

Young Indigenous Meatworkers' Gazette

News letter of the Boys from the Bush Projects, Remote Area Work Scheme (RAWS)
Issue No. 14, Tuesday, 2 November 2010



This space is reserved for the logos of those meat processing companies that engage RAWS workers

JBS Swift buys Rockdale Beef

The world's largest beef processor, Brazilian-owned JBS Swift, has purchased Rockdale Beef for an undisclosed figure.

have to spend in excess of \$80 million in working capital to get this business (Rockdale Beef) back to where it needs to be", he said.



"That \$80 million will be spent on getting the feedlot numbers to back around 50,000 and buying grain and other issues." The plant is presently operating at fewer than 13,000 head of cattle.

Swift Australia now owns and operates 13 meat processing plants and 6 feedlots. It employs approximately 7000 people nationally. This company has more than 22 percent control of the Australian meat processing sector. The US owned Cargill Australia is the next biggest competitor with 12 per cent.

Swift's purchase of Rockdale Beef is excellent news for the Boys from the Bush Projects - Remote Area Work Scheme (RAWS). Swift has signed off on a Memorandum of Understand (MOU) for an additional 25 young Indigenous workers at their Riverina Processing Plant.

Swift Human Resource Manager, Maureen Ray, said to BFTB Projects, that they are pleased with the results of RAWS thus far and keen to employ more young Indigenous people.

Director John Berry told the ABC News that Swift buys businesses to run them successfully. *"We're going to*

With so many meat processing plants located on the east coast, they have the potential to employ a huge number of young Indigenous people.

BFTB Projects' past involvement with JBS Swift

In late 2008, JBS Swift offered BFTB Projects 25 positions for Indigenous youths from remote northern communities at their Brooklyn Plant located in Melbourne. A further 25 positions were offered at their Longford Plant located in Tasmania.

Unfortunately the deal was not realised because of government (DEEWR) regulations.

The government's position was in order for Swift to employ Indigenous youths through BFTB Projects, Swift had to be the funding applicant rather than BFTB Projects.

This ruling made Swift legally liable for the recruitment and off-site support and supervision, which were the responsibility of the BFTB Projects. This decision was unacceptable to Swift. Swift as the applicant also had to provide the government with detailed information on its private financial affairs.

Swift was not the only meat processing company that found these requirements unacceptable. As a result, a maximum of 75 positions that could have gone to disadvantaged Indigenous youths from remote northern communities were lost.

BFTB Projects pleaded with the government for some flexibility to no avail. We had to wait until government introduced their new Indigenous Employment Program, before BFTB Projects was able to put in a submission and take responsibility for its operation.

BFTB Projects blends knowledge and skills from a number of disciplines

BFTB Projects draws upon qualifications and extensive experience

in rural and remote area social work with at risk Indigenous youths. These skills and knowledge are further enhanced, with qualifications and extensive experience in agriculture and the pastoral industry.

This unique blend of two primary disciplines, enables BFTB Projects to identify and bring together two parts of a special socio-economic equation described below.

1. BFTB Projects recognizes that meat processing plants have high staff turnover. This employee impediment restricts the industry from reaching its full potential.

2. BFTB Projects knows that meat processing plants are willing to employ any number of Indigenous youths, if they are willing to work and to stay committed to their employer.

3. BFTB Projects can appreciate the fact that if meat processing plants cannot find workers from near by, they will look for workers living in other parts of the country.

If they cannot find workers in other parts of the country, they will bring them in from overseas. When this happens, BFTB Projects has openly challenged those who state that these foreigners are taking jobs from Australian workers. This is simply not true. Australians did not want these jobs.

Similarly, BFTB Projects openly challenges anyone who says that young Aboriginals from the Northern Territory, are taking the jobs of Aboriginals living in NSW. This is also not true. The NSW Aboriginals did not want these jobs. Besides, there are plenty of jobs for everyone.

However, BFTB Projects did publicly challenge the Government when it was exposed for favouring foreign workers who were securing jobs, that could have gone to young Aboriginal workers.

4. BFTB Projects was the first to identify the existence of a large number of Indigenous youths living in rural and remote communities, who are willing and able to leave home for work in the meat processing industry.

This translates into an untapped labour force ideally suited to the meat processing industry. The effective utilization of this labour force could make a significant contribution towards the labour needs of this industry; mutual benefit for the employer and young Indigenous Australians.

5. BFTB Projects understands that it is the off-site behaviour of these young people that make them difficult to use.

We understand the ways in which poor parenting, the breakdown of social norms, discipline and education, the development of negative self-perceptions, passive welfare dependency, and perverse incentives, express themselves through a range of self-defeating behaviours that can seriously effect their work performance, for example, the regular use and abuse of drugs and alcohol, and extremely intense, all consuming, relationships with the opposite sex.

If these behaviours are not addressed effectively they will very quickly intrude into the workplace and seriously affect their work performance. By nature, these matters are usually well beyond the influence of workplace mentors.

We also understand how the provision of real work is the most effective means of addressing the myriad of social problems, which continue to cause individuals, families, and communities so much distress.

6. BFTB Projects knows that the way to recruit these young people, is to get out there and look for them. They are not readily identifiable, particularly by Job Network Providers. In fact a scheme of this sort will not work, if it is

dependent on referrals from Job Network Providers.

The only thing impeding this Scheme is the lack of focus and commitment from Government, to support Indigenous youths taking up employment opportunities wherever they can be obtained.

When I left school at the age of 17 (nearly 40 years ago), my father organised for me to travel from our home in the Adelaide Hills to my first job working for Peko Mines in Tennant Creek. In those days, youth mobility for the purpose of work was a norm; a rite of passage. This was the occasion that signified that you are now a young man, making your own way in the world.

And let us not hear any talk about young Indigenous people not being part of this. On my way to Tennant Creek, 40 years ago, the train stopped for a few hours at Maree in central South Australia. I met an Aboriginal school friend of mine named Alex, who was also going to a job somewhere out bush organised by his family.

In this regard, the difference between youths then and many youths now living in rural and remote communities, is that their parents or other family members are unable to help them, in the manner that our parents or family members helped us. However, there are a number of exceptions to this.

Anton McMillan blazing the trail for his family and community

Something very important is going here.

Pictured below is Anton McMillan from Santa Teresa in the Northern Territory. He joined the Scheme on the 29 January 2010 at the age of 16, (at the request of his mother).



Anton has recently been promoted to a trainee boner, pictured below.

Anton was saying that his supervisor thinks he has the making for “*a dame good boner*”.

After observing Anton in action, the Plant Manager also stated that Anton has the potential to be a good boner.

Anton is now 17, and has been in the Scheme for 9 months. Anton is now a multi skilled worker for Swift Australia on the Boning Floor.



Like all good developmental projects, it is not just about the here and now. It is also about the larger world, family and community, now and in the future. It is also about breaking negative cycles from one generation to the next.

Anton’s family back in Santa Teresa has been watching, listening, and thinking about what is happening to their son.

Nine months later, Anton’s aunty has come forward to say that she wants her two children aged 16 to now join Anton in Narrandera, to work for Swift Australia. The family are also talking about other younger ones coming down, after they have left school and when they are old enough.



These are important family and

community dynamics that Governments should be paying attention to.

This is what was beginning to take shape in BFTB earlier trial groups, before it fell victim to the external forces of maladministration and avarice.

Formal induction training has begun thanks to Michael Grogan of FGM Consultants

FGM Consultants have been engaged to deliver the MINTRAC Certificate in Meat Processing i.e. Certificate II or Certificate III level as determined by their training program.



Michael Grogan has been a long time supporter of the BFTB's Projects.

It was Michael who did the original negotiation with Tabro Meats in 2006, for Boys from the Bush to conduct its first large scale trial group in this industry. He continues to promote RAWS to other meat processing companies throughout Australia.



Last week Michael Grogan drove from Gippsland in Victoria to deliver a two day induction course to our workers.

This course gave our participants an overview of the industry, and where they are presently situated. Participants were taken through the various streams of MINTRAC courses that will provide them with a career in the meat processing industry.

They were provided with an understanding of, and an appreciation for Work Instruction (WI), Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), Critical Control Points (CCP), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), Quality Assurance (QA), good health and hygiene standards, the function of AQIS, and much more.

Michael said; *“Their eagerness and enthusiasm to move up quickly in the industry has definitely been ignited.”* He went on to say, *“Their excitement and enthusiasm was significantly above the general industry participants.”*

Michael added that; *“Swift is a company that could offer these young people the opportunities they need to progress their careers. I can also see how the off-site coaching and mentoring will ensure their success,”* he said.

Update on the RAWS promotion induction video

Our video is being made in three parts:
Part 1 – employment preparation and assessment (11 minutes).
Part 2 – the daily routine (15 minutes)
Part 3 – meat processing work (approximately 30 minutes)

Part 1 and 2 has been completed. Part 3 is near completion.

Each segment has been designed so that it can be viewed in isolation from the other two segments. Also, it is not necessary to view them in order for the viewer to make sense of the content.

All three parts will be field tested in the forthcoming recruitment drive.

These are big budget films using award winning actors. Part 1 stars Jarvis Johnson (pictured below) from Ali Curung acting as himself.



Part 2 stars Kenneth Philomac from Alpururulam acting as himself.



RAWS has zero tolerance of drug and alcohol

Part 3 stars all the other famous actors all playing themselves doing their various jobs.

Our appreciation is expressed to PVS Workfind, Steve Rothfield and Jackie Yowell, for their donations towards the production of these films.



Steve Rothfield and Jackie Yowell.

Update on Bungoona

Readers will recall Newsletter #13 talking about an organisation called Summit Employment and Training that is willing to purchase a building named Bungoona located in the main street of Narrandera. It is large enough to accommodate a maximum of 20 young people.



The idea is that Summit Employment and Training purchase Bungoona and lease it to BFTB Projects, to establish the first ever school of work and training for young Indigenous people, for the meat processing industry.

Summit's purchase of this building is conditional; that it is able to obtain the necessary financial assistance for modifications and refurbishments.

BFTB Projects must go in the direction of developing the **Live-in Carer/Family Group Home Model**. This model has proven itself to be the most effective for high needs participants. Our earlier trial used the **On-call/Visiting Supervisor Model**, which proved not to be very effective nor sustainable. It should only be used for low needs participants who do not engage in drugs or alcohol.

The **Live-in Carer/Family Group Home Model** is the future of this Scheme. With this model we will soon be able to achieve a retention rate of approximately 60%; participating for a minimum of 12 months work placement, with about 50% of these employees obtaining the necessary life skills for sustainable independent living within 6 months.

The development and operation of Bungoona is an exciting opportunity for all its key stakeholders, and we look forward to the journey that lies ahead.

EDUCATIONAL SECTION FOR RAWS' WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Breakfast

- 1 poached egg
- 1 grilled tomato
- 1 cup baked beans
- 2 toast with margarine

**How many teaspoons of fat are in this breakfast?
Where is the fat coming from?**



**Look at the next page for the answer in
teaspoons of fat**

This breakfast is a low fat breakfast.

There is a small amount of fat in the egg and a little scrape of margarine on the toast.

Adding vegetables like the baked beans and tomato and using wholemeal toast makes it higher in fibre and more nutritious.



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**Soad & Jacqueline James
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