

Young Indigenous Meatworkers' Gazette

Newsletter of the Boys from the Bush Projects
Issue No. 25, Monday, 18 March 2013



This space is reserved for the logos of those meat processing companies that have or are engaging BFTB workers

SAMEX our new employer of young people from the Northern Territory

BFTB Projects has shut down our project with JBS Swift Riverina Beef in southern New South Wales and have established a new project with SAMEX in Peterborough, South Australia. Our reason for shutting down our Riverina group will be explain in our next issue.

SAMAX Plant Manager, Christine Duggan, is straight down the line when it comes to the employment of disadvantaged youths from remote northern communities. *"If they are serious about wanting a job, I will give them a go"*, she said.

But wait ... there is a lot more to this story than just giving young people a fair go. This is the first time ever a plant manager has actually gone out and purchased a backpackers hostel specifically for this project. Moreover, she has also appointed one of her workers, Joshua Datson, as the Residential Supervisor.

In all the years we have been out there developing something that actually works, we have never come across anything like this before. Christine Duggan is one of those rare individuals that is straight as a dye; no platitudes, no sleight of hand and no bleeding heart for those who want to play the system. This woman has put her money and time on the table for those that are serious about wanting a real job, rather than an all-expenses paid excursion (disguised as a training course), or a new place and opportunity to fund their lust for drugs and alcohol.

Christine and her husband have also agreed to help out with the off-site support and supervision, including teaching the young people how to cook wholesome meals for themselves.



“Hi all, my name is Christine Duggan Plant Manager at SAMEX Peterborough, I have been here for 24 years. I am looking forward to being a part of the Boys from the Bush. I have been busy getting their lodgings ready, and now a date has been set to welcome the new workers into our company and our small but lovely town. Good luck to you all that are coming down, see you soon.”

Pictured below is Joshua Datson, one of the workers at SAMEX appointed by Christine as the Residential Supervisor.



“Hi my name is Joshua Datson. I moved to Peterborough mid-February and started a job at the local abattoir. I have settled in well to my new home and town. The abattoir has joined in with a project called the Boys from the Bush. I have been asked to supervise and mentor the young lads that have been chosen to take part in the project. The accommodation is well on the way and nearly finished. We are looking forward to their arrival.”

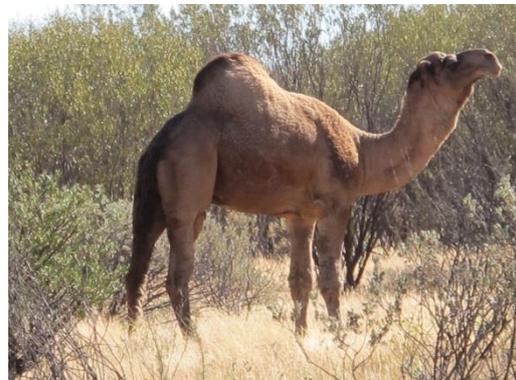
Peterborough has a population of about 2,000 people. It was established in 1881 and in time became an important rail transport hub and the junction of three railway-line gauges. The development of standardisation and new technology brought an end to those days. Its major

industries today are the abattoir and tourism.

There is also something else different about the Peterborough meat processing plant. This plant processes wild camels from the APY Lands. It also processes horses.



For years Milton had been driving past these wild camels, stopping occasionally to take a few pictures and occasionally firing a shot over their heads when they come too close to his camp at night.



Some of these big ones have always worried him a bit. He had also seen them yarded up on the side of the Stuart Highway awaiting transport down to Peterborough.



Milton has met Roger Kayipipi from Fregon, one of the men employed to help catch the wild camels running wild all over the APY Lands.



But little did Milton know that one day he would become involved in this new and very exciting industry.

Pictured below is inside the SAMEX meat processing plant and camel forequarters ready to be boned out.



Pictured below are camel hind quarters being cut up. We have never eaten camel before; they say it tastes better than beef.

Those familiar with our Riverina project would recognise our Riverina project

manager, Pio Nakvuwai, standing in the background, who will assist in the provision of pastoral care to our workers in our Peterborough Project.



Another interesting thing about the Peterborough plant is the high number of women on the slaughter floor. Who knows, one day we may have the likes of Joyce Briscoe, Sasha Neal and other young women from remote communities joining them. Pictured below is one of the women trimming horse carcasses for export.



“I see you’re getting the band back together”, says Jim

Yes, we are getting a few of the older hands back together for this Peterborough Project.

BFTB Projects welcomes back Anton McMillan from Santa Teresa, pictured below.

For this Peterborough Projects we are bringing back some of the best, and Anton was one of the best.

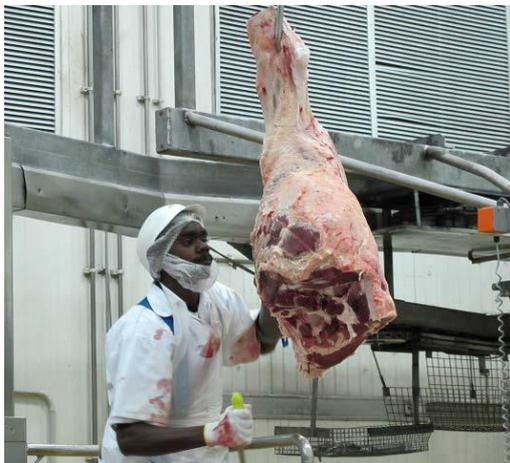
Anton first joined the BFTB Projects Rockdale Beef group back in 2009 at the age of 16. He remained in the scheme until early 2012 by which time he was a fully qualified boner; and one of the best. He is now 20 years old.



Pictured below is Anton when he first joined our scheme.



Pictured below is Anton working as a fully qualified boner in the JBS Swift Riverina Beef Boning Room.



A big welcome to one of our new participants, Dyson Douglas aged 17, pictured below.



Dyson is from Kiana Station, situated between the Barkley Homestead and Borroloola.

We have had two young people from Kiana Station in the past and both went really well.



This is Dyson's first real job, but comes with excellent references. The Principal of the Kiana School, Marita McKenzie, describes Dyson as "*the best*". Dyson's uncle described him as "*too good for this place*".

Milton is out on the recruitment trail

Milton is presently on a recruitment drive assessing the suitability of numerous applicants in remote communities throughout the Northern Territory and Kimberley region.

It's a hard drive; the heat, dust, flies, long distances between communities and an overheating engine takes its toll.



Milton has notices that there appears to be less young people wanting work these days and a greater resignation to their life on welfare.

The permit system for the APY communities must be scrapped

An important initiative of the Howard Government was to amend the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, to allow general public access to the remote communities in the Northern Territory. For this initiative they received our applause.

A short time later the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Hon Mal Brough MP, re-emphasised his determination to ensure similar changes were made to the South Australian *Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act 1981*.

In the APY Lands the general public is required to provide everything which includes all the houses, roads, power station, water services, sewage services, health services, police services, schools, shops, and the salaries of the people. To then ban the general public from freely entering the APY communities is plain wrong.

This is not a matter of the public wishing to intrude upon people's privacy or their private property. It is a matter of the rights of citizens and taxpayers to know what is being done in their name and with their money. It is about the protection of all of **our** rights and the pursuit of an open and free society. The structures and governance systems in place within APY communities

need to reflect not only our democratic system, but also integrity, transparency and accountability. The aphorism: "*power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely*" needs to be remembered. The governance and oversight required needs to be in place to ensure limits on, and oversight of, the all-powerful **zhuān zhèng** or administrators of these outback ghettos.

This matter is not about Aboriginal communities being subjected to more scrutiny than the rest of Australia. It is about subjecting them to the **same** scrutiny as the rest of Australia; equal accountability and responsibility, equal oversight and equal governance.

The administrators of the APY Lands want us to believe that the permit system is **not about** keeping the Anangu people isolated from opportunities or communication, **but rather** to "*prevent abuse of our people*" and "*protects sacred sites*" and "*keeps out undesirable people, grog, petrol and marijuana traffickers*".

Taken at face value this appears reasonable, but when you take a closer look at this claim there is ample evidence that it is false. To begin with they are confusing two separate issues here. When we talk about opening up the communities to public scrutiny, we are not talking about opening up the surrounding land where there is no substantial use of public funds. We are unaware of any sacred site that exists within the confines of a community that would or could be desecrated by visitors to that community.

Even the NT Law Council was not open and transparent about this point, when it voiced opposition to the Howard Government opening up the NT communities to public scrutiny. We simply have to ask the question: "*Has there been any desecration of any sacred sites in the NT due to the opening up of these communities to public scrutiny?*" The answer is "No".

Secondly, to say that opening up the communities will lead to non-Anangu people bringing in grog, fuel and marijuana, is again false and misleading. The relevant authorities know that virtually all the grog and marijuana brought into the APY communities, has been brought in by the Anangu people themselves. And the permit system is totally ineffective at stopping this. The underlying cause needs to be addressed, rather than providing a

monopoly on illicit supply. Again we can turn to the NT experience and ask the question: “*Is there more grog and drugs in these communities as a result of them being open to public scrutiny?*” Again, the answer is “No”.

With regards to preventing the abuse of vulnerable people (children and the elderly), the relevant authorities also know that nearly all the abuse and neglect of the Anangu people, has been inflicted by other Anangu people. Again, the underlying issues have not been addressed.

BFTB Projects knows what occurs in many of these remote communities, because most of our members have worked for the past 25 years in these communities as Courts Officers, Statutory Child Protection Officers, Statutory Juvenile Justice Officers, drug and alcohol counsellors, domestic violence workers, and in the development of youth suicide prevention programs, petrol sniffing prevention programs, and the management of foster care programs and work programs.

When travelling the back roads between communities at night, Milton had run into some of these sly grog and drug runners, men whom he had recognised to be holding responsible positions in the community. He did report them to the police.

Milton was working with the Kalumburu Aboriginal community at the time when 13 young girls made disclosures of serious sexual abuse. Their disclosures resulted in 19 Kalumburu males placed into custody, and charged with sexual offences against children. They included the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, 6 Counsellors, Head Warden (Senior Community Police Officer), Warden (Community Police Officer), Stronger Families Project worker, and a number of other community members, including 3 minors. The victims, both male and female, were lured into providing sexual favours in exchange for drugs. The perpetrators were teaching the young girls what to do by showing them hard-core pornography.

We can point to many other examples of abuse, neglect and exploitation that we have uncovered in the course of our duties as Courts Officers, Statutory Child Protection Officers and Statutory Juvenile Justice

Officers, in a number of different remote communities.

In June 2006, the South Australian Parliament’s Aboriginal Lands Parliamentary Standing Committee concluded that the permit system was “*working well and that comprehensive changes are not warranted at this time*”.

The Committee noted that its research had not uncovered “*any hard evidence*” to suggest the system was “*being operated in an inconsistent or capricious fashion.*” The Committee expressed concern that the “*national debate*” about the operation of permit systems was relying on hearsay, anecdotal evidence and “*isolated incidents from years past.*”

But the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, Hon Jay Weatherill MP, had publically stated in a government report that he was aware of many instances where the permit system was being abused by the administrators.

Well here is something for the South Australian Government’s consideration; yet another example of what appears to be the abuse of the permit system by the same authority that has been trusted to administer the system. It appears that the APY staff at Umuwa are abusing the permit system, to the detriment of real employment opportunities for Ananga youth

BFTB Projects entered the APY Lands, in accordance with the prescribed procedure, for the purpose of promoting the virtues of real work over welfare dependency, and the recruitment of young people for this Peterborough Project and other employment opportunities.

The advantage young people living in the APY communities have is that many of the older people were familiar with going away for work. Back in the 1960s many of them went to the Riverland for seasonal fruit picking work. This scheme was developed by the Superintendent of Ernabella Mission, Bill Edwards, and the men and women were supervised in Barmera by Doug Hooper.

It is this employment history that would pave the way for young people taking up some of the work opportunities at Peterborough. Unfortunately this initiative was prevented from occurring.

The Director of the APY Lands heard about Milton talking to the old people at Amata about their experience of going away for work, and encouraging them to talk to the young people about doing the same. He heard about what Milton was saying from the self-appointed assessor of entry permit holders; the manager of the Amata Art Centre.

According to the Director, he and the Art Centre manager had concerns about what Milton was saying to these elderly people, and perhaps to what these elderly people were saying to him. The Director ordered Milton to leave the APY Lands under the threat of being arrested and locked up if he **immediately** failed to leave.

He even had APY staff in Umuwa drive ahead of him warning the other communities along the way, that he was coming through and instructing the council staff not to talk to him.

Clearly, this had nothing to do with protecting sacred sites or protecting the people from abuse, or protecting the people from the ravages of drugs and alcohol abuse. It was apparent to Milton that something more opaque and sinister was occurring in this instance.

It did not matter to the Director of the APY Lands that BFTB Projects originated on Mer (Murray Island) in the Torres Strait, the home of Eddie Mabo and Native Title. It did not matter to the Director that two of the three founding members of BFTB Projects was Maluwup Nona and the late James Bon, who brought the first Sea Rights case before the courts after expelling a commercial trawler from their traditional waters, and successfully demanding they return their catch to the rightful owners.

Pictured below are two of the founding members of BFTB Projects and Oped Youth Camp at the grave site of Eddie Mabo on Mur. Photo taken by Milton James.



These were the days we were teaching young Torres Strait Islanders to be self-reliant commercial fisherman, rather than to live their entire life on welfare like what is presently going on in the APY communities.



It would appear from this behaviour that the best the Director is offering his people is the administration of their dysfunction.

It also made no difference to the Director that BFTB Projects is a Federal Government's Indigenous Employment Program Panel Members, and an approved service provider to deliver our services to the APY communities. It made no difference to the Director that BFTB Projects was delivering services in accordance with Federal Government policy, to get young people off welfare and into employment. It made no difference to the Director that BFTB Projects has achieved unrivalled success in this area.

It made no difference that on the 2nd of September 2010, an APY Lands by-law came into force that enabled employees of Service Delivery Agencies, contractors and other service delivery entities working for a government department and funded through government funds and grants, to enter the APY Lands without a permit.

Here you have evidence of the APY staff at Umuwa in breach of their own by-laws, and abusing the permit system to the detriment of the people they are employed to serve. If the

Director cannot be trusted to abide by his own by-laws, how can he be trusted with anything? Even the Amata police officer made mention to Milton that his wife had also been refused an entry permit. How is it possible for these community leaders to be a law unto themselves to the detriment of their community members and to the broader Australian public? How is it that these community leaders can allow others to do their bidding beyond the law?

Milton has since met a retired couple who had once worked at Amata in the delivery of health and construction services many years ago, who were also being questioned about their entry permits by the manager of the Amata Art Centre, when they last visited Amata to see their old friends. It is evident that the abuse of the permit system has been recurring over many years.

The message that we are receiving from the Director of the APY Lands is that he does not want our services offered to the youths living in APY communities, even though we had a legal right and government endorsement to do so.

We are also receiving the message that the Director is not overly troubled by the prospect of seeing another generation of Ananga people live their entire lives on welfare. We suspect that for him the issue is all about keeping young people “on country”, regardless of the economic and social costs.

We wrote to the Chairman of the Fregon Community, as we were requested to do so by his brother, and to offer him the opportunity to embrace these work opportunities for the young people at Fregon. He did not reply to our letter. It was possible the letter did not even reach him. It is possible the gatekeepers kept the letter from him or advised (instructed?) him not to answer. These things do happen in remote communities that are closed off to the outside world and beyond the reach of public scrutiny.

We have sent a copy of this newsletter to the South Australian Government. It will be interesting to see if there is any response.

Right minded people would think that as the camels were caught on APY Lands, that

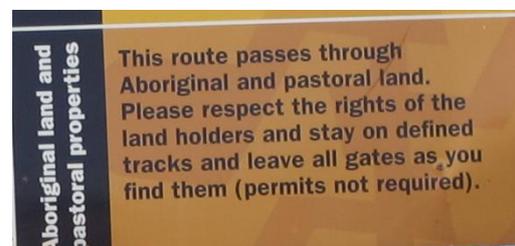
Anangu people would embrace the opportunity for their young people to become involved in the processing of these camels. Unfortunately any vision and action in relation to improving the lives of their young people, seems to be absent from the hearts and minds of the people who have the responsibility for achieving these outcomes.

For this reason we call upon the Federal and State Governments to act. We also call upon the Federal Opposition, that should they win the next election, to finish the job they started and bring an end to the isolation of these outback ghettos. We need to open them up to public scrutiny, so that we can see for ourselves the prevailing under-class; a sub culture enshrined in our legislation and sponsored by taxpayer’s money.

Pictured below is one of the offensive sign on an arterial road, leading to totally taxpayer funded communities in the APY Lands.



Pictured below is one of the more respectful signs on one of the arterial roads, leading to totally taxpayer funded communities in the Northern Territory, where people are actively embracing the Peterborough Project.



Pictured below is one of the signs outside of a NT community inviting the general public to visit their art centre, where they will be greeted by **friendly** people. This is not the case at the Amata Art Centre.



This is what we are calling for in the APY Lands by whom ever has the capacity to act.

We also need to get serious about getting young people off welfare and encouraging them to take up the work opportunities in other parts of the country.

We have a number of strategies to ensure access to opportunities for the Anangu people, despite their “leadership”. Watch this space!