked in the window of the nearby home hardware store just for fun. The total damage amounted to \$1,120.00.

The mastermind of this undertaking was Wilson Marbendinar. This kid was only 15 years old and earning on average \$588.79 per week at the abattoir, which was more than any of the other Aurukun boys. Wilson wanted for nothing. He had his own private, furnished, air-conditioned room, and provided with good regular meals. In addition, he was provided with an array of after-work and weekend social, recreational and sporting activities, the likes of which he had never received back home in Aurukun. To top it off, a few months earlier, he was awarded the worker of the month certificate and gifts.

After he was caught, I asked Wilson why he did this: *“Do you want to go home? Don’t you like it here?”* He replied: *“No, I really like it here. I don’t want to go home.”* Desmond said the same thing. For those unfamiliar with our target group, this sort of behaviour would make no sense. But, from the perspective of BFTB Projects theory and practice, it makes perfect sense.

All those involved were interviewed by the police. All those involved admitted their offences. All those involved were charged and released on bail to appear before a Family Conference in April. The conference was later deferred to a date yet to be set.

The police thought that Desmond was the ringleader. Certainly, Desmond had the power to influence other boys, but I knew that Wilson was the mastermind. And true to form, the families of these 2 boys responded by insisting that the boys were innocent and that fault lied with everyone else.

The police brought their employer (the manager of the Samex meat processing plant, Ms Duggan) into the situation. This made a bad situation manifestly worse. I had spent a considerable amount of time and effort in trying to establish a demarcation line between matters that concern their employer and those that do not. This matter should not have involved their employer. When Ms Duggan became involved, her immediate response was to dismiss all the boys from their employment and demand that I return them all back to Aurukun immediately. She had verbally abused the boys, and spoke to me in a highly abusive manner. She later apologised for her behaviour, and gave tacit approval to my longstanding request for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that established a clear demarcation line and acceptable and unacceptable forms of communication to me and the boys.

Over the days that followed, Ms Duggan agreed to reinstate all the boys, including Desmond. I accepted the reinstatement of all the boys, but deferred the reinstatement of Desmond. I was aware that other events were taking place that would make Desmond’s reinstatement superfluous. His family was making arrangements to fly him back home in spite of my objection and in breach of his bail conditions.

I also became aware that Desmond was inflaming his family by telling them lies about Samex workers making racist comments to him. Desmond's uncle refused to accept that they were lies even though Desmond admitted that he had made this up. I also became aware that Desmond was privately organising someone to drive him to Adelaide whilst telling those around him that he was going to stay. I could see that Desmond's effort to get to Adelaide were, at best, becoming chaotic, and at worst, were going to place him at risk which would invite more blame from his family. As it happened, Semi was travelling to Adelaide the next day to pick up another boy from the airport, so I told him to offer Desmond a lift to the Adelaide airport. I was told that Desmond's brother (a man who made it known to us that he was running for the position of Mayor of Aurukun) had booked Desmond a flight from Adelaide to Cairns. Desmond accepted Semi's offer without hesitation. In effect, Desmond got off scot-free, aided by his family. He was never held to account for his offence and did not pay a single cent towards the cost of the repairs. He is now back in Aurukun and his family have left him to his own devices — engaged in neither work, training or education. Wilson Marbendinar is in the exact same situation.

This is only part of what we must deal with here. It can and does get much worse than this. A few days after this trouble, Jack Wolomby attacked his supervisor at work with an iron bar and then smashed a window of the abattoir lunch room. Why? Because he was told that smoko was finished and he now needs to get back to work. "Fuck you" he said, and picked up an iron bar.

Shortly after this, Rayden Kalkeeyorta's aunt who lives in Pormpuraaw demanded that he return home because her son, who also lives in Pormpuraaw, had fallen ill. Rayden's sister in Aurukun also jumped in, demanding that he return home. And from what we could make of it, his mother went along with their demand. Then the grandmother of Jarrod Ornyengaia came forward requesting that he and Rayden return home for the funeral at the very moment the Peterborough group was being relocated.

The Participation [Responsibility] Agreement specifically deals with this issue as a precondition to their acceptance in AYOP. His mother had agreed that her son would not be called back should this sort of event occur. But when it came down to it, her agreement counted for little. This is not a one-off event. I come across this sort of behaviour quite often; so often in fact, that I have developed a standard procedure to deal with empty promises.

Knowing that the matter would not be dealt with by anyone on the ground in Aurukun and something that the Cape York Institute also struggles to deal with, I instructed my supervisors to break the line of communication between Rayden and his family. After a week of them not being able to contact Rayden they lost interest and we have not heard from them since. Rayden settled back down and is now going along quite well. Dealing with Jarrod Ornyengaia proved to be much more difficult, and in the end it was left to me to try and deal with the grandmother. See Appendix 5 for a discussion on this topic.

Returning to my earlier point about this sort of behaviour from our target group making perfect sense, my point is this: If we think that closing the gap is all about providing these young people with equality of opportunity, then we are so wrong.

These young people, like all of us, are a product of our environment. None of us choose our parents. None of us choose the moment in time in which we are born. And none of us choose the society in which we are born. We also need to remind ourselves that what choices we make in life are based upon our present state of mind and the totality of our experiences.

So when a young person earning an average of \$588.79 per week breaks into a humble hairdresser's salon to steal \$10.00 in coins, what does this say about this young person's state-of-mind and the totality of his past experience? Truly, Wilson and Desmond do have some serious problems.

Before young Wilson came to us, he fancied himself to be a bit of a gangster rapper; a rebel, a young Leroy Brown. My job was to get him to fancy himself to be a good respectable young man who can stand on his own two feet and make his own way in the world. There was no question about it, we were making ground. Yes, there were a few moments of relapse, but this is expected. When it comes to this sort of thing, there is no instantaneous rebirth or a spectacular Eureka moment where the kid gets it and settles down. What progress we make requires a tremendous amount of hard painful work.

Wilson was with us for 23 weeks. In that time he worked for 639 hours and earned \$14,027.70, and after a shaky beginning he began to acquire a reputation as a good solid worker. Even with this serious relapse, he still did not want to go home. He asked for another chance; an opportunity to start again in another job. And he had agreed to pay for all the damage he caused from his savings. But this second chance was denied to him by his father who, like Desmond's family, forced his return to Aurukun. What does this say about the families of these boys?

On the morning of the 23 February 2016, Wilson's father, Mr Jason Marbendinar, rang me and left an abusive message. I deleted the message. About 2 minutes later (9:53 am) I received another message from him. The exact words of this message were: *Hey Milton, it's me again. My son told me what you said to him on the phone. And you told him not to have a feed in the house. And you told your workers to tell Wilson eat outside; to eat on the street. Mate if you got the guts, you fuckin call me. Call me. Fuck you. Milton you fuckin asshole. Call me. Call me you fuckin asshole, you fuckin fat cunt.*

What Mr Marbendinar was referring to here was my instruction to Toduadua that Wilson was not to eat in the kitchen, but to eat separately from the other boys. He was to be served in his bedroom or lounge. I did not want him 'poisoning the waters' anymore than he had. Besides, a small degree of discomfort will do him the world of good. Mr Marbendinar's take on this was that Wilson was eating on the street. But as it turned out, Toduadua did not follow through with this instruction. Instead, he allowed Wilson to eat with the other boys, because he felt sorry for him.

About 10 minutes later, I took a call not knowing it was Mr Marbendinar again. He immediately went into a tirade of abuse and threats. He accused me of being "*a fuckin racist*", "*A white fuckin racist*". He went on about "*All white people are fuckin racists*". When I told him the facts of the situation and that Wilson was not eating in the street; for one night only he was served his dinner in his bedroom, but all Mr Marbendinar would say was that I am "*full of shit*". He went on about how I "*should come to Aurukun and face the Aurukun people; you fuckin racist*". "*You stealing all these Aurukun kids. You do the stolen generation again. You fuckin asshole. You fuckin racist asshole*". He went on to say that I "*am fucking robbing these kids*". He also went on about how I was "*blackening the name of Aurukun people*". All through this tirade, he made all these direct and indirect threats, such as "*we get you*", "*you won't get away with this*", "*when you coming here*". He refused to accept that Wilson had done anything wrong. When I told him that he had been charged with break-and-enter and stealing, all he said was "*Did he hit anyone? He never hit anyone. He's not a criminal*". And this is the thing; these parents do not see anything wrong here; it is just normal behaviour for these people; there is no condemnation, no consequences, and will attack anyone who dares to introduce consequences. What we have here is the essence of the dysfunction; violent, irrational, abusive parents and their messed up naughty kids who are untouchable. He refused to accept Wilson's bail conditions, nor was he appreciative of me looking around for another job for him. He demanded that his son be sent home immediately. Further, he was irate about his son having to pay for the damage he caused from his savings. He is still demanding that all of his son's savings must be returned to him.

Added to this, I had CYI staff responsible for the referral of young people to AYOP buy into this nonsense. Mr Marbendinar wanted Wilson's bank transaction statement, thinking that these statements would reveal large sums of money still in Wilson's account. Wilson, on the other hand, was unwilling to cooperate. When he was offered assistance by CYI staff to instruct his bank to send Mr Marbendinar his bank statement, Wilson went silent and refused to do so. This should have been the end of the matter, but Mr Marbendinar persisted. It was then that CYI staff contacted me, asking if I could provide Wilson's bank transaction statement to Mr Marbendinar, as he and family members were disrupting the CYI's work in Aurukun.

My reply was to say: *"It's Wilson's bank account. Wilson can access HIS bank account any time he wants. He can request his bank to send him his financial transactions statement at any time he wants. For whatever reason, Wilson has chosen not to do this. That's his choice, that his prerogative. If Jason wants a copy of Wilson's bank transactions statement, then he needs to get it from, or via, his son. This is how the world works. This is what Jason needs to do. Why is someone not telling him to do this? If someone has already told him to do this, and his son does not want to do it, then this is between him and his son. Why are we getting involved? What we need to do is get back to our core business. Jason pulled Wilson out of his job and brought him back to Aurukun. Jason told me that he is going to send his son to work somewhere else. So, where is his son now working? If he is not working, then what's going on? This is what we need to be pursuing."*

What is most unfortunate about the loss of Wilson was that it should not have happened. See Appendix 6: WPS Developmental Note #11 – *The use of distance*. This note provides an example of how distance can be used to our advantage.

Just before I was uncontactable for two weeks (as I had to be in China), we were in an ideal situation. Wilson understood that he was in a very difficult situation. He did not want to go home, but he was not going to defy his father. What he wanted was for me to somehow fix it so that he could stay in the project without defying his father's wishes. I knew this. So the first thing I did was to tell Toduadua to confiscate all the boy's phones to prevent, or frustrate, any contact between Wilson and his father. The Fijian supervisors had no authority to assist Wilson to leave the project, and he could not leave without assistance. Only I had that authority to assist Wilson, and I was uncontactable, which meant nothing could happen until I returned. So what went wrong?

Things went wrong because the supervisors themselves were also in need of greater support and supervision. The supervisors did not comprehend, nor possess the skill set, for a more advanced practice in managing environments as a means of managing behaviour. Certainly, if I was there at the time, I would have handled the situation totally different. This was an important lesson on the limitations of the Fijian supervisors.

To complicate matters, we had an employer who would not adhere to appropriate boundaries. Ms Duggan had become increasingly erratic in her responses and interactions. In our May review meeting, she took issue with everything in the review report. She threw the attached documents on the floor, and then stormed out of the review meeting in a rage, saying *"it's all bullshit"*. She even took issue with her own company's data showing that our young people were only working 2 or 3 days per week. She said that they had been offered more work, but they did not want it. According to our Fijian supervisors, over the previous 6 months there were only 2 occasions when one of our boys was absent from work due to weekend football injuries, and none of them have turned down extra work.

Ms Duggan had repeatedly expressed disappointment in the behaviour of the Aurukun boys. She stated that the Aurukun boys told her that they were not happy with their jobs inside the plant and life in Peterborough, and that they want to go home. She said that the boys want to work outside of the plant in the by-products and hides section. She said that two of them had confessed to her to have damaged plant equipment in an effort to be sent home. She also reported that the boys were often late for work and, at times, not coming to work, and still coming to work with no lunch.

The young people and our supervisors report a different picture. Yes, Wilson did confess to carrying out acts of “sabotage” (Ms Duggan’s word). He cut a vital electrical cable to the production line, and admitted to have slashed about 100 plastic aprons. When asked “*Why?*” He replied because “*I don’t like working on the gut truck*”. The other boy denied ever damaging any plant equipment and denied confessing to Ms Duggan that he had damaged plant equipment in an effort to be sent home. He did, however, say that they would like to be transferred to one of our other work groups that we are in the process of setting up and where he will be given more hours and better working conditions, but where he will be expected to perform at a much higher standard. Ms Duggan’s explanation for these conflicting reports is that the boys are afraid to share with us their true feelings, whereas they are not afraid to share their true feelings with her. There was no evidence for these assertions, and on the contrary the evidence was otherwise.

Whatever the situation, what is clear is that the other meat processing plants are offering fulltime employment (40 hours per week) as opposed to Samex which can only offer casual part-time employment. As mentioned earlier, the average number of weekly hours worked by the Aurukun boys at Peterborough was:

- Wilson 30.43 hrs pw (36.27 hrs for only 2 weeks prior to leaving the project)
- Jarrod 22.80 hrs pw (22.39 hrs)
- Rayden 23.46 hrs pw (21.09 hrs)
- Zantack 20.84 hrs pw (19.82 hrs)
- Jack 19.92 hrs pw (19.73 hrs)
- Desmond 14.16 hrs pw (14.13 hrs)

Moreover, since the start of the year, their hours were dropping (average hours since the beginning of the year are shown above in brackets). The promise of increased hours never eventuated.

This low number of hours has had a negative knock-on effect. Most of their income is being consumed by their expenses, and the boys have been complaining that they are unable to save much money. Moreover, with so much free time on their hands, we were inviting trouble (as the proverb says: “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop”).

This was apparent in the situation with Desmond who confessed that he and other boys had been walking around the streets of Peterborough in the middle of the night throughout the week. And on one of these nights they smashed two shop windows in the main street and took off with a charity box. Desmond was averaging only 14.16 hrs per week.

There is a general consensus that Samex can provide our target group with **a good introduction to work, but as the boys settle down, Samex is unable to meet their increasing appetite for a full-time employment and a greater income.** Similarly, the town of Peterborough is a good transitional town from their life in a remote community to a more cosmopolitan world where they are exposed to a more vibrant youth culture, new innovations, and more progressive attitudes and ideas. All of which will better equip these young people for a more meaningful and constructive participation in the broader community. But Samex’s position is that if we relocate any of the boys, including the saboteurs, to any other meat processing plant, Samex will withdraw from the project. This ‘all or nothing’ stance had placed AYOP in a very difficult position. Samex could not provide our young people with fulltime employment, which was a problem, and they were threatening to dismiss all of them if we assist any of them to leave for employment elsewhere.

At the same time Wilson and Desmond were departing Peterborough, another young person named Lorenzo Marbendinar was flown down.

Lorenzo also fell victim of an employer that knew no boundaries. Lorenzo joined AYOP on my reassurance that he will begin work within 48 hours of arriving in Peterborough. This is what our MOU with Samex required. I then departed the country and was uncontactable for 2 weeks. When contact was re-established, to my dismay, I learnt that Lorenzo had returned back to Aurukun. My investigation into the matter revealed that Lorenzo had not been employed and was left at our barracks for two weeks while the others went off to work. Certainly, this was a legitimate point of contention for Lorenzo. If I was in his position, I would have also objected.

The situation came to a head when Ms Duggan left the plant and went to our barracks by herself to confront Lorenzo about the negative things he had been saying to his mother about the project. Djina Jaffer stated that he saw her leave the plant and sensing trouble, he decided to follow her in his car to the barracks. And it was good that he did, otherwise the situation had the potential to have turned quite ugly. According to Djina, Ms Duggan confronted Lorenzo at the barracks and started verbally abusing him. Lorenzo retaliated abusing her back and I am advised threatened to hit her with his skateboard. I am further advised that Ms Duggan responded with threats of her own. It was reported to me that Lorenzo then picked up a knife and screwdriver, but, before he could do any harm, Djina intervened, talked him down, and took him back to his room. I understand that then Djina ordered Ms Duggan to leave.

An important point to note is that the families of these young people (Desmond, Wilson and Lorenzo) had organised and paid for the cost of their return home. This is an improvement. In the past, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) directed that we provide a guaranteed return airfare to all participants who wish to exit the scheme. The Department dismissed our warning that the provision of this welfare benefit would undermine the entire foundation of the scheme. Once every young person, who is faced with the rigours, challenges and frustrations of their first few weeks or months of work and contemplates 'throwing in the towel', knows that the project is responsible for providing an exit – then the whole project will fail. The project is based on the principle that you wear the responsibility for your actions. All participants are workers in the real economy in a real job. They have been supported with an airfare to come to this job in Peterborough, South Australia. If they 'throw in the towel', then they are in the same position as any other worker – they must find their own way home. It is a good thing that DEWR is not involved in this project, for this project has been able to move forward on a sounder footing.

To fully cast aside the welfare mantra, I gave consideration to the families paying for the cost of their child's flight going down. The precedent to this was the 1960s Aboriginal fruit picking scheme. This scheme provided a loan to cover the transport cost to the work site which they had to pay back from their salary — there was no transport subsidy. This is what I also did with the Northern Territory boys participating in AYOP. But this would be difficult to do with some Aurukun boys. More importantly, I cannot see how it would improve our outcomes in any way.

Besides all of this, it is not the young people that are our primary concern; it is their parents. What we need is for the parents of successful applicants to put up an asset of some sort against their agreement to support their child to remain in the project. Should they default on their commitment, then they forfeit their asset. But what asset do these people have that is of sufficient value to them?

### 6.2.1 Creating social capital

AYOP can also be evaluated in terms of its ability to create social capital. **Social capital** is a sociological concept, which refers to connections within and between social networks. Though there are a variety of related definitions, they tend to share the core idea that social relations and values, such as trust, have worth. Just as a car (physical capital) or a university education (cultural capital) can increase productivity

(both individual and collective), similarly social capital affects the productivity of individuals and groups. This may include anything that facilitates individual or collective action, through networks of relationships, characterised by reciprocity, trust, and social norms. Strong social capital is necessary for a strong democracy and strong economic growth.

Evaluating the outcomes of AYOP in terms of the production of social capital will offer a broader appreciation of the project's worth, and the government's purchase of the delivery of these connections.

This section of the report will now examine the strong connections that have taken place within and between four primary systems: 1) individual participants; 2) the family, friends and home community; 3) the workplace; and 4) the host community.

#### **a) Creating social capital at the individual level**

There are those who mistakenly believe that we are all primarily motivated by economic reward and therefore place emphasis on piece-work (linking an individual's remuneration directly to his output) so that workers had incentives to produce as much as possible within a given period. This belief oversimplifies the complex nature of human motivation, ignores cultural and social context, and has been superseded by those of the *human-relations school*, which places importance on the influence of group norms and values. The human-relations school is closely associated with the name of Elton Mayo, who published the results of the famous Hawthorne Experiments which concluded that the attitude of the workers and their feelings about their work were of strategic importance. Good relations and a positive atmosphere are responsible for high morale and good productivity. This has certainly been achieved with our past abattoir groups, as testified by JBS Swift Riverina Beef, and Rockdale Beef management and workers. It was also achieved in the initial months at Samex Peterborough, but good relations and positive atmosphere began to wane as the behaviour of the Samex plant manager became more erratic and irrational. And as the boys working hours began to drop and they could not make sufficient financial headway.

Most participants are in their mid-to-late teenage years. These are impressionable years, which mean that some of the experience these young people have today will be remembered for the rest of their lives. Moreover, some of these experiences have, or are in the process of, shaping or reshaping their thoughts, attitudes and behaviour. They have established new friendships with, or exposure to, people from all walks of life; people that they would not normally come into contact with, and through which they become exposed to new ideas, new patterns of behaviour, and new ways of viewing or handling existing situations and challenges, i.e. we are creating new, more productive patterns of behaviour.

A behaviour that I am keen to extinguish is what I call '**feast and famine type of behaviour**'. This is the pursuit of immediate gratification at the expense of greater reward tomorrow. A number of participants would repeatedly over indulge themselves with all that they had today, as if there was no tomorrow. For example, they would spend all their surplus income over the weekend, leaving nothing for themselves through the week, to the point where they are walking around picking up "bumpers" (cigarette butts) off the ground, and unable to afford a \$2 drink, or unable to make a 50¢ telephone call to be picked up from work — poverty in the admits of abundance. One can speculate on how and where this sort of behaviour has its origins, certainly there is little in their communities of origin that runs counter to this behaviour.

Being immersed in a normal environment can and does extinguish this behaviour. This is to the benefit of these young people and to broader civic society. Viewing outcomes in these terms, placements that last for only three months may still have some value.

## **b) Creating social capital amongst family, friends and community**

When individuals from remote communities leave home to live and work in the mainstream, everyone in that community, and some people in neighbouring communities, get to hear about it. Should they hear that things are going well for that young person, then this can become a matter of pride for the family of the young person, and an inspiration to his friends and young relatives – someone they view as having ‘made it’.

Dick Esten, Chairman of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES), said to me a few years back “*Our one [Aboriginal] bank manager is worth fifty of your [meatworkers]*”. Esten was speaking about an AES client who had recently secured a position as a bank manager, and the positive impact that this would have on members of her extended family. Whereas, young people working in abattoirs would have much less of an impact on members of their extended family. I strongly disagree with Esten’s assertion.

The Esten status hierarchy assumes that social reference groups have a trickledown effect on families, and this increases in its intensity and range as individuals move higher in the social strata. It is plain to see that this is often not the case. Many in the political, professional and managerial classes, who may have arrived to their positions from working class or welfare backgrounds, tend to move class and develop social identities within the groups with whom they work, often at the expense, rather than the benefit, of their working or welfare class origins.

Many young Indigenous people living in remote communities are poorly educated and will continue to fall behind in the skills needed for successful participation in the mainstream workforce and the non-welfare economy. There are now more Aboriginal young men in prison than there are at TAFE and at university. At best, most young people are destined for unskilled labouring positions. This, however, should not be viewed in any disparaging manner, or to see this as a reason for not engaging in any sort of work. The truth is that not everyone is cut out to be a bank manager, professional or member of the intellectual elite. In the same manner, it is silly to say to young people aged in their early-to-mid teens, who can barely read and write, and have a series of behavioural problems, to be told that if they go to school and study hard they could one day become a doctor, lawyer or engineer. This (in all but rare cases) is nonsense and just adds to the confusion, false hopes, disillusionment, and ultimately the sense of despondency or anger expressed by these young people. It is wrong to encourage young people to build their aspirations on fantasies.

Similarly, it is disingenuous to say to these young people that if you do well at sports they could be a Cathy Freeman or a Michael O’Loughlin one day. Very few young Indigenous people have made a successful career in sports. Privileged or exceptionally talented people do not make effective role models for those who are not privileged or talented. More effective role models are ordinary people who are doing well; people that the average young person can identify with. I can name any number of young people who had been inspired by their older brother, cousin or uncle who joined one of my work groups, and asked for the opportunity to join them. The results of my recruitment in Aurukun provide evidence of this.

The BFTB Projects target group is young people disconnected from mainstream social structures and social networks, and who are trapped in small remote homogeneous systems, where social networks are characterized by weak social norms, low levels of trust, and high levels of demand reciprocity. BFTB Projects helps these young people by offering them an employment opportunity, physical and social mobility, and engagement in mainstream social structures and social networks. A number of these young people, in time, take on a form of ‘bridging social capital’ whereby it is they who hold the connections between other likeminded family members and friends, and it is they who can leverage BFTB Projects to allow these others to join them. BFTB Projects in turn encourages this sort of mutual leveraging to take place. This form of bridging social capital has the potential to grow exponentially.

**c) Creating social capital in the workplace**

John Ray, in a study to explain racism, noted that people with negative views of Aborigines tend to vote conservatively and endorse statements of a generally conservative nature. Older people, particularly males, tend to have a more conservative orientation, and males too are probably more likely to see the world in a rather more Darwinian way as they are more generally involved in economic struggle and competition, and therefore their attitudes may become more hardened.<sup>14</sup>

The meat processing industry is a labour intensive industry employing three unskilled labourers to every one skilled worker. I have noticed that meat process workers do tend to endorse statements of general conservative nature, and they hold hardened attitudes towards Aborigines.

It would be fair to say that Samex Peterborough management and staff were, at the start, reticent if not cynical, about taking on young Aborigines from Aurukun with little education and no prior work experience. But in time they became supportive of the project and disappointed that we left.

Paul Troja, General Manager/Director of Rockdale Beef stated in a letter to Barbara Livesey, Group Manager, Indigenous Strategic Group, DEEWR, that:

*“[T]he workers under the BFTB, are treated in the same way as any other workers, ... The BFTB workers all interact with the rest of the workforce, either at their workstation, during their breaks, or, as I understand, away from the workplace. We have found that, in general, the BFTB workers are willing workers, .... The BFTB program has delivered essential workers to Rockdale Beef, at the same time as providing opportunities for some of the most disadvantaged Australians. Rockdale Beef considers the outcome to be a win-win situation.”*

In relation to the production of social capital, we have here two ethnically diverse groups of Australians, where one group at least (non-Indigenous management and staff of a meat processing plant) were generally holding poor opinions of, or lacking trust in, the other (young Aborigines), but who are now, after a relatively short time, engaging in social relationships of mutual respect, trust and reciprocity. These qualities are a central dynamic of a healthy work environment and with high levels of productivity. This is the stuff of a good civic society. They are qualities by which unequal individuals can now unite around the shared objective of productivity and economic progress, rather than the hitherto unequal relationship of producer-consumer versus despised dependency.

**d) Creating social capital within the community of Peterborough**

A most challenging issue in establishing a work group in a town like Peterborough is members of the community expressing concern about young Indigenous people coming into their community and causing trouble.

We now have a situation in Peterborough where we believe all members of the community hold good opinions of the young people from Aurukun. They have explained away the broken shop windows as a few bad apples. All AYOP participants are engaging in social relationships of mutual respect, trust and reciprocity, with a number of groups in the local community, to everyone's mutual benefit, particularly the churches, football clubs and army cadets.

In essence, we have achieved a situation near to the ideal view of good civic life in a small country town, and this notion is central to high levels of social capital.

---

<sup>14</sup> Ray, J.J. (1981) 'Explaining Australian attitudes towards Aborigines', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 4, Number 3 July 1981, 348-352.

### 5.3 Social inclusion/exclusion

AYOP can also be evaluated in terms of its ability to achieve social inclusion. One key aspect of social exclusion is unemployment and the lack of participation in the workforce. Jahoda and associates were among the first to identify and research a link between lack of work and psychosocial developmental problems.<sup>15</sup> Their case study series on the effects of high unemployment in the Austrian village of Marienthal, during the Great Depression, revealed that those who were unemployed sharply curtailed their social activities, read less, lost their sense of time and punctuality, and experienced increased familial breakdown. This must surely resonate with Noel Pearson's thesis in that these and other behaviours are like a pandemic sweeping across Aboriginal communities. According to Pearson, this stems largely from people's detachment from work and the real economy.

So how does participation in the workforce benefit AYOP participants? Jahoda and associates provide a comprehensive answer to this question. Work, according to Jahoda, has both manifest and latent functions. The manifest function is **income**. The latent functions are **time structure, enlarged social experience, engagement in collective purposes, identity, and creativity**.

Since this pioneering study by Jahoda and associates, there has been a great deal of research into the effects of unemployment throughout the Western world. These studies have shown that unemployment does have a negative impact on people's mental health; not as an association but as a cause. This research also reveals that there are a number of demographic variables that influence the nature and severity of the impact. For example, studies have revealed how there is a gradual increase in anxiety and depression, and loss of morale in the unemployed as the period of unemployment lengthens. Similarly, other studies found that emotional instability increased with the length of unemployment.

Another important demographic variable is culture. There appears to be little published evidence about commitment to the labour market among Indigenous Australians in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians. One might expect, from the disadvantaged position of Indigenous people in general, that young unemployed Indigenous people would exhibit less positive attitude to paid employment than do non-Indigenous. A look at places like Mitiŋulu outside of Uluru illustrates this point. Voyages Ayers Rock Resort were bringing in all their domestic staff from the Philippines, as nobody from the nearby community had any interest in the work, preferring a life of idleness supported by family or unemployment benefits. Even the Aboriginal dancers were brought in from the Central Coast of New South Wales.

There was one interesting study by Warr and associates<sup>16</sup>, where the commitment to participation in the labour market among young British born unemployed black people of Afro-Caribbean descent, was compared with young British born unemployed white people. This study found that young unemployed white people exhibited higher general distress and depression than young unemployed black people. By comparison, young white males had a more positive attitude towards jobs and job seeking. This finding concurs with our own experience with BFTB Projects' participants.

---

<sup>15</sup> Jahoda, M., Lazarfeld, P.F., & Zeisel, H., (1933). *Marienthal, the Sociography of an Unemployed Community*. London: Tavistock. [English trans. 1972]. Sighted in Morrell, S., Taylor, R., Quine, S., Kurr, C., & Western, J. (1994). A cohort study of unemployment as a cause of psychological disturbance in Australian youth. *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 38, No.11, 553-1564.

<sup>16</sup> Warr, P.B. (1978). A study of psychological well-being. *British Journal of Psychology*, 69, 111-121.

Another important demographic variable is age. Eisenberg and Lazarsfeld<sup>17</sup> were amongst the first to examine how unemployment affects young people, particularly during the crucial transitional period between childhood and adolescence. They concluded that young people who gain employment are more likely to make a full and successful transition from childhood to adulthood. On the other hand, unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, had a discernible effect on their personality. These detriments included the tendency to become drifters, increased irritability, loss of ambition, an increase in female prostitution, criminality and homelessness. These behavioural traits concur with my findings where better outcomes are achieved with young people under 20 years old compared to those over 20 years old.

More recent studies have shown that unemployed young people experience a decrease in self-esteem and increases in depression, from general poor health to serious chronic illness, impaired social competence, impaired learning, alienation, social exclusion, and psychological morbidity. In addition to these psychosocial effects, there are other reasons why youth unemployment is a major concern. Firstly, widespread youth unemployment leads to an increase in criminal activity and other forms of antisocial behaviour. Secondly, it can lead to increasing the risk of suicide. Thirdly, there is the fear that it may have a detrimental effect on work values so that unemployed youths come to reject the work ethic, and prefer a life of idleness supported by family or unemployment benefits rather than paid employment.

In summary, a thorough evaluation of the outcomes achieved by AYOP needs to take into consideration the high levels of social capital and social inclusion achieved by placing participants into private sector employment, and the government's purchase of the delivery of these inclusions. I argue that placements that only lasted for three months or so would still have a positive benefit on these young people.

---

<sup>17</sup> Eisenberg, P. & Lazarsfeld, P.F. (1938). The psychological effects of unemployment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 35, 358-390. Sighted in Mitchell, D.P. & Betts, A. (2002). Youth employment, mental health and substance misuse: a challenge to mental health services. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 9, 191-198.

### 6.3 PRIMARY ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

The Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project (AYOP) commenced operation in May 2015. Ten young people were brought into the project over the following 6 months. The first young person from the Northern Territory, Anton McMillan, started work in the week beginning 25 May 2015. The first young person from Aurukun, Wilson Mardendinar, started work in the week beginning 10 August 2015. The last young person from Aurukun, Desmond Kawanka, started work in the week beginning 14 December 2015.

The table below (Table 1.0) provides the total number of hours worked by each young person — their total gross earnings, their total tax paid, and their total net earnings between 25 May 2015 and 19 June 2016 ( $\approx$  13 months) — at which time the entire group was relocated to abattoirs in southern New South Wales (Refer to Section 4; explanation for the relocation).

**Table 1.0 Productivity of young participants between 25 May 2015 and 19 June 2016**

	Hours worked	Total gross earnings	Income tax paid	Total net earnings
<b>Travis</b>	841.12	\$18,616.26	\$7,195.00	\$11,421.26
<b>Mitchell</b>	1,460.92	\$35,128.96	\$4,504.00	\$30,624.96
<b>Anton</b>	1,083.83	\$28,568.70	\$3,157.00	\$25,411.70
<b>Djina</b>	1,277.02	\$30,442.68	\$3,758.00	\$26,684.68
<b>Desmond</b>	99.16	\$2,143.10	\$458.00	\$1,658.10
<b>Jack</b>	597.73	\$12,738.78	\$4,544.00	\$8,194.78
<b>Zantack</b>	729.58	\$16,016.65	\$3,355.00	\$12,661.62
<b>Rayden</b>	915.26	\$20,243.31	\$6,672.00	\$13,568.30
<b>Jarrod</b>	889.26	\$19,699.13	\$6,590.00	\$13,109.13
<b>Wilson</b>	639.08	\$14,027.70	\$1,663.00	\$12,364.20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8532.96</b>	<b>\$197,625.27</b>	<b>\$41,896.00</b>	<b>\$155,698.73</b>

The above table (Table 1.0) shows that Mitchell Mahoney had worked the most hours (1,460.92 hrs). Desmond Kawanka had worked the least number of hours (99.16 hrs). The combined gross earnings of all 10 young people totaled \$197,625.27. Their combined income tax paid totalled \$41,896.00.

As mentioned earlier, what we have here is a project that provides a number of **accumulative** benefits for its participants, their families, their home community, their host community, and the national budget — the likes of which has never before been seen in this country outside the BFTB Projects.

Included in its benefits is the provision of an unsubsidised wage in private sector employment. Instead of being perceived as a burden to be regretfully carried, they are now financially independent and welcomed tax payers.

What is astounding is that this project has been operating at less than half its capacity and still it has generated nearly \$200,000 of new economic activity within the first 12 months of operation under very challenging conditions.

The table below (Table 2.0) provides the total number of on-site consultancy hours performed by the Fijian supervisors. These are the total number of hours the supervisors spent working alongside our young people in the meat processing plant to set the pace and standard of work that is required by their employer, to provide our young people with encouragement, and, where required, to correct any misbehaviour. Their hours are recorded and the abattoir is invoiced by BFTB Projects for this work.

**Table 2.0 Productivity of supervisors from 23 August 2015 to 19 June 2016**

	<b>Hours of consultancy work for Samex (23.8.15 – 19.6.16)</b>	<b>Consultancy payments made by Samex to BFTB Projects</b>	<b>GST</b>
Semi	1,081.86	\$26,359.08	\$2,396.28
Toduadua	549.08	\$13,239.66	\$1,203.65
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1630.94</b>	<b>\$39,598.74</b>	<b>\$3,599.93</b>

The above table (Table 2.0) shows that the supervisors spent a total of 1,630.94 hours engaged in on-site activities at a cost to Samex totalling \$39,598.74. GST paid on this revenue totaled \$3,599.93. These amounts are paid into BFTB Projects operating account and are included in the overall economic activity generated by the AYOP.

**Table 3.0 AYOP Financial summary**

<b>ECONOMIC OUTPUT from 25.5.15 to 19.6.16 (≈ 13 months)</b>	
<b>Items</b>	
Total gross earnings of young participants	\$197,625.27
Total gross revenue generated by supervisors	\$39,598.74
<b>Total Economic Output</b>	<b>\$237,224.01</b>
<b>ECONOMIC INPUT from 25.5.15 to 19.6.16 (≈ 13 months)</b>	
<b>Items</b>	
BFTB Projects organisation costs	\$80,676.00
Project establishment and operational costs	\$36,260.00
Supervisor #1 Living Allowance (12 months)	\$5,200.00
Supervisor #2 Living Allowance (6 months)	\$2,600.00
<b>Total Economic Input</b>	<b>\$124,736.00</b>
<b>ECONOMIC BALANCE from 25.5.15 to 19.6.16 (≈ 13 months)</b>	
<b>Total economic gain produced by project (output less input)</b>	<b>\$112,488.01</b>

The above table (Table 3.0) shows that the AYOP produced an economic gain within the first 13 months of \$112,488.01.

It is certainly rare to see a social project that produces a greater quantifiable and irrefutable economic return than the actual cost of the project. It is certainly unique to see a social project that produces twice the economic output than input.

A complete economic evaluation of this project needs to consider the alternatives.

Opponents to the AYOP say that these youths should be at school rather than work. We agree, but all the youths attending the AYOP were refusing to attend school and their parents were unable or unwilling to send them to school.

Moreover, those who were employed to pick up where their parents left off had no success. Nor have those who oppose the AYOP come forward to say how these young people can be made to attend school. Nor have they come forward to voice objection to the 3 young people that were taken out of the project by their families only to be left with nothing — no education, training or alternative employment.

What also needs to be considered is that their school attendance came at a cost. We say ‘school attendance’ rather than ‘education’, because all 6 Aurukun youths can barely read and write, tell the time, measure weights, distance, volume and temperature. Clearly, their school attendance was not translating into much of an education. Perhaps this explains why they were refusing to attend school and, instead, wanted to go to work. Table 4.0 below shows an approximate annual cost of their school attendance.

**Table 4.0 ABSTUDY COSTS**

<b>ABSTUDY COSTS</b>		
<i>Living away from home</i>		
Under 16 years	2 youths x \$474.20 per month x 10 months	\$9,484.00
Between 16 and 21 years	4 youths x \$866.40 per month x 10 months	\$34,656.00
Boarding school supplement	6 youths x \$2,563.30 x 4 semesters	\$61,519.00
Fare allowance	Actual cost – \$800 av. x 6 youths 2 flights each	\$9,600.00
School fee allowance		\$14,322.00
<b>APPROXIMATE TOTAL</b>		<b>\$129,581.00</b>

The above table (Table 4.0) shows that it was costing taxpayers approximately \$129,581.00 per annum to send the 6 Aurukun youths to school. The AYOP has turned this previous cost of \$129,581.00 per annum into a net gain of \$112,488.00 within 13 months.

The fact that none of them were going to school at the time they joined the AYOP does not mean that in their case the financial baseline was 0. They were still receiving a number of community-based taxpayer funded services. These include costs associated with governance, housing, power, water, sewerage, sport and recreation, law and order, state health costs, and a range of social services. These costs have been estimated to be in excess of \$85,000 per person, per annum. With 7 of the 10 youths remaining in the AYOP after 12 months, this is a notional cost saving of \$595, 000.00.

The 3 young people from the Northern Territory who joined the AYOP were in the Work-for-the-Dole program prior to joining. The table below (Table 5.0) provides the approximate cost of this. This does not include costs associated with governance, housing, power, sport and recreation, law and order, state health costs, and a range of social services.

**Table 5.0 WORK-FOR-THE-DOLE COSTS**

<b>WORK FOR THE DOLE COSTS</b>		
Work for the dole payments	2.5 youths* x \$6,480.00	\$16,200.00
Savings on work activity fee	2.5 youths x \$4,769.00 pa	\$11,922.50
Management service fee	2.5 youths x \$2,307.00 pa	\$5,767.50
Pharmaceutical allowance	2.5 youths x \$139.20 pa	\$348.00
Federal health care services gap	2.5 x \$1,275.00 pa	\$3,187.50
<b>APPROXIMATE TOTAL</b>		<b>\$37,425.50</b>

**\* One young person from the Northern Territory left the project after 6 months**

The above table (Table 5.0) shows that it was costing taxpayers over \$37,000.00 to support the 3 Northern Territory youths in the Work-for-the-Dole program. This provides additional savings to taxpayers when they joined the AYOP.

Certainly, at least 1 of the 6 Aurukun youths who joined the AYOP would have been sent to the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre if it was not for this project. See page 25, article titled '2800km from home and a step ahead of strife'. The table below (Table 6.0) shows that this would have cost the Queensland Government approximately \$51,000.00, plus court, police, and transport costs.

**Table 6.0 YOUTH DETENTION CENTRE COSTS**

<b>YOUTH DETENTION CENTER COSTS</b>	
\$206,955.00 pa / youth (Youth Affairs Network, Qld)	
1 youth for 3 months (\$567.00 per day)	\$51,030.00
<b>APPROXIMATE TOTAL</b>	<b>\$51,030.00</b>

Instead of being locked up in the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, this young person remains a worker in a meat processing plant where he earned \$16,273.96 between 14 September 2015 and 19 June 2016, and paid \$3,480.00 in tax

One would think that with outcomes like these, governments, with its rhetoric of funding only those projects that provide value for money, would be clamoring to get behind the AYOP or its methodology, but unfortunately this has not been our experience.

Our experience is that there is a considerable amount of fake professionalism, bipartisan politics, bullying and intimidation taking place in the public service, including pursuits that run counter to its stated policies. For example, up until recently, senior officers in the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) were opposed to disengaged youths under 18 years leaving their remote community for work.

In 2009, a senior officer in the same department stood up at a public meeting in Wagga Wagga attended by prominent local Aboriginal people to state that BFTB Projects was taking the jobs of local Aboriginal people. This was fervently contested by both Cargill Beef and Rockdale Beef saying that the department knew that local Aboriginal people were offered these jobs, but they turned them down saying that meat processing work was a “losers’ job”.<sup>18</sup>

In 2012, the same department claimed that BFTB Projects, after years of developing its highly successful methodology, was in breached of contract for requiring that our young workers pay for their own board and keep. The department insisted that BFTB Projects should provide free board and keep for Aboriginal youths, regardless of how much money the young people were earning, and regardless of the department’s refusal to pay for this. What does this say about the hypocrisy that goes on within the public service when it agrees with Noel Pearson’s thesis about the importance of Indigenous people experiencing life in the real world and real economy?

Again, in 2012, the same department claimed that BFTB Projects was in breach of contract by allowing our young workers pay a local non-Indigenous woman to come in and cook for them. The department insisted that the young people should not be allowed to do this. Again, what does this say about the hypocrisy that goes on in the public service when its policies support Indigenous self-determination and autonomy?

BFTB Projects will soon explore a new approach to raise funds for the expansion of this project. It plans to seek non-government funding to establish a new group. Thereafter, this group will be financially self-reliant and not held back by the fickle nature of certain government departments.

---

<sup>18</sup> Boys from the Bush Projects, Remote Area Work Scheme, Progress Report #1, dated 12 November 2009.

The table below (Table 7.0) provides an approximate cost for the establishment of a single group working at a meat processing plant, not including the BFTB Projects organisational costs.

**Table 7.0 GROUP ESTABLISHMENT COSTS**

<b>GROUP ESTABLISHMENT COSTS</b>	
Vehicle	\$3,000.00
Vehicle registration	\$600.00
Workers compensation insurance	\$1,255.00
Health insurance	\$1,198.00
Q-fever vaccination	\$145.00
Visa application fee	\$390.00
Flight cost from Fiji	\$1,470.00
Advanced rent	\$440.00
Rental bond	\$880.00
Washing machine	\$500.00
Refrigerator	\$600.00
Beds	\$80.00
Mattresses	\$100.00
Sheets, blankets & pillows	\$200.00
Wardrobes	\$240.00
Coffee table	\$10.00
Kitchen table & chairs	\$90.00
Cutlery and cooking equipment	\$15.00
Lounge chairs	\$200.00
Television	\$380.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,808.00</b>

The above table (Table 7.0) has been included as a guide to the approximate cost of establishing a single group of 1 Fijian supervisor and 3 young people provided with fulltime employment at a nearby meat processing plant. Once the group is established they require no additional funding — they are economically independent.

Nothing like this project has ever before been seen in this country, and it takes a number of observers some time to fully appreciate what is going on here.

## **7.0. AREAS REQUIRING IMPROVEMENT**

### **7.1 Recruitment — problem and partial solution**

Successful recruitment of young people to these projects requires a particular knowledge and skill-set. For this reason, we have always taken responsibility for all recruitments, which included applicant suitability assessments and the community-based preparation of successful candidates. But on this occasion, CYI insisted that it take responsibility for recruitment in Aurukun and on Cape York Peninsula.

The original recruitment target was for a minimum of 5 young people. This was the breakeven point for the rent of the Peterborough railway barracks at \$100 per week, per person. Ten participants were required for full rent recovery within 3 months — recruiting at the rate of 1 participant per week. It became evident within the first few weeks of the project that the Aurukun based recruitment officers were not up to the task. This had a knock-on effect where the requirement that participants were responsible for the full cost of rent and utilities could not be realised and a subsidy was required. The target of 1 participant per week was a low target, but this still proved to be beyond their abilities.

Anticipating that this was going to be the weak link in the project, we had to rethink the model, starting with the accommodation model being used. A solution was for the project to return to the rent of more affordable 3 bedroom homes with 3 young people and 1 residential supervisor in each home. This has always been the ideal accommodation model, particularly when dealing with difficult youths, but this low supervisor-client ratio had always been unaffordable. That is, until the employers started contributing to the operation costs.

This development should not be seen as a reason for accepting the poor performance of the recruiters. The poor performance of these people will still place the entire project at risk even with our new innovations and adjustments. Clearly, the recruiters need to be replaced or better trained to do this sort of thing.

### **7.2 Community based assessment — problem and solution**

The BFTB Projects community based suitability assessments are crucial to the success of these projects. Years of work has gone into assessing what works for whom and under what circumstances.

The community-based suitability assessment requires that the assessor get to know the nature of the applicant and the relevant facts or information pertaining to his or her ability to live and work effectively in the mainstream far from family and home community. The assessor needs to make a prediction on how the applicant might behave if he or she was offered a position in the AYOP and how best to help the young person adhere to the requirements of his Participation [Responsibility] Agreement. We spent many years development of a very sophisticated and comprehensive assessment package, which was handed over to CYI to assist in the assessment of applicants. But it was either not used, or where bits were used, they were used incorrectly.

To outsource this task to another organisation proved to be a mistake in 2005 and appears to have been a mistake for this project. From the outset of the 2005 Work Placement Scheme (WPS) it was being abused. See Appendix 7: WPS Developmental Note #2 – Suitability assessment. Young people were being thrown on the first available plane with no assessment and no preparation. At present, CYI does not have anyone with the required knowledge and skill-set to carry out a suitability assessment and preparation beyond a most rudimentary level.

To overcome this serious weakness in the project, we had to go back to the drawing board. We needed to find a way to reduce our dependency on good community-based suitability assessments. A solution is to re-establish a fruit-picking group. Not as alternative employment to meat processing work, but as a site where we can carry out an off-community suitability assessment that has a “firewall” between it and the meat processing groups.

### **7.3 Community based preparation — problem and solution**

The poor preparation of successful applicants is also a serious weakness of the project. We spent many years developing a very sophisticated and comprehensive preparation package which was handed over to CYI to assist in the preparation of new recruits. But from what we can gather, very little, if any of it was used. Or if bits were used, we could see by talking to new arrivals and their families that these bits were not used correctly. This may help explain why a number of families disregarded the Participation [Responsibility] Agreement which required that they support their child to remain in the project.

In addition, all the Aurukun boys were sent down without a tax file number. Form 1 – Applicant Details, specifically states that this must not happen. Not a single application for a tax file number was sent. This was extremely poor form. The consequences were that it took us, at the Peterborough end of the project, over 6 months before the Aurukun boys could get a tax file number and, in the meantime, they were being taxed at the highest rate which meant that, at times, they were earning as little as \$135.70 per week. At this low rate, they could not even pay for their living expenses, which totalled \$250.00. The recruiters were warned of this, but our warnings went unheeded.

Moreover, Q-fever vaccinations were not carried out, medical assessments on the prescribed form were not carried out, drug tests were not carried out, birth certificates were not obtained, and Medicare cards were not obtained. See Appendix 8 for a copy of the Applicant Details form and what the recruiters are required to do.

The re-establishment of a fruit-picking group will not solve this problem. This problem can only be solved by CYI recruiting people who possess the knowledge, skills and work ethic to carry out this sort of work.

### **7.4 Cape York Institute engaging in direct discussions with employer — problem and solution**

It is a requirement of BFTB Projects that families and community based organisations, including referring agencies, are not to engage in direct discussions with the meat processing plants and BFTB Project supervisors, unless approved by the Director of BFTB Projects and only in relation to certain matters.

Our experience has been that separate lines of communication often results in mixed messages and inappropriate communication taking place. More worrying is that separate lines of communication enable unscrupulous or foolish persons to turn different positions into antipathy within and between stakeholders.

We were very surprised and disappointed to see that CYI had failed to fully appreciate its past mistakes in relation to this sort of thing. What we had here is Samex Peterborough being invited by certain CYI staff to engage in direct conversation with them to discuss ways in which Samex could enter a direct partnership arrangement with CYI to find a way to commandeer the AYOP or to establish a rival project.

Fortunately the new structure of BFTB Projects prevents this from taking place; otherwise the AYOP would have imploded within weeks.

To prevent a reoccurrence of this sort of thing, we have instructed our supervisors not to give out their contact details and to not share the contact details of meat processing plants. Plus, all future group emails to stakeholders will be sent out as blind carbon copies.

We are also exploring other ways of placing parts of the AYOP beyond the reach of external interference. An innovation we are presently looking into is the invitation to private individuals (philanthropists) to fund the establishment of some future work groups.

## **7.5 Difficulties with Department of Immigration — problem**

We have submitted two concerns to the Department of Immigration.

1. Our visa application for Mr Waisake Kativerata as our third supervisor was submitted on 2 June 2016 and is currently bogged down in a bureaucratic process with no end in sight. The consequences of this have been:

- Djina Jaffer from Coen on Cape York Peninsula had been working for Samex meat processing plant in South Australia for the past 9 months. He was being transferred to a higher position with the Young abattoir in southern New South Wales. Due to the delay of Mr Kativerata's visa, Djina had to be sent back home, where he remained unemployed, and rightly upset about losing his job.
- We had no choice but to withdraw our offer of fulltime employment for 2 young people from Aurukun. These 2 young people gained national notoriety 2 months ago when they, and several other youths, attacked teachers and the Principal of the Aurukun School, resulting in the school being shut down. These young people were apprehended and detained in the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre. We were hoping that they would be released to BFTB Projects 2 weeks ago and placed into the fulltime employment of the Junee abattoir, but this plan had to be abandoned due to the delay of Mr Kativerata's visa.

Our understanding is that all this loss was totally unnecessary, had it not been for an administrative task that would have taken less than one minute. In any event, this may not have made any difference due to the inabilities of the CYI recruitment officers.

2. We submitted an application to the Department for Mr Semi Cagilaba's second visa that had been approved by our amended Special Programme Agreement. Our concern is that the Department of Immigration has requested Mr Cagilaba to provide the following additional information to process his application for the second year:

- An invitation letter that includes the following:
  - The name of the approved Special Program;
  - The length of stay in Australia with the proposed program commencement and completion dates clearly specified;
  - Report on the assessment of invitees against the assessment criteria;
  - The name, address and telephone number of the place where the participant will undertake activities in Australia, if different from the address of the Special Program Provider;
  - The details of all duties/activities to be performed;
  - Any proposed training to be undertaken;
  - Any wage/salary, stipend or allowances that will be paid;
  - Any cost that the participant will incur during their stay, for example transport and/or accommodation;
  - The arrangements which are in place for the participant's support and general welfare during their stay in Australia;
  - Where the participants will not be paid for their activities, ensure that both the Participant and the organisation indicate their understanding of that arrangement by completing Forms 1283 and 1284.

Our objection is that all of this information **has been provided on two occasions already**. The first occasion was when he submitted his application for the first visa. The second occasion was only a few weeks ago when we submitted his application for the second visa. And now he is asked to provide the same information again for the third time. Clearly, the officer concerned is paying no attention to the information that has already been provided to him on two previous occasions.

- Australian Federal Police National Police Check.

Mr Cagilaba has been requested to obtain an Australian Federal Police Check. Our objection is that Mr Cagilaba was required to submit a Fijian Police Check as part of his suitability assessment. For the past 12 months he has been under 24/7 support and supervision by BFTB Projects. It is not possible for him to have engaged in any activities in the last 12 months that would have come to the attention of the Federal Police and not to have come to our attention. Any commission of a crime would have resulted in his immediate dismissal.

Moreover, our threshold of unacceptable behaviour is much lower than behaviour deemed criminal, i.e. the absence of any criminal history does not determine Mr Cagilaba's suitability for his duties or his good character.

- Fijian Police Clearance Certificate.

Mr Cagilaba has been requested to obtain a Fijian Police Clearance Certificate. Our objection is that the Department **has been provided with a Fijian Police Clearance Certificate on two occasions already**. The first occasion was when he submitted his application for the first visa. The second occasion was only a few weeks ago when we submitted his application for the second visa. And now he is asked to provide the same information again for the third time. Clearly, the officer concerned is paying no attention to the information that has already been provided to him on two previous occasions.

- Curriculum vitae or resume.

**This has also been provided on two occasions already**. The first occasion was when he submitted his application for the first visa. The second occasion was only a few weeks ago when we submitted his application for the second visa. And now he is asked to provide it again. Again, it is clear that the officer concerned is paying no attention to the information that has already been provided to him on two previous occasions.

- Medical examination and chest x-ray.

We think that this is also a meaningless exercise, but Mr Cagilaba will be attending a medical examination and chest x-ray on Thursday 4 August, as requested.

### **Department of Immigration's response to our concerns**

We submitted the above mentioned concerns to the Department. The Department's response was:

*"We note that you are not an authorised recipient for these two applications, but we would like to assure you that all necessary communication for these applicants has been carried out as per legislative requirements and that the assessment is still within our processing standards. Our team is monitoring the progress of these applications and will endeavour to finalise them as soon as we receive the required information."*

We feel that this response is unsatisfactory. It does not address our concerns about the repetitive request of information that we have provided to the department on two previous occasions and a waste of our limited resources. Nor does this response address the concerns of those who have lost their employment due to the delay. Nor does it provide any indication of how much longer we must wait for Mr Kativerata to arrive.

We have since renegotiated a new employment opportunity for Djina Jaffer and 3 others. It has taken us over 6 months to obtain this agreement with Gundagai Meat Processors. But if Mr Kativerata does not arrive within 14 days this employment opportunity may be also lost. The situation has now become critical.

## **8. Summary**

In summary, the AYOP is proceeding very well, despite all the difficulties mentioned in this report. A good part of this success can be credited to the innovation of using Fijian off-site and on-site residential supervisors. They are meeting our expectations.

Certainly, it is a challenge for them to deal with youths that do not respond well to standard forms of intervention. It is certainly a challenge for them to appreciate the sophistication of the BFTB Projects methodology and to commit to high standards of professional conduct. Yet, they are under close professional supervision from within the BFTB Projects organisation and observation by a number of organisations, including the meat processing company, landlords, real-estate agents, churches, army cadets, and football clubs.

With regards to the two-way benefit of this initiative, it is clear that the Fijian supervisors are unaccustomed to working alongside those with unbounded energy and a determination to get results — not just to ‘talk-the-talk’, but to actually ‘walk-the-walk’. It is good for their personal development to work alongside these sorts of people and to incorporate this experience into their future endeavours back home in Fiji. At this stage in their personal development, these Fijians are more comfortable to just follow instructions — to do what they are told to do. Again, this was all expected.

A number of further developments and new innovations are planned. It is planned that more meat processing groups will be established using non-government funding. This has already begun.

A nearby fruit-picking group will also be established as an intake group that provides suitability assessment and prerequisite training for those wishing to work in a meat processing plant. It will also provide work for those young people incapable of transitioning into a meat processing plant.

Another new innovation we are presently working on is an international young meat process-worker exchange program with China. I expect that this will have a number of beneficial outcomes and spinoffs.

# Appendix 1

## Discussion on muddled professionals

Milton James

In 2006, during the 2005-2008 Work Placement Scheme trial, one of the group supervisors, Alex, had cause to contact “the Welfare” to request counselling for Jamie. Alex said that he got on to a counsellor, but all she said was that Jamie should be sent back home. The counsellor could not or would not deal with the reality of her situation.

This girl had no family to protect her in Kalumburu, nor were there any effective support services or counselling services in this remote Kimberly community. She fled the community in fear of being molested and a desire for a better life, and all this counsellor could talk about was how she should be sent back home.

This is not the first time that counsellors and others in the helping profession have shown their complete ignorance about what it's like in these remote communities. Although, it's not always their lack of knowledge that give rise to their objection to young Aborigines from remote northern communities being assisted to live in southern urban communities.

Certain attitudes can be formed very quickly or they can develop slowly over time. Once formed, a person's attitude can be a real block or filter to facts and alternative explanations. I have witnessed people in positions of power and status recoil in disgust or respond with great affection towards a particular situation and their underlings will immediately follow suit, like lemmings.

To give an example, years ago, I and many other social workers were given an article as part of an induction course by the Department of Families and Communities Services, Victoria, on how to work with Aboriginal children and their parents. This article was titled, *Raising Children in the Nunga Aboriginal Way*, and published in the prestigious Australian Child and Family Welfare Journal. It begins with the following abstract:

*This article provides a snapshot of some aspects of Aboriginal child rearing. It argues that Aboriginal child rearing practices that may be seen in a negative light by non-Aboriginal people are, in fact, effective means for preparing Aboriginal children to deal with the conditions they will encounter as adults.*

This abstract is followed by an introductory quote by an Aboriginal woman that the authors say “sums up some of the concerns of many Nunga Aboriginal mothers”.

*You know a government worker will come through the door and see that we haven't got very much and that I haven't got a sparkling clean toilet or a shiny kitchen. There's only four cups in the house and two or three knives. There's only five towels between 11 or 12 people. There's junk on the floor and chocolate and scribble on the walls. Sometimes a panel in the wall will get broken when one of our relations gets drunk and goes silly. There might be bits and pieces of car in the yard and the grass will probably be long and dry. They might even hear me yelling at Wayne, “Get off the fucking table or I'll knock your head off”. These are the kinds of things that government workers will see and turn around and say that maybe I'm not a fit mother. **Because they are only seeing things through their white culture** (bold added). I often wonder why me and my family have to be punished because we are poor because the school never taught my kids to read and write properly and nobody will give them a job. **Why should I be punished because I do things differently to the way white people expect things to be done** (bold added)? **Why do I have to worry that my son will get depressed in prison and take his own life? Why do teachers, police, welfare workers and doctors look down on me because of my Nunga culture** (bold added)?*



## Appendix 2

### A word about work ‘orbits’

Milton James

It has become quite apparent that the word ‘orbit’ in relation to work mobility has a different meaning or inference to different people. This essay will clarify what we mean by work orbits.

Noel Pearson had this to say about work orbits:

I have introduced the concept of orbits as a solution to the problem of how we can avoid economic integration becoming a one-way ticket for the young away from their origins, a prospect that many parents and community elders dread. Even though Norman travelled and worked in other areas, he **retained a strong link with Kuku Yalanji country** (bold added) and spent much of his life there. He was a person who would have been able to embark on orbits of the kind I envisage. His example shows that it is possible to choose to maintain an Aboriginal identity and be completely able to interact with **modern society** (bold added).

Mining Magnate, Andrew Forest, used the term ‘orbit’ in his report to government titled, “Creating Parity”, which the government has used to base its present Indigenous employment policy. Forest offered no explanation of the term, other than what was provided by the Cape York Institute. But he then went on to say that we need to support people to come and go from ancestral lands for the purpose of work without losing their access to housing or employment in their home community. It’s not exactly clear who he is talking about here. He could not be talking about the vast majority of people for whom there are no employment opportunities in these remote communities and there never will be. And I have never heard of any person returning from a period of employment arranged by Boys from the Bush Projects having difficulty in returning to the same living arrangements that were available to them prior to going away. His report stated:

The Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership introduced the term (*sic*) ‘orbiting’ in relation to Cape York communities—see <http://cyl.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Cape%2520York%2520Agenda%2520final.pdf>. Broadly speaking, the term refers to the mobility of Indigenous people from remote communities to take up education and employment opportunities in regional and metropolitan centres, while also retaining **their connection with ancestral lands** (bold added). We need to build on existing programmes and significantly expand support for people to take up work where the market provides it, and enable them to orbit back to their home communities **without losing access to housing or employment** (bold added).

Sociologists also use the term ‘employment orbits’ to describe the spatial distance in which workers are able to travel each day from their home to their place of employment (See for example, Bracey, H.E. (2002), *English rural life: Village activities, Organisations and Institutions*, Routledge). Anthropologist, Jon Altman, used the peculiar term ‘orbit in’ as opposed to ‘orbit out’, to describe Aborigines reoccupying empty landscapes to ‘manage the country’ (whatever that means) (*Altman, J., What future for remote Indigenous Australia? Economic hybridity and the neoliberal turn*, Altman, J. & Hinkson, M. (eds.) (2010), *Cultural Crisis — Anthropology and Politics in Aboriginal Australia*, UNSW Press).

In circumstances where people choose to relocate for the purposes of work, we normally use the term 'migration'—this can be either internal (within the country) or external (outside of the country). Speaking of 'internal migration' for the purposes of work, Deshingkar and Grimm (*Deshingkar, P. and Grimm, J. (2005). Internal Migration and Development: A Global Perspective, Overseas Development Institute, IOM International Organisation for Migration*) have identified four broad kinds of internal migration: 1) rural-urban, 2) rural-rural, 3) urban-rural, and 4) urban-urban.

1. Rural-urban movement occurs as a result of an urbanising economy, rural workers moving to larger towns, cities, and industrial centres where there is a higher demand for labour, more and varied opportunities.
2. Rural-rural movement occurs when workers from rural areas with few jobs travel to another rural area where there are more jobs.
3. Urban-rural movement usually occurs when individuals return back to their home town. Often, these people bring back skill sets that benefit their home area.
4. Urban-urban movement takes place from city to the outer suburbs, or vice versa, or from one city to another.

In addition, we have 'circular migration' or 'repeat migration'. This term refers to the temporary and usually repetitive movement of a migrant worker between home and host location for the purpose of work. It represents an established pattern of population mobility, whether cross-country or rural-urban (*Newland, K. (2009). Circular Migration and Human Development, Human Development Research Paper (HDRP) Series, Vol. 42, No. 2009*).

Circular migration is a developing concept. It refers to a loose notion of various definitions. Fargues (*Fargues, P. (2008). Circular Migration: Is it relevant for the South and East of the Mediterranean, CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes – Circular Migration Series, 2008/40*) notes that:

One finds both restrictive definitions like the one adopted by the European Commission, and the wider, more inclusive definitions of some researchers. They take into account the 'transnational' nature of many modern migrant communities around the world, and anticipate that in the future, thanks to easy and cheap transport and communications and to the close ties migrants can keep with their country of origin, circulatory will become the rule, not the exception (bold added).

Agunias and Newland (*Agunias, D.R. and Newland, K. (2007). Circular Migration and Development: Trends, Policy Routes, and Ways Forward, Migration Policy Institute*) have identified four types of circular migration: 1) Permanent migration—one or several generations later—permanent return, 2) Permanent migration and temporary return, 3) Temporary migration and temporary return, 4) Temporary migration and permanent return. Agunias and Newman have listed a number of criteria that make migration circular:

- i. Temporary: periods of stay are limited in duration;
- ii. Renewable: several periods are possible;
- iii. Circulatory: freedom of movement between home and host communities is fully-enjoyed during each period of stay;
- iv. Legal;
- v. Respectful of the rights of migrants;
- vi. Managed in order to match labour demand in one location with supply from another location.

Using the above conventional typologies, the type of migration taken up by young Anton McMillan, mentioned on page 2, is a type 3 rural-rural voluntary circular migration.

Evidence shows that circular migration, for the purposes of employment, has been an important route and necessary condition for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. An analysis of remittance flows throughout different parts of the world reveals enormous sums flowing back to home communities and can account for a substantial proportion of household incomes (Sok, H., Cbea, H. and Sik, B. (2001), *Annual Economic Review*, Development Resource Institute, Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Al-Ali, N. (2004), 'The relationship between migration within and from the Middle East and North-Africa and pro-poor policies', Report by the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter for DFID; Karan, A. (2003), 'Changing patterns of migration from rural Bihar, in Iyer, G. (Ed.), *Migrant Labour and Human Rights in India*, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, pp. 102-139). In addition, returning migrants may also bring back a range of skills which can benefit their home areas immensely (Zhao, Y. (2001), 'Causes and Consequences of Return Migration: Recent Evidence from China', Working Paper No. E2001010, China Centre for Economic Research, Beijing University).

But is or could this be the case with individual Australian Aborigines from remote communities? Certainly, it was the case in the early 1960s, before the introduction of unemployment benefits. For example, a feature of the mission's economy on Bathurst Island was the migration of able-bodied males for a period. They'd travel to labouring jobs in Darwin, the salt works in Shoal Bay, and the forestry work on Melville Island. In 1960-1961 the total wages (training allowance) paid to people on Bathurst Island was £2,173.4.0d, added to this was £943.19.4d for the sale of local produce, whereas, in the same period £8,611.2.4d was spent by Aborigines in the local cash store. The difference in these amounts was mainly due to earning brought back by the migrant workers (James, M. (2015), *The 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-picking Scheme: A Critical Evaluation*, Australian eBook Publishers). These migrant workers were in effect subsidising the mission. There was also the situation where in 1964 a large group of men from Ernabella Mission migrated up to the forestry works near Darwin for 11 months of the year (James, M. (2015), *The 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-picking Scheme: A Critical Evaluation*, Australian eBook Publishers). But the broadening of the criteria for welfare payments, in particular the provision of unemployment benefits to residents of remote Aboriginal communities, much of this migration ceased.

According to Deshingkar and Grimm, international experience has shown that policies, programs or actions that tend to restrain mobility or to provide incentives for people to stay on their land do, in the long run, lead to unmanageable situations (Deshingkar, P. and Grimm, S. (2005), *Internal migration and development: A global perspective*, International Organisation for Migration, No. 19, Switzerland). And this is what has occurred in so many remote Aboriginal communities, to the point where the Western Australian Government and Federal Government are now proposing to shut down between 100 and 150 Aboriginal communities in Western Australia (A document prepared by the Federal Government in 2010, titled, 'Priority Investment Communities – WA', categorised 192 of 287 remote settlements as unsustainable).

But how then do we explain the reason for young Anton McMillan engaging in his third circular migration? And for that matter, how do we explain the near 200 young people that have signed up to circular migration with From the Bush Projects over the years, many of whom were receiving welfare or CDEP payments? (See: James, M. Rural & Remote Area Work Scheme, Progress Report #4, 31 January 2011, [www.fromthebush.org/papers](http://www.fromthebush.org/papers)). Their willingness to engage in circular migration can be explained by the term 'accumulative migration'.

The term accumulative migration is used in the international literature (Deshingkar, P. and Start, D. (2003), 'Seasonal Migration for Livelihoods, Coping, Accumulation and Exclusion', Working Paper No. 220, Overseas Development Institute, London). A study by Rao distinguishes between migration for survival (sometimes referred to as distress migration) and migration for additional income or the acquisition of new skills or to gain new experience, all of which has been named accumulative migration (Rao, G.B. (2001), *Household Coping/ Survival Strategies in Drought-prone Regions: A Case Study of Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh, India SPWD-Hyderabad Centre*).

The stone-age hunter-gather existence of Australian Aborigines is an example of survival migration. The nature and scope of this migration varied widely from those living in the wetter coastal regions to those living in the harsh central inland desert regions where it was necessary to roam over great distances (Young, E. and Doohan, K. (1989). *Mobility for Survival: A Process Analysis of Aboriginal Population Movement in Central Australia*, Darwin: North Australia Research Unit, The Australian National University).

In the contemporary context, it's important to note that economic distress or survival migration is not limited to deprived families, and that accumulative migration is not limited to families who are relatively well-off (Deshingkar, P. and Anderson, E. (2004). *People on the move: New policy challenges for increasingly mobile populations*, Overseas Development Institute, Natural Resource Perspectives, No. 92, London). In the case of Anton McMillan he states that his motivations are all of the above: income, acquisition of additional skills and qualifications, and new experiences.

We are all aware of the social and economic situation in remote Aboriginal communities. There is no real employment for most of these people, and to remain living in these communities means settling down to a life of total welfare dependency. A few will drift away, but not necessary for the purposes of employment. Some young people will drift to urban centres in search of youth culture, fun and excitement. Some will leave home to spend time with relatives. Others will leave to seek certain goods and services not available to them in their remote community. This sort of movement can be defined as various forms of accumulative migration. Others leave to escape the chaos and violence (distress migration). Take for example the situation in 2011 when over 100 people fled Yuendumu in fear of their safety (See article by Verity Edwards, 'Aboriginal people flee to Adelaide to escape Yuendumu violence', The Australian, 10 February 2011). This sort of movement is best described as distress migration. Very few have the inclination, confidence, skills, and resources to leave unassisted for the purposes of employment.

Many of us are aware of the growing number of Indigenous youths that have disengaged from education and training and get into all sorts of strife. Moreover, many of them are not responding to standard forms of intervention. From the Bush Project was established specifically for these young people. What we offer these young people is fulltime employment in a meat processing plant at award rates and under award conditions with intensive on-site and off-site support and supervision. It is a voluntary scheme, but designed in a manner that favours their continued participation. We have on occasions accepted referrals from the Children's Court as an alternative to ordering a custodial sentence.

Our scheme is not a recruitment agency for labouring jobs in other parts of the country for the purpose of financial gain (see for example, Migrant Workers – China - YouTube). Our scheme recruits disengaged youths for meat processing work in other parts of the country to help save a failing social system. This is a form of migration that is not described in the international literature.

This scheme has been developed by From the Bush Projects for the Cape York Institute as a **type 3-4 rural-rural voluntary circular migration** project that provides a number of **accumulative** benefits for the participants, their families, and home community. It has been named the **Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project**. The accumulative benefits include:

- Diversion from the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol
- Diversion from offences against persons and property
- Diversion from family/parental abuse and neglect
- Diversion from other negative influence within the community
- Diversion from the justice and welfare systems
- Provision of a suicide prevention strategy
- Provision of real employment paid at award rates and under award conditions
- Provision of financial self-reliance
- Provision of savings and investment support opportunity
- Provision of the opportunity to boost family income through remittances
- Provision of pro-employment and pro-social role models
- Provision of good physical and mental health activities
- Provision of 24 hour support and supervision
- Provision of constructive social, recreational and cultural activities
- Provision of life skills and life education, which includes helping to develop a moral character, the expression of gratitude, and framing of desires
- Reducing the demand on public housing and other public services in their home community
- Paying tax on income
- Creation of social capital at an individual level
- Creation of social capital amongst family, friends and community
- Creation of social capital in the workplace
- Creation of social capital in the host community
- Creation of social inclusion

(See: James, M. Rural & Remote Area Work Scheme, Progress Report #3 dated 8 May 2010, and Progress Report #4 dated 31 January 2011, [www.fromthebush.org/papers](http://www.fromthebush.org/papers).)

This article was printed in: *Young Indigenous Meatworkers Gazette*, Newsletter of Boys from the Bush Projects, Issue No. 27, Monday, 1 June 2015, [www.fromthebush.org](http://www.fromthebush.org)

## Appendix 3

### WPS DEVELOPMENTAL NOTE #13

© Milton James 2005

**Topic: Intervention, work and the environment**

The Boys from the Bush (BFTB) social enterprise program was a program that used a commercial enterprise as a means to address certain social problems. A close examination would reveal that there were layer upon layers of different practices or activities being applied. Many of them were applied simultaneously. Each practice or activity was designed to deal with different antecedents to certain antisocial behaviours. This layering of practices has been illustrated by the BFTB Intervention Map. The first part of this map has been reproduced below.

Anti-social behaviour	Antecedent (risk factor)	Practice approach	Practice actions
1. Stealing and other property offences	Poverty	Provide income	Sale of eucalyptus and melaleuca oils.
	Boredom	Provide interesting activities	Adventurous remote bush camps. Involved in a stimulating commercial enterprise. Travelling to other interesting areas and communities.
	Unemployment	Provide employment	Produce and sell eucalyptus and melaleuca oils and related products (or any other viable enterprise). Involvement in all facets of the enterprise (planning, fundraising, production, promotions, sales, finance).

To use this map, you must first look at the far left column. Here you will see a list of anti-social behaviours which were the focus of the program. The first anti-social behaviour is stealing and other property offences. You then move to the second column, headed "Antecedent (risk factor)". This column lists the various reasons for stealing and other property offences. They are antecedents to the anti-social behaviour. The third column defines the "Practice approach" or the method used to deal with each of these antecedents. For example, if the primary reason for stealing was due to poverty then a simple response or solution (described as practice approach) would be to give the person some money. The fourth column headed "Practice actions" provides a description of actions performed by each approach. Or, in this case, it describes how money was provided by the sale of eucalyptus oil. The full version of this Intervention Map has been reproduced at the end of this Developmental Note.

This Intervention Map shows that at the practice level the BFTB program had a multitude of practices many of them operating simultaneously, which made it a multifaceted approach. It was developed in this way because there are a number of reasons for any particular type of behaviour. For example, stealing could be due to poverty, boredom, unemployment, poor education, lack of life skills, inadequate

parental supervision, inadequate social controls, inadequate self control, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, or cultural disintegration. The challenge for the practitioner is to work out what was the primary reason for the behaviour in any particular case. The truth is that we often don't know what the primary reason was in any particular case, because we lack sufficient training or because we lack adequate assessment tools. For example, I have often heard people say that sport and recreational activities prevents crime. This may be true, but this only makes sense where the offence was stealing and the cause for stealing had something to do with boredom. To use sport and recreational activities as prevention to crimes that are primarily due to poverty makes no sense. And indeed, any experienced and competent worker would testify that sport and recreation programs by themselves can not possibly prevent all crimes. To complicate matters, there are often a number of reasons why a person commits an offence. And the weighting to be given to the various reasons is often hard to determine.

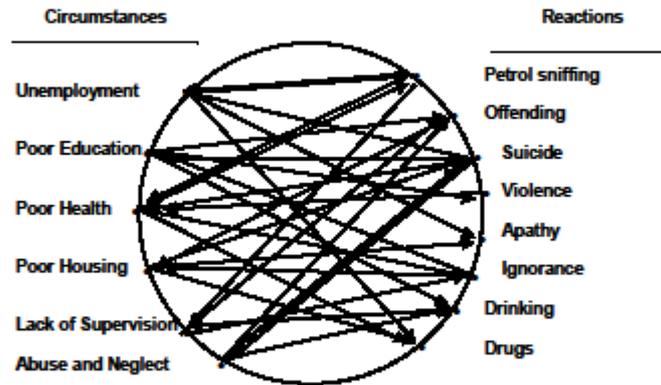
This was the challenge faced by the author with every new referral. The solution of which was the development of multiple interventions, all operating simultaneously. This was the primary reason for the program's effectiveness, but even here, things were not straight forward.

At the time I developed this Intervention Map, which was a number of years ago now, it occurred to me that not all things could be accurately described in this lineal manner. Take for example the issue of mental health and unemployment. Research has shown that poor mental health is both a causes and effect of unemployment (See: Jackson *et al.*, 1983; Liem, 1987; Warr, 1987; Morrell *et al.*, 1994; Schaufeli, 1997). If you throw offending behaviour in the middle of this you immediately get all sorts of interesting cause and effect possibilities. Generally speaking, this was only a descriptive weakness, not a practice weakness. But there were practice weaknesses that very few people picked up on. One of these was that not all the BFTB program interventions were complementary. For example, trying to operate a commercial enterprise was not always complementary to the needs of uneducated and unmotivated participants. Group work was not always complementary to autonomy. And social integration was not always complementary to providing a safe environment. Instead, most observers were distracted by a perceived disunity between the name of the program and the inclusion of females. Within the practice of the BFTB program, this was a really shallow observation and of little consequence to the girls involved.

I have since refined some of my thoughts behind this idea of describing cause and effect in purely lineal terms and practices that are not necessarily complimentary to each other.

Imagine that most things are connected in someway. For example, offending behaviour is in someway connected to the level of support and supervision received, which in turn is connected in someway to drugs and alcohol, which in turn is connected in someway to unemployment, which in turn is connected in someway to education, which in turn is connected in someway to support and supervision, which in turn is connected in someway to housing. Think about this for a moment, and you begin to see how this can go on and on, criss-crossing back and forth. This sort of thing can get quite complicated. And indeed, the reasons for certain behaviour can be very complicated.

The illustration below represents a simplified version of this concept where the circle represents the person – the embodiment of these interconnected causes and effects, or circumstances causing reactions and these reactions causing circumstances.



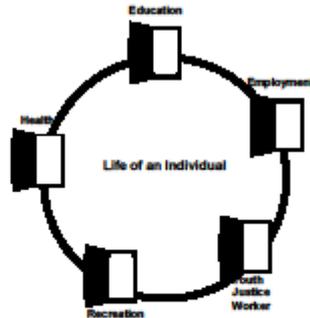
Looking at behaviours in this way, you should be able to see how this sort of concept can accommodate a simple case of cause and effect (for example, unemployment can cause offending behaviour) and it can also accommodate a much more complicated situation where circumstances and reactions keep bouncing off each other with no clear starting point and no clear end point.

In these situations, the interesting part begins when we try to decide a point of intervention. Imagine you are a youth justice worker required to deal with a young person's offending behaviour. Where or how would you intervene? But given that most things are connected in some way and in varying degrees, we could intervene at a number of different points, all of which could potentially alter the situation. For example, a legitimate pathway to prevent further offending behaviour could be the prohibition of drugs and alcohol, or the provision of education, or the provision of greater support and supervision, or the provision of employment. If, however, the offending behaviour had nothing whatsoever to do with drugs or alcohol then an intervention at this point will have no effect on the offending behaviour. If however, the offending behaviour did have something to do with the lack of parental support and supervision or boredom then the provision of employment could prevent future offending of the same type and cause. It can prevent offending behaviour because employment is connected to the provision of income, activity, time structure and purpose (to only mention a few).

#### Points of intervention

Viewing things in this way, we can see that there are certain factors that are very powerful in their strength and utility to alter behaviour. Employment is one such factor. Another is education. I have termed these factors "intervention doorways". They are doorways into our lives and therefore have the potential to bring about change to our lives. These doorways can take the form of influential people coming into our lives. More commonly, they are influential institutions entering into our lives.

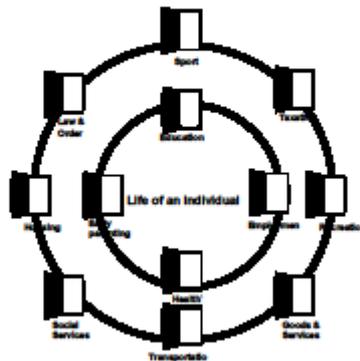
Education can alter our lives, like employment can alter our lives. This has been illustration below.



There are some doorways that are more powerful than others, for example, early parenting, health, education and employment. These are very powerful in their ability to determine our behaviour and shape our lives. According to Bowles & Gintis (1976), formal education is regarded as a major agency of certification and socialisation. Schools socialise us into the habits of thought and behaviour that is necessary for our future work. In a market society, work defines not only our income but also our status, identity and purpose (see: Part 4 (a) of the Trial Report).

Apart from our genetics, these institutions are probably the major determinant of our behaviour. I have therefore placed these agencies closer at the centre of our lives by positioning their symbolic doorways close to the centre.

Surrounding these doorways, close to the centre, are doorways that I have placed on an outer circle. These outer doorways are less powerful determinants of our behaviours, such as sport, taxation, recreation, law and order, transport, social services, etc. To varying degrees, these can also influence our behaviour and the quality of our lives. There are of course many other doorways in addition to the ones illustrated and they all vary from individual to individual in the strength with which they can influence our behaviour.



So what has all this got to do with the Work Placement Scheme (WPS)? I have developed this new way of looking at things to more easily and accurately describe the difference between the WPS and the BFTB program. By design, the WPS uses only one door, but it is one of the most powerful of all doorways - the employment doorway. The WPS's success is due, in large part, to the inherent power of work to change participant behaviour and the quality of their lives. The BFTB program tried to use these same inner circle doorways but it was not sufficient - the work was not real enough. It ended up having to use the less powerful outer circle doorways. The BFTB program could change behaviour, but not to the depth and breath that is being achieved by the WPS.

However, the WPS is more than a job agency. I talked earlier about how circumstances cause us to react and our reactions cause circumstances. The scheme can change environments which, in turn, can change behaviour. This means that the WPS has the capacity to deal with offending behaviour, health, education, drugs, alcohol, petrol sniffing, poverty, boredom, youth suicide, ignorance and apathy, and so on - all of which, in varying degrees, are the product of the environment. Work is a major part of our environment. Introduce work and you can alter the environment.

In addition to the inherent qualities of work to change the environment and therefore change behaviour, the WPS value adds to work by providing a particular type of work in a particular environment. The type of work the scheme provides includes: the provision of work well away from any disruptive or corruptive influences of family and community; the provision of work in a functional community; the provision of private rental housing; the provision of transport at cost; and the provision of support and supervision. And all these things are provided on conditions that relate to their work performance.

Another important factor is that these components are complementary to each other. There is no inherent inconsistency or contradiction between anything we do. An employment scheme can have the mandate to intervene into other dimensions without contradiction. We can promote autonomy and independence while providing regulation without contradiction. For example, drugs can not used because it is against the law. Under 18 year old participants can not drink alcohol because it is against the law. Over 18 year old participants can drink but it cannot interfere with their work performance or the work performance of others. Furthermore, the scheme's status and reputation will influence our ability to obtain and maintain employment for young people. For this reason the scheme can request that all participants refrain from behaviour that can potentially damage our status and reputation with employers and the local community.

14 September 2005

<b>Boys from the Bush program INTERVENTION MAP</b>			
<b>Anti-social behaviour</b>	<b>Antecedent (Risk factor)</b>	<b>Practice approach</b>	<b>Practice response</b>
1. Stealing and other property offences	Poverty	Provide income	Sale of eucalyptus and melaleuca oils.
	Boredom	Provide interesting activities	Adventurous remote bush camps. Involved in a stimulating commercial enterprise. Travelling to other interesting areas and communities.
	Unemployment	Provide employment	Produce and sell eucalyptus and melaleuca oils and related products (or any other viable enterprise). Involvement in all facets of the enterprise (planning, fundraising, production, promotions, sales, finance).
		Re-integrative shaming	Linking stealing with weak lazy children unwilling/unable to work like proud responsible young men.
		Provide basic pre-employment work skills	Development of work ethic through modelling, reward and positive reinforcement combined with punishment and negative reinforcements of laziness, lack of self control and dependency.  Getting accustomed to time structured work and following instructions.  Teaching team work and to work single-handedly.  Teaching effective communication skills.  Teaching basic financial and business management skills.  Finding opportunities to use existing knowledge and skills.
		Poor education and limited life skills	Provide education and life skills
		Increase confidence and self-esteem	Finding opportunities to use existing knowledge and skills.  Public and private rewards and positive reinforcements.  Enlarge participants' social experiences by exposure to

		the public, to formal public events and travel to other communities.
Inadequate parental supervision, social controls and self control	Introduce effective supervision and social controls	Strong effective leadership. Clear incorruptible rules and expectations. Assertive condemnation of unacceptable behaviour. Effective monitoring.
	Increase self-control	Provide training in self-control.
	Group work	Using group dynamics to maintain control and the reinforcement of norms.
	Re-integrative shaming	Associating stealing with spoilt, weak and lary children unwilling/unable to control themselves and behave like proud responsible young men.
	Behavioural modification	Loss of earnings or exclusion from certain activities
Peer pressure	Group work	Using group dynamics to maintain control and reinforce norms.
	Promote individuality and self-expression	Identify and encourage individual development of skills.
	Re-integrative shaming	Linking stealing with weak impressionable children unwilling/unable to stand up to others and make their own decision like proud responsible young men.
	Behavioural modification	Shaping new group values. Prompts to desirable behaviours. Rewards, positive and negative reinforcements of desired behaviour. Punishment of undesirable behaviour. Group and individual counselling.
	Separation from peers	Move to new environment
Drugs and alcohol use and abuse	Re-integrative shaming	Linking alcohol to a man's drink and underage drinkers as little children trying to act like men – "Men with dignity and self respect do not go about drunk and making fools of themselves".
	Behavioural modification	Move to new non-drinking environment and more effective supervision (See 'Boys from the Bush' information booklet.)  Modelling abstinence or modification.
	Group and individual education and counselling	Drug and alcohol education.

		Promoting good health	Hard physical work in the bush. Good nutritional food.
	Cultural disintegration	Reaffirming Indigenous culture Reaffirming cultural bond to the land	Teaching and promoting cultural knowledge and skills. Rough remote bush camps Producing Indigenous bush medicine and aromatic insect repellents. Environment awareness. Condemning welfare dependence. Promoting financial independence. Promoting self-respect, masculinity/femininity and positive Indigenous identity. Program restricted to Indigenous youth. Strong effective leadership.
2. Violent offences	Inadequate parental supervision, social controls and self control	Introduce effective supervision and social controls	Clear incorruptible rules and expectations. Assertive condemnation of unacceptable behaviour. Effective monitoring.
	Violent role models	Model non-violent behaviour	Promote non-violent/non-threatening, communication, understanding and self-control.
	Lack of moral development, destructive values and attitudes	Promote moral reasoning, respect and understanding	Promoting reciprocity among participants and a sense of universal justice. Group and individual education and counselling. Promoting reason over passion. Self-awareness education.
	Poor impulse control	Increase self-control	Training in self-control.
	Low self-esteem	Increase self-esteem	Finding opportunities to utilise existing knowledge and skills. Public and private rewards and positive reinforcements. Enlarge participants' social experience.
3. Youth suicide	Sense of hopelessness and despair	Provide greater community integration	Partnership in a highly visible and successful commercial enterprise.
	Social isolation	Social integration	Promoting team work and identity with the program. Build up self-esteem by providing a positive image.
	Loneliness	Help develop new friendships	Group work. Group living. Travel to other communities and meet new people.
		Promoting strength and individual identity	Using natural abilities and presenting knowledge and skills.

	Depression	Promote a positive perspective	Individual and group encouragement and by delegating of leadership responsibilities and promoting creativity and self-expression.
		Reduce stress	Practical support and counselling. Allow some flexibility. Effective communication and team work skills.
		Community integration	Involvement in a stimulating commercial enterprise.
4. Drugs and alcohol abuse	Modelling behaviour	Prohibition; enforcement of legal drinking age	Forbidding the consumption of drugs and alcohol
		Re-integrative shaming	Linking alcohol to a man's drink and underage drinkers as little children trying to act like a man. "Men with dignity and self-respect do not go about drunk or off their face with drugs and make fools of themselves".
		Provide education	Factual information on drugs and alcohol.
	Low self-esteem	Counselling	Group and individual counselling.
		Behavioural modification	Modelling: - Supervisor modelling desired behaviour - Group members modelling desired behaviours. Loss of earnings. Increase work tasks. Negative and positive reinforcements.
		Environmental change	Long term placements where there is greater environmental controls and more effective supervision.
5. Ignorance and apathy	Socially isolated	Enlarge participants' social experiences	Travel to other communities and form new friendships. Exposure to the public invitations to formal public events.
		Provide education	Social, political and cultural education. Learning through work. Teaching life skills.
			Integrate the program with formal educational opportunities.
		Developing a safe appropriate learning environment	Educational-support group of peers. Remote bush camps. Effective communication.

Irresponsibility	Promote responsibility	Provide general social, political and cultural education. Provide effective supervision, support and counselling.
Lack of moral development	Promote moral reasoning, respect and understanding	Promote reciprocity among participants and a sense of universal justice. Promote reason over passion. Self-awareness education.
Criminal behaviour	Provide education	Information on the law and their responsibilities.
	Re-integrative shaming	Linking criminal behaviour to childish behaviour.
Welfare dependence	Provide education	Social, political and cultural education.
	Promoting financial independence	Involvement in a successful commercial enterprise.
Over compliance	Promote independence of thought and action	Promote critical thinking and expressing personal views.
Inability to participate	Education and skills training	Integrating program with formal educational opportunities.

## Appendix 4

### WPS DEVELOPMENTAL NOTE #69

© Milton James 2007

**Topic: The horticultural industry cannot grow the WPS whereas the meat processing industry offers more promise**

The Work Placement Scheme (WPS) began in January 2005 with the placement of young Indigenous people from Cape York Peninsula into unsubsidised fruit picking work in the Riverland region of South Australia, the Murray Valley and Sunraysia regions of Victoria.

The horticultural industry was chosen for its abundance of unskilled work believed to be ideal for young unskilled Indigenous people with minimal education and no work experience. Ironically, the industry that helped establish the WPS is now holding it back. This note discusses the limitations of the horticultural industry and my move towards the meat processing industry which holds more promise.

A number of work group supervisors are employed to provide ongoing effective support and supervision. This is a vital structural component of the WPS. These work group supervisors are mainly sourced through MADEC Employment Services based in Mildura. Most of the applicants are unemployed rural labourers living in the region who may or may not have previous supervisory experience or knowledge of the local horticultural labour market. None of them have ever worked with young Indigenous people from remote northern communities. I have received no applications from experienced professionally qualified people. Over the past 2½ years, we have employed over 18 work group supervisors and very few lasted more than 2 or 3 months. Their reasons for leaving or being told to leave fall into one of three broad categories - 1) private domestic problems; 2) inability to carry out their duties without close supervision, and 3) lack of knowledge and skills in behavioural management. This, combined with huge seasonal fluctuations in employment and the general instability of the horticultural industry, is now seriously hampering the development of the WPS.

August 2005 saw the 5 month trial of placing 5 selected young people from the Renmark fruit picking group with Tatiara Meats as meat process workers in the Bordertown abattoir. This trial was based on the need to overcome my inability to recruit suitable work group supervisors and to seek out more stable industries willing and able to employ large numbers of young unskilled workers. The trial was conducted without a work group supervisor so to test the effectiveness of the other structural components of the scheme to maintaining the participants in their employment. This trial found that the meat processing industry did offer many full-time employment opportunities for unskilled workers and that an on-site work group supervisor was not essential for selected participants to maintain their employment in this line of work. **It was their behaviour outside of work that proved to be a problem which eventually affected their work performance and threatened their employment.** This finding was consistent with our lettuce picking group at Wemen, Victoria, when their employer reported achieving a better result without the presence of our work group supervisor. Whereas, their behaviour outside of work was, at times, very difficult to manage.

Page 1 of 1

September 2006 saw the establishment of the Wonthaggi abattoir group in Victoria, based upon the learnings of the Bordertown Trial and the Wemen group. This group has no on-site work group supervisor. Instead, it has an off-site supervisor, cook and domestic support worker which have proven to work well. The young people enjoy this type of work much more than fruit picking. It provides them with better working conditions, a greater and more stable income, on-site training and nationally credited qualifications. All participants live in rental houses with individual bedrooms. The abattoir uses their own on-site work supervisors who appear to be more effective than those employed by the WPS for the horticultural groups. They are also offering more full-time permanent positions than could ever be provided from the horticultural industry. The clear conclusion is that the WPS should seek ways to minimise our reliance on the horticultural industry and on-site work group supervisors and focus more on the meat processing industry and the provision of off-site support and supervision. This is what the scheme has sought to do in recent months, whereby, the horticultural industry has been used as the entry point only – an Intake Group. Good workers are quickly moved on to the Wonthaggi meat works.

Discussions are now taking place with Fletcher International at Albany in Western Australia. It has received good reports from TABRO Meats in Wonthaggi and has placed an order for 50 young people for immediate start.

This has created a new problem. We now have only one single entry point to the scheme - the Renmark fruit picking group which is still troubled by the lack of suitable supervisors, regular employment and a shortage of suitable accommodation. This is proving to be a real problem as it holds back our expansion into the meat processing industry.

The proposed solution to this problem is the resurrection of the *Boys from the Bush* (BFTB) program as an assessment tool and a secondary means of preparing young people for entry to the meat processing industry. The BFTB program will also be used for the assessment and training of on-site and off-site supervisors. This program will enable assessment and training to be done closer to home in a more familiar environment and where there is greater access to more experienced professional support.

14 June 2007

## Appendix 5

### THE MATTER OF FUNERALS

*A revised extract from BFTB Projects, RAW3 Progress Report #4, dated 31 January 2011*

On the 13 November, 2010, Virgil Downs and Jarvis Johnson from Ali Curung in the Northern Territory were contacted by their adoptive mothers to tell them that their natural father had passed away and that they had to return home immediately. The moment they received the call they were off, or at least they tried to take off. They didn't bother to give notice to their employer. In fact they didn't even mention anything to their work mates. They simply packed their bags and went straight down the street to catch the first available flight or bus back home. Virgil and Jarvis had been in the scheme for exactly nine months.

This sort of behaviour was in breach of the RAW3 Participation [Responsibility] Agreement that the head of the family had signed. The reason it got to this point was because I was away at the time on a recruitment drive. When I caught wind of what was going on, I immediately rang their senior uncle in Ali Curung to tell him what was going on. The uncle acknowledged that this was a breach of our agreement and instructed the boys to remain in Narrandera and return back to work until they receive further instruction.

When I questioned the mothers of these two boys on their breach of agreement, they denied any knowledge of the agreement and that the boys leaving their employment without notice for up to 3 months to attend a funeral was a problem. They said, "But nobody told us we couldn't do this." This of course was nonsense. What I also picked up was that these women were not accustomed to being pulled up on their nonsense and they didn't like it.

To assist the reader to understand what was going on here, a broader historical and social context of the issue at hand will be discussed.

The issue at hand is Indigenous people's long and regular absence from work (and school) to attend funerals. This is one of the areas in which Indigenous cultural practices is antagonistic to the national task of trying to close the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

What I am arguing here is the necessity for some fundamental cultural redevelopment if Indigenous people are to improve their employability in the private sector. This, however, is much easier said than done, as Peter Sutton explains:

*"The trouble with culture in this context is that it is neither fully conscious and subject to voluntary control, nor wholly unconscious and beyond being brought to mind. Culture consists of the interplay between what social scientists sometimes call 'unreflexive daily practice' and our awareness of what we are doing and thinking. Much of this awareness is selective. This complexity alone makes cultural and social engineering an unpredictable and daunting venture, if not in fact, as Charles Rawley once said, a phony idea."<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Sutton, P. (2010). *The Politics of Suffering: Indigenous Australia and the end of liberal consensus*, Melbourne University Press, p. 66.



Evidence was presented at the 1966 cattle industry award case [Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission: The Cattle Station Industry (Northern Territory) Award, 1951] on a number of failed experiments to engage Northern Territory Aborigines into mainstream employment. This included failed attempts to use Aboriginal labour in abattoirs in Katherine and Darwin. The reason for these failures was “because of their poor working record and frequent absenteeism.”<sup>1</sup> Attending funerals had been cited as one of the causes of this high rate of absenteeism.

A similar situation was being experienced in other parts of the country by other industries at that same time. It was reported by J.E. Tonkin, Chief Personnel Officer, Comalco Aluminium, in 1966 that:

*“The rate of absenteeism amongst the aborigines is distressingly high. In general it is no less now than it was 7-8 years ago and averages about 15% of the total ordinary hours of work. This rate would not be tolerated from southern workers. ... All of the aborigines have been on and off the payroll many times because of absenteeism, and if the normal commercial disciplines that applies to imported workers was applied, then none of the aborigines would now be employed.”*

We will now come forward 56 years and cite an extract from a 2010 publication by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) titled; ‘Working and Walking Together’:

*“Because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are extensive, and observe significant obligations around Sorry Business and other bereavement protocols, assumptions should not be made about the perceived ‘closeness’ of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person to the deceased in their need to attend a funeral or conduct Sorry Business. It can also be a cause of great distress if an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is unable to fulfil their bereavement obligations. **Adequate arrangements for bereavement leave should be available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to attend funerals and observe Sorry Business** (Bold added).”*

SNAICC states that the purpose of its publication; ‘Working and Walking Together’, “is to provide ideas, information, tools, practical tips and encouragement to assist non-Indigenous organisations, and their non-Indigenous staff, to strengthen their relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations”. The publication, however, makes no mention of the ongoing concern of employers about Indigenous peoples’ long and regular absence from work (and school) to attend funerals. Does this mean that SNAICC has no interest in the concerns of employers, or of the concerns expressed by teachers and the State and Commonwealth Departments of Education? Does SNAICC understand that this ‘working and walking together’ needs to be a two way street?<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Seminar paper titled: *The problem of Aboriginal Employment, Wages and Training*, May 1966, by F.H. Gruen, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Monash University, Victoria.

<sup>2</sup> The SNAICC was founded by the late Mollie Dyer from the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. Mollie and I were good friends back in the 1980s before she passed away, and I know that she was very concerned about those elements of Aboriginal culture that were holding her people back, nor did she hold back in speaking out about these things.



There are in fact countless numbers of articles and other publications written in recent times that express concern about this ongoing problem. Moreover, there are indications that the situation may have worsened over the past fifty six years. According to Hudson:

*"CDEP payments help fund attendance at funerals and 'sorry camps.' Lasting several weeks, 'sorry camps' have become a major feature of remote existence, providing a respite from the boredom and frustration of life in remote communities as well as an excuse for indulging in feasts of packaged goods, alcohol, and marijuana. Many remote community leaders have become disturbed by the disruption to work and schooling that these prolonged funerals cause, arguing instead to a return to traditional burial ceremonies that only required one to three days attendance spread over several months."*<sup>1</sup>

In one study of remote communities it was found that 28 percent of the CDEP participants attended funerals, ceremonies or festivals in the previous three months, whereas only 6 percent of the mainstream employed reported attending these kinds of events.<sup>2</sup>

Taylor, Bern & Senior (2000: 80) have also described the situation in most remote communities.

*"People's awareness of death as a frequent event is heightened by the fact that a death in the community involves everyone. Death interrupts the life of all residents in the community. Upon notification that someone has died a sorry day is declared, work ceases, school children are sent home and the shop is shut. Later when the body is returned to the community family members are required to hide indoors. Finally the entire community stops work and schooling to attend the funeral. Last days due to deaths and funerals impact most adversely on the education of children, whose outcomes are already affected by irregular attendance. At the end of term in October 2001 only one week out of ten that had not been affected by such an event."*

Geoff Guest, an old stockman and horse handler of Aboriginal decent in a private interview with me at his Outstation on Cape York Peninsular had this to say about Aboriginal funerals:

*"These days we see funerals being held up, sometimes for months, while they wait to contact certain people and sorting out squabbles. They will squabble over where the body is to be buried, who's going to be in charge, and how's it going to be organized. This didn't happen in the old days; it was not the tradition. The longest I ever saw a funeral go on for was about 3 weeks. It was 1939; I was 13 years old at the time, when we were mustering up in the Kimberly country. The funeral was delayed while things were being organized and while some of the new ones learn the ceremonial dances. It was important for them to get it right. Also in those days, only local people could be reached. People outside the area didn't feel guilt if they couldn't be contacted or couldn't attend. That was understandable.*

*There were always squabbles, but in those days it would be sorted out very quickly, you had to sort it out quickly. But these days with refrigeration it can be put off. And with the advent of telephones and charter flight everything changed, people far away could more easily be contacted, and this has caused a lot of problems since. The funeral can be put off until they are able to contact certain people, or for someone to get a lift, or for someone to get the money to travel.*

*Funerals have now become like a social event; a bit like a party, people coming from far away and staying for longer. Many might hardly know the deceased person, but they are still expected to go to the funeral or think they should go. For some it's like a power thing, where families try and put it over one another. If someone doesn't turn up they will get wild with them. It looks like they are showing respect, but it's not for the benefit of the deceased person. Others just come along for the food. And these days it's much easier to go away. With a key card you can draw out your Centrelink payments at any time any where. They can stay*

<sup>1</sup> CDEP: Help or Hindrance? The Community Development Employment Program and its Impact on Indigenous Australians, Centre for Independent Studies, Policy Monograph 86, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> J C Altman MC Gray and R Levitas, 'Policy Issues For The Community Development Employment Projects Scheme In Rural And Remote Australia' Discussion Paper 271/2005 Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU (2005) IX.



*away for weeks. This couldn't happen before. I know some people who are professional funeral goers, you know, attending funeral all the time and all over the country. I can understand it when the deceased person is close to you, but not if they are distant, and you hardly know them. A lot of these people will leave the kids at home to look after themselves with no money, sometimes for weeks. This is when the kids get into trouble, breaking into places to get food.*

*These people don't understand that culture is for people, not people for culture. If the culture becomes a problem or no longer has benefit for the people it should be dropped. If we get locked into a culture that's no longer a benefit, it holds us back. People need to be educated about these things."*

Geoff Guest picks up on the point about the SNAICC publication 'Working and Walking Together'. Has SNAICC become blind to the problem? SNAICC is one of many organisations calling on employers to be considerate and to make available adequate arrangements. Unfortunately, it appears that SNAICC, like so many others, has succumbed to the business of blame, which is constantly directed outward to others, not inwards to the self.

A number of employers in the meat processing industry have expressed to me that they are reluctant to employ Aboriginal people for exactly the same reasons as stated in 1966: "because of their poor working record and frequent absenteeism". The Australian Centre for International Business conducted a survey of 227 CEO's on their views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The CEO's identified three main factors constraining the greater employment of Indigenous workers: 1) shortage of job applicants, 2) difficulty in retaining, 3) high absenteeism.

A certain level of workplace absence is to be expected and can be beneficial for an organisation. Attending work when genuinely unwell is a health and safety issue for both the sick employee and others in the workforce. On the other hand, high rates of absence are costly. It can have a significant impact on the income of individuals and their employer. Regular absence often coincides with poor performance, high turnover rates and low organisational commitment. The costs of absence can be divided into two categories: direct costs and indirect costs. Direct costs include salaries, recruitment costs, overtime, and replacement staff costs. Indirect costs include training costs, service disruption, negative public perception, poor moral and lost productivity, business continuity and interruption.

The experience of BFTB Projects is that one of the most important pre-condition, for a successful work placement is where the young person's family understands the nature of real work and are committed to supporting the young person to fulfill his obligations. Where there is little understanding or support from the family, high rates of absenteeism is assured, followed by an early departure. Such lack of understand and support is more likely in families with little or no history of engaging in real work. In this regard, huge numbers of young people living in remote Aboriginal communities have got a serious problem and they will continue to have a serious problem for many years to come.

BFTB Projects is, however, assisting to balance these issues. In mid 2010, Barry Campbell from Tiritjika was called home to attend the funeral of his young niece. Rockdale Beef provided him with two weeks bereavement leave, which included the three days bus trip home and the three day bus trip back. Barry returned back to Narrandera and work at Rockdale Beef within the two week period. This was all facilitated by BFTB Projects.

In September 2010, the sister of Daniel McDonald from Alpururulam had passed away. After we had a chat, Daniel decided not to go home.



In the case of Virgil Downs and Jarvis Johnson, however, their adoptive mothers simply swept our Participation [Responsibility] Agreement aside. This was typical of these women. From the day Virgil and Jarvis arrived their mothers were constantly pressuring them into coming back home. Their excuses included:

- they must come home to attend a royalty meeting;
- they must come home to be by the side of a family member who has fallen ill;
- they must come home to protect the family from a tribal fight; and
- they must come home to attend an initiation.

What frustrated these women was that each time they called with a new story as to why the boys must come home I would catch wind of what was going on. I would then promptly contact the head of the family requesting him to intervene. This is what also occurred when I caught wind of the mothers' disregard of the agreement in regards to the funeral of their father. The uncle again intervened and instructed the boys to remain working for JBS Swift until they receive further instruction. Unfortunately, on this occasion I was still on the road and unable to monitor everyone's compliance with the uncle's instruction. The next thing I knew was that both boys had returned back to Ali Curung.

It is a fact that funerals are often used by young people and their families as an excuse for getting out of school or work or detention. The writer has witnessed a number of incidences where a young person returned home for a funeral only to find that the young person did not attend any service. Instead, they spent the day sleeping, playing video games, or indulging in drugs or alcohol with friends.

What made the case of Virgil and Jarvis particularly troubling was that their father's funeral service never actually took place at the time the family was stating. The deceased man died on the 13 November 2010. It was on this day that the family called Virgil and Jarvis to return home immediately. The disturbing fact was that the deceased man was not buried until 28 January, 2011 – 76 days later. Furthermore, it was the family's expectation that Virgil and Jarvis were to remain at home until their father was buried. This family would often go on about their strict adherence to traditional culture. But this business of putting off a funeral for 76 days could never have take place in traditional times. As a result, two young people had lost their job and with little to show for their past nine month's effort.

By way of contrast, Jewish and Muslim tradition requires that the deceased must be buried as soon as possible after death. This traditional practice originated from the fact that the Middle East was, and is, a region with a hot climate. In Biblical times, there were few ways of keeping the dead body from decomposing. Not only would this be generally undesirable, but allowing the dead body of a deceased person to decompose in this way would be showing that person great disrespect, hence the custom of burying the body as soon as possible. This practice has not changed even with the advent of refrigeration.



## Appendix 6

### WPS DEVELOPMENTAL NOTE #11

© Milton James 2005

**Topic:           The use of distance**

The reason for providing employment well away from north Queensland was explained in my report titled; "A report on the trial of placing young Indigenous people from Cape York Peninsula region into private sector employment in southern states". Quoting from page 7:

*"Young people refusing to attend school and work are commonplace on Cape York Peninsula. In most cases, this appears to result from the lack of an educational and work ethic, combined with the unrestricted, unconditional licence endowed upon young people by their families and community at large. One strategy used to deal with the problem of school rejection has been to send young people to school well away from the distracting and sometimes negative influences of peers, family and community. Experience has shown that these school or work placements must be located far enough to deter the young person from running back to family and community as soon as conformity is required and restrictions apply. This strategy has proven to be the most effective in providing formal education for children and young people on Cape York. It is also a key strategy used in this trial. Distance will not only deter young people from leaving, it will also prevent others from interfering (James, 2005, p. 7)."*

A good example of the effectiveness of this design occurred a few months ago with participant #9, aged 17 years. This participant had a very low productivity — picking on average 1 bin of oranges per day. In addition, he was highly disruptive to other participants. He was counselled and warned by his employer and group supervisor on a number of occasions with no effect. His excuse for his low productivity was his excessive weight — an excuse that I refused to accept. It seemed to me that the real reason he chose to ignore all the warnings was because there was no need to pay any attention to them. He never had to wear the consequences of his misbehaviour in the past (his family was always there to bail him out), so why should this situation be any different? Before long his employer gave him the sack, and, as expected, he contacted his family asking them to pay for his fair back home. Fortunately for him (perceived as unfortunate by him at that time) his 3 week assessment period had passed.

It was at this point that I intervened. I was fully aware of participant #9's situation and I had a good understanding of his general character. His known weaknesses were that he had no savings, no credit, no transport, no food stocks, no knowledge of local support services, no local friend or family member, a big appetite, liked his home comforts, very spoilt and a very long way from home. His known strengths were that he was reasonably resilient and intelligent; he had the capacity to reason things out and he had good communication skills.

One of the first things I did was to contact his family with the request that they do not assist him under any circumstances. When I obtained this agreement, I informed participant #9 that he had 24 hours to vacate his caravan, as stated in the rules; we are not a welfare agencies providing free accommodation.

If readers think about this for a moment, you can see that this young person had set himself up for considerable hardship. In all probability, the ensuing crisis had the potential power to force him to reassess his behaviour at a depth that no other prior intervention had achieved. Those who understand crisis theory and intervention know what I am talking about. A state of disequilibrium was created – the realisation that their usual ways of dealing with a situation no longer works. This is a time when the person is vulnerable and more open to change.

As it turned out, after 48 hours participant #9 rang me to say that he now realised his mistake (clearly stated) and asked for the opportunity to show his change in attitude. This opportunity was offered on the agreement that he is to live and work separate from all other participants with a minimum of 3 orange bins per day. Today participant #9 has a much improved attitude and is held in high regard by his new employer. He picks between 4 and 5 bins of oranges per day. He lives in his own caravan in a small caravan park close to the centre of Renmark and visits the main group only on weekends.

As I said, this is a good example of how the design of the WPS can bring about a positive change in behaviour. However, readers should not think that all participants treated in this way respond in the same positive manner. Take for example participant #10 aged 19 years. He was also a poor performer picking on average only 1 bin of oranges per day. Like participant #9, counselling and warnings by his employer and group supervisor had no discernable effect. He also had no savings, no credit, no transport, no food stocks, no knowledge of local support services, no local friends or family members and was a very long way from home. His 3 week assessment period had also passed. But there was a crucial difference between him and participant #9. Participant #10 clearly lacked the same reasoning skills, had poor communication skills and displayed low moral reasoning. When he was told that he had 24 hours to vacate his caravan he went and broke into a caravan belonging to one of the other participants and stole his \$800 “hidden” under his bed. He then took off back home to Yarrabah.

This sort of break-and-enter and stealing behaviour often occurs in many Cape York communities. Often it's young people standing over defenceless older people demanding that they hand over their welfare cheque to buy grog or dope. If they don't hand it over they can expect to have their home ransacked.

In hindsight, this young person should not have been accepted into the scheme. His general demeanour suggested that something was wrong. His movements were lethargic and expressed little emotion. He was often withdrawn and rarely interacted with other members of his group. He was often confused and slow at organising his thoughts, and when not working he spent most of his time sleeping. When I told him to leave the scheme he showed no emotional reaction – immediate and total acceptance. He asked for no help; not even from his own family.

18 September 2005

## Appendix 7

### WPS DEVELOPMENTAL NOTE #2

© Milton James 2005

**Topic:** Suitability assessments

The Work Placement Scheme (WPS) is a formal mainstream work experience, which can be compared to a formal mainstream school experience.

A common strategy of families and welfare agencies dealing with young people with behavioural problems has been to send them away to boarding school (shifting the problem to others). This will inevitably result in the school lodging a complaint. Take for example, Wangetti Education Centre. For years this school was used as a dumping ground for those with behavioural problems. At one stage, the behaviour of the students was so bad that the school had to be closed and its reputation was severely damaged. Djarragun College, on the other hand, rejects those with severe behavioural problems and those who are not serious about wanting an education. This not only makes their life easier and protects the school's reputation, it also protects other students from being bullied or influenced by those who misbehave.

The WPS is similar to schools in that the scheme will not work for young people who are not serious about wanting to work. To determine if a young person is serious about wanting to work, we must carry out an assessment. An assessment is when you examine the nature and history of the young person. When a child or young person answers "yes" to the question "Do you want to join the scheme?" this does not mean that the young person is willing and able to live outside the community and engage in mainstream (private sector) employment. To send a young person to the WPS without a proper assessment risks failure. It will also risk harming other young people already in the scheme and ultimately ruin the scheme's credibility and ability to function. We must remember, the bottom line for mainstream employers is profit. If they cannot profit from their employees they will not employ them – this is how the private sector works, and smoke and mirrors cannot change this bottom line.

An example of what I am talking about is the referral of participant #5 and #6 from Aurukun. Participant #5 was not selected for the WPS on the basis of merit. He was selected on the basis of family status. And he has caused no end of trouble and unlikely to last very long. Whereas, participant #6 was selected by me on the basis of merit and he is going very well. My assessment was based on his presentation and performance in the Boys from the Bush program and the Aurukun Youth Strategy.

In future, I need to see evidence that an assessment based on merit took place, otherwise I will not approve his application.

7 June 2005

## Appendix 8



*From the Bush Projects*

*Aurukun Youth Orbiting Projects*

---

### APPLICANT DETAILS

NAME: .....

DATE OF BIRTH: ..... AGE: .....

MOBILE No.: .....

HOME ADDRESS: .....

.....

..... Ph: .....

POSTAL ADDRESS: .....

.....

---

JOB SEEKER ID. No. (if relevant): .....

TAX FILE No.: .....

MEDICARE No.: .....

BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS:

BANK: .....

BSB No.: .....

ACC. No.: .....

ACC. Name: .....

DATE(S) OF ASSESSMENT: .....



ITEM	PARTICULARS	WHERE	Completed
Form 1	Applicant Details	Aurukun	
Form 2	Preliminary Health Check	Aurukun Health Centre	
Form 3	Drug & Physical Test	Aurukun Health Centre	
Form 4	Participation [Responsibility] Agreement	Aurukun	
Tax File Number	If no TFN, application for TFN for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders must be completed	Centrelink Office Before participant leaves the community.	
Photo Identification	Make up RAW5 photo identification letter for the flight if no other photo identification available. Other ID: Category A – Photo ID <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drivers Licence</li> <li>• Original birth certificate</li> </ul> Category B – Photo ID <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original identification letter on Council letterhead (must include name, dob, address)</li> </ul>	Aurukun  Photo ID must be provided to check-in counter to get on flight  Other ID must be collected before participant leaves the community.	
Bank Account	Keypad, PIN number and account number	Aurukun Must be opened before participant leaves the community. Preferably Commonwealth Bank. To change banks in Peterborough requires birth certificate.	
Health Care Card or Medicare Card or Medicare Number	Medical number must be written on Medical and Legal Assessment form	Aurukun Health Centre	
Criminal background check	Ensure no outstanding warrants, charges or court order restricting interstate travel.  Check for current supervised court orders.	Aurukun Police Station or Court House or Community Corrections Officer	
Registration of Voluntary Job Seekers	Ensure all applicants are registered with local Job network Provider	Local Job Network Provider	