

Young Indigenous Meatworkers' Gazette

News letter of the Boys from the Bush Projects, Rural & Remote Area Work Scheme (RAWS)
Issue No. 15, Monday, 4 April 2011



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

2010 was a good year for Boys from the Bush workers with a number of them staying on for a second year

2010 was a very tough year, with a number of setbacks, but our results were still very good.

For example, we had 50 per cent of our workers reaching the 9 months milestone, and 36 per cent reaching the 1 year milestone. This compares to JBS Swift's previous experience of 5 per cent retention of Indigenous workers after 6 months, and a yearly retention rate of approximately 38 per cent for the industry generally.

We would have had 50 per cent reach the 1 year milestone if it was not for this new and highly disruptive practice of a burial and 'sorry business' lasting for up to three months, with the result that 2 of our young people lost their job.

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.

Should these prolonged funerals become fashionable we will never close the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The really good news story is that 36 per cent have chosen to remain working for JBS Swift into the foreseeable future.

Our earlier trial groups in Bordertown (Tatiara Meat), Wonthaggi (Tabro Meat), Albany (Fletchers International) and Cobram (Tasman Group) were focused on how best to help young people maintain their job for up to 12 months.

Some of our pictures of these earlier trial groups are shown below.



With all this earlier developmental work behind us, we can now turn our attention to the task of helping young people to develop a **career** in the meat processing industry.

The first of our graduates from Riverina Beef, Barry Campbell, was a family man. His wife and daughter remained at home in Titjikala while he went off to work for Rockdale Beef / Riverina Beef for 12 months. He is now living back home in Titjikala with his wife and daughter working on CDEP.

A video of Barry at work for Rockdale Beef can be seen on the improved BFTB Projects web site.

We think that Barry's case has some interesting government policy implications, particularly around the continuation of CDEP and mobility for young family men living in remote communities.

We now have a strange situation where CDEP is not only assisting in the down-skilling of Barry, but it is also helping to delay the inevitable reality that young people like Barry need to leave these communities if the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is to be closed, and the social dysfunction is to be avoided.

Clearly, greater incentives must be provided to people like Barry where entire families can move to follow the primary bread winner once they are

integrated into the workplace and host community.

The next 4 graduate workers are all young single men from remote communities, and they have decided to remain with JBS Swift. Again, this should be of interest to government policy advisers.

One of these young men, Travis Mahoney, has applied for a transfer to JBS Swift's meat processing plant in Townsville where he can live with an aunty.



Travis's transfer will take place at the end of this month, and we will continue to follow his progress with great interest.

Young people from the Northern Territory working at Riverina Beef: Why are they there?

Whilst most management understand the context of this project, it has come to our attention that there are a number of staff at the Riverina Beef meat processing plant who do not fully understand why young people from up north have come all the way down to the JBS Swift Riverina Plant to work.

Well it's really straight forward. There are no jobs for these young people back home. They have the choice of either

staying home and live their lives on unemployment benefits or leaving home to find work. In addition, the communities in which they have grown up are highly dysfunctional, dangerous and life expectancy is significantly reduced.



This is where the Boys from the Bush Projects comes into it. We help young people who want to leave home for a job in the meat processing industry, but need a helping hand to get started. They have an opportunity of a new environment, and new life and health opportunities.

For the most part, all Boys from the Bush workers are treated just like all the other workers at Riverina Beef. But it's important to keep in mind that they have lived very different lives to most other workers at Riverina Beef. For example;

- Not everyone working at Riverina Beef grew up in a place where there are few opportunities for a good education.
- Not everyone working at Riverina Beef grew up in an area where there is up to 90 per cent unemployment.
- Not everyone working at Riverina Beef has travelled 3,000 kilometres for a job opportunity.
- Not everyone working at Riverina Beef has no local family or friends to support them.
- Not everyone at Riverina Beef grew up in a place where their parents

could not protect them from the dangers of drugs and alcohol abuse, and where these dangers may be endemic.

- Not everyone working at Riverina Beef grew up in a place where, unless you are born to a privileged family or are exceptionally talented, your voice is rarely heard.



In 1966, the grandfathers of some of these young people came down from the Northern Territory to Leeton and Griffith to pick fruit and vegetables.

It was reported in the local paper (The Murrumbidgee Irrigator) that they were good people who work well. They were welcomed into the local community, with many locals coming forward to offer them a helping hand.



Should any locals be inclined to offer the same helping hand to the grandchildren of these earlier visiting workers, please feel free to come forward and introduce yourself. We have a number of young people looking for a helping hand with all sorts of things. Some are looking for a lift to and from work. Some are interested in the idea of boarding with local families. Some are simply interested in getting involved in weekend sports and social activities.

If you think you can give a helping hand with any of these things, you can give Milton James a call on 0429 644 645.

New worker from Santa Teresa in Northern Territory

A big welcome to 22 year old Mike Wallace (pictured below) from the remote Northern Territory community of Santa Teresa.



Mike started out his working life on CDEP, but he then did a stockman's course at Mataranka Station. Shortly after this course, Mike teamed up with old Jacky Anzac, where together they worked on Delamere Station, Montejinni Station, and Camfield Station for a few years.

Mike then returned back home to Santa Teresa and went back on CDEP for about 1 year when he heard about his

cousin Anton McMillan working down south in the meat works, and asked if he could also come down.

Mike has started off with JBS Swift Riverina Plant in the offal room, pictured below.



At first Mike has found the work a little difficult, but he feels confident that he will get the hang of it soon.

Mike was assisted to join BFTB Projects by our good friends, Catholic Care NT.

CatholicCare NT
ABN 49 861 718 108



New worker from Walgett in New South Wales

A big welcome to 17 year old Reginald Peters (pictured below) from Walgett in north central New South Wales.

Reggie had to jump a number of hurdles before he was able to join this scheme. He did jump these hurdles and he is now in.

There are a lot of people in Walgett who are hoping that Reggie goes well.



Reggie has started off his career in the JBS Swift Riverina Plant boning room, shown below.



Reggie was assisted to join BFTB Projects by our good friends, Best Employment.



New worker from Far North Queensland

A big welcome to 17 year old Derek Koowootha, pictured right. His mother's family come from Aurukun on Cape York Peninsula and his father's

family comes from the Coen-Pormpuraaw area.

This is Derek's first real job and first time he has been so far from home.



Like Mike Wallace, Derek has started off his career in the meat processing industry in the JBS Swift Riverina Plant offal room.

Pictured below is Derek cleaning out intestines for export.



Derek was assisted to join BFTB Projects by our good friends Direct Employment Services



Update on the RAWS promotion induction video

Readers may recall that BFTB Projects produced a promotion/induction video, with donations from PVS Workfind, Steve Rothfield and Jackie Yowell.



Steve Rothfield and Jackie Yowell.

These videos have now been road tested and they worked well. They have been shown throughout a number of remote communities in the Northern Territory and all who have watched them think they are really good.

You can see extracts of Part 3 of the video on the BFTB Projects website at www.boysfromthebush.org.au. Click on the page titled Work Scheme Videos.

A paper to be written by the President of BFTB Projects

I am presently writing a paper about a work scheme developed in 1966 for Northern Territory Aboriginal people picking fruit and vegetable in South Australia, Victoria and New South

Wales. A year later this scheme collapsed in a big way.

This scheme was very similar to the horticultural work groups I developed between 2005 and 2007, before I made the switch to the meat processing industry.

I documented my reasons for this switch in WPS Developmental Notes #29, #69 and #73 that have been posted on the BFTB Projects website at; www.boysfromthebush.org.au

When I first developed the horticultural groups, I was completely unaware of this earlier scheme.

It is now 2011 and I have just found out that some of the young people presently in my meat processing group are the grandchildren of people who were in the 1966 scheme.

The odds of this family event reoccurring 43 years later, just by chance, are astronomical. This is a truly amazing story, but it will not be the focus of my paper.

The focus of my paper will be about why this earlier scheme failed and how RAWS has not repeated their mistake.

The paper will conclude with the view that, in this business, there is no big game buster to be developed by the rich, famous, privileged or talented. Widespread change will come slow and hard, and probably as a result of a mass of small interventions.

EDUCATIONAL SECTION FOR RAW'S WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

**Mars bar
12 squares of chocolate (60g)**

**How many teaspoons of fat and sugar
are in each?**



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

Chocolates taste good but they are really high in both fat and sugar



THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED BY



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Michael McDaid
Ted Sherwood & Rosie Sherwood
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