

Young Indigenous Meatworkers' Gazette

Newsletter of From the Bush Projects – www.fromthebush.org
Issue No. 28, Saturday, 19 September 2015

Wilson Marbendinar embarks upon his **first** work orbit

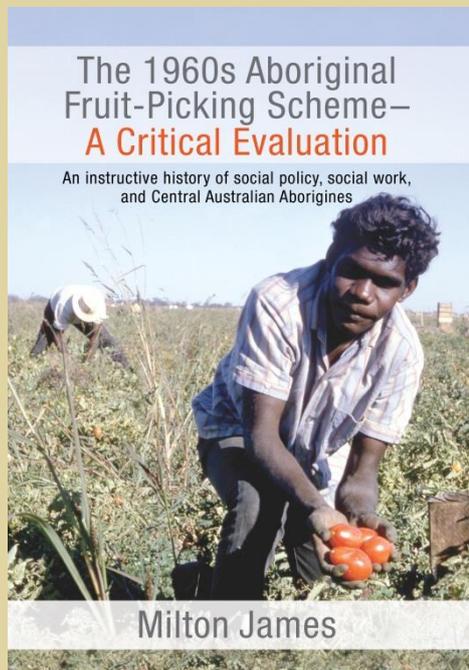


Pictured above is Wilson Marbendinar, aged 16, from Aurukun and his father Jason. He began his first work orbit with From the Bush Projects working for SAMEX meat processing plant in Peterborough, South Australia, on 8 August.

Wilson started off a bit slow, and didn't understand how a real workplace operates, but he is now going okay.

Now available

The 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-Picking Scheme— A Critical Evaluation



This is a must read book about a historical event that challenges the way in which Central Australian Aborigines have been portrayed, past and present, in regards to their willingness and ability to engage in work orbits.

See: Overview, p.6

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Profits from the sale of this book go to From the Bush Charity

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Jarrold Ornyengaia embarks upon his **first** work orbit



Pictured above is Jarrod Ornyengaia, aged 15, from Aurukun.

He left school in 2014 in year 9, and is one of many Aurukun youths that refused to go to school. All efforts to get him back into school had failed. But he was willing to go to work.

Jarrold began his first work orbit with From the Bush Projects working for SAMEX meat processing plant in Peterborough, South Australia, on 28 August.

This is some of what Jarrod has to say:

Hello, my name is Jarrod. I am down here in Peterborough for work.

This is my first job and I really like it. My job is working on the gut truck. It's a heavy job, but I can handle it, and my boss says I am going really good.

Rayden Kalkeeyorta embarks upon his **first** work orbit



Pictured above is Rayden Kalkeeyorta, aged 15, from Aurukun.

He left school in 2014 in year 9, and is one of many Aurukun youths that refused to go to school. All efforts to get him back into school had failed. But he was willing to go to work.

He began his first work orbit with From the Bush Projects working for SAMEX meat processing plant in Peterborough, South Australia, on 4 September.

This is some of what Rayden has to say:

Hi this is me. I like it here. I miss my family, but it's alright. I am working in the offal room. Cutting meats and making boxes.

Hi mum and dad. I miss you heaps, but don't worry about me because I am okay. Come down and see me one day. Hi Cara, Adel and Lynette. I love you all.

Zantack Walmbeng embarks upon his **first** work orbit



Pictured above is Zantack Walmbend, aged 15, and his mother Eta and father Donavan in Aurukun.

Zantack left school in 2014 in year 9, and is one of many Aurukun youths that refused to go to school. All efforts to get him back into school had failed. But he was willing to go to work.

He began his first work orbit with From the Bush Projects working for SAMEX meat processing plant in Peterborough, South Australia, on 14 September.

This is some of what Zantack has to say:

Hey all you Aurukun people. This is me Zantack. I have a real proper good job here in South Australia. I just started but the Manager said I am a really good worker and Milton is proud of me.

Semi is looking after us and he is a really nice cooker.

Travis Mahoney joins the Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project



Pictured above is Travis Mahoney, aged 24, from Alpururulam community in the Northern Territory.

Travis was in BFTB Projects Remote Area Work Scheme for over 3 years working for JBS Swift Riverina Plant and where he obtained Certificate III Slaughtering. Milton had invited him to join the AYOP.

Djinabugee Jaffer joins the Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project



Pictured above is Djinabugee Jaffer, aged 19, from Coen on Cape York Peninsula.

In the background is the Peterborough railway barracks leased by the Cape York Institute—more about this in the next newsletter.

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Our supervision model — a sophisticated (cutting edge) design that works

One of the things that differentiate our approach from other approaches to the task of placing poorly socialised youths into real employment is the provision of intensive **OFF-SITE** (after work) support and supervision.

Our 2009-2013 Remote Area Work Scheme (RAWS) established that the most effective supervision model for our target group (disadvantaged youths living in remote communities not responding to standard forms of intervention) is the **Live-in Carer/Group Home Model** (see: Remote Area Work Scheme (RAWS), Progress Report #3, dated 8 May 2010, www.fromthebush.org/papers). Moreover, we found some Fijians to be quite suitable supervisors. There were a number of reasons for their suitability:



Pictured above are Pio and Simon in 2012—two volunteer Fijian supervisors of our Yanco work group.

👉 They were more respectful, and held a strong sense of self-reliance.

👉 They were not risk adverse, nor hamstrung by the extreme political correctness that has crippled so many youth workers, social workers and community development workers.

👉 They provided a strong physical presence that reduced outbursts of violence and incidences of bullying and intimidation, which characterises a number of young people in our target group.

👉 They had 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.

👉 They helped to remove the division of labour, division of responsibility, and division of authority based on skin colour.

👉 Past experience has shown that ordinary generic youth workers do not hold the same objective passion and skill-sets to manage these work groups effectively and professionally. Supervision provided by these youth workers have been associated with poor supervision, where supervisors have exploited the vulnerabilities of our clients, and engaged in practices that increased our client’s use and abuse of drugs and alcohol, increased their level of apathy, and increased division and victimisation.

In March 2013, we trialled a slightly different version of our model—engaging a supervisor to provide both off-site and **ON-SITE** support and supervision at the SAMEX meat processing plant at Peterborough in South Australia. This approach proved better for it relieved the employer from the time-consuming task of additional explanation/education, speeding up slow workers, chasing up those who have left their work station, and, at times, the unpleasant task of correcting serious misbehaviour. This has the benefit of increasing their productivity, and providing a less disruptive and more harmonious work environment, all of which improves their chances of maintaining their employment. Unfortunately, we were unable to find any other person with the required skill-set who was willing to volunteer for this sort of thing.

Faced with this most intractable problem, we came up with a most creative solution. Our senior supervisor, Pio Nakvbuwai, is affiliated to the **Assembly of God Church in Fiji**. He managed to negotiate an agreement with members of his church in Fiji to come to Australia as volunteers to assist From the Bush Projects to provide both **OFF-SITE and ON-SITE** support and supervision. This was followed by our successful application to the **Department of Immigration and Border Protection** for approval as a “Special Programme” under regulation 2.60D(d) of the *Migration Act 1958 (Cth)*, and our successful application to become a “Special Programme Sponsor” under the subclass 416 visa (Cultural/Social) programme. This was followed up by our successful application for a “Special Programme (subclass 416) visa” for the first of our volunteer Fijian supervisors.

Those who have had little or no experience at engaging youths from our target group (disadvantaged youths not responding to standard forms of intervention) into work orbits, are unlikely to fully appreciate the significance of what is going on here. From the time this scheme was first trialled back in 2005, it has been hampered by the lack of suitable supervisors. With the assistance of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, and Pio Nakvbuwai, we may have just obtained a real solution to a long-standing intractable problem.¹ Moreover, we believe that this could be a sustainable solution, and will better protect the integrity of the scheme.

Pastor Semi CAGILABA from Fiji is the first of our volunteers. He is a middle-aged family man with two teenage daughters. He is a former rugby league player for Fiji, and assistant pastor for the Grace Mission. He has worked in a meat processing plant, and is presently a driver for Neptune Pacific Line (NPL) in Fiji.



Pictured above left is Semi Cagilaba met at the Melbourne airport by Pio Nakvuwai. Pictured above right is Semi at our Peterborough barracks.

Thus far, this trial is proceeding well.

¹ The lack of committed and skilled supervisors was one of the problems with the 1960s Aboriginal fruit-picking scheme. Foolishly, the then South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs commandeered the Ernabella Labour Export Project, which was established by a committed staff member of the Ernabella Mission and a committed on-site and off-site volunteer supervisor, and replaced them both with paid government workers. The Ernabella Labour Export Project was a most efficient and effective project that operated for many years, but shortly after it was taken over by the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs it was run onto the rocks and abandoned. This event provided an important lesson, but, alas, there is no evidence of the right lesson being learnt.

There is a difference in the amount and quality of work that is performed by those acting out of altruism and those acting out of self-interest. Attempts to use financial incentives to encourage people to do something they care about often backfires. A recent study has confirmed that introducing economic incentives to a community-based voluntary service can result in a reduction of the quality and efficiency of that service (See: Naza, C., Tung, B., Marteau, T.M. (2013), 'Incentivizing blood donations: systematic review and meta-analysis to test Titmuss' hypotheses', *Health Psychology*, vol. 32 (9), pp. 941-949). Tragically, there are some who have picked up on phenomena as something to be exploited rather than something to be respected.

The 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-Picking Scheme — A Critical Evaluation

An instructive history of social policy, social work, and Central Australian Aborigines

Overview

The first time I heard about the 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-Picking Scheme was in November 2006. I was being interviewed by Victorian ABC rural radio about my own Indigenous fruit-picking scheme that began in 2005. An elderly man from Shepparton rang through to say that he recalls something very similar to my scheme taking place in the 1960s when Aborigines from the Northern Territory had come down to Shepparton to pick pears. I was a bit perplexed by what he had said. I also sent a group of young people from Cape York communities to pick pears in Shepparton, but I had never heard anything about any earlier scheme.

Eight months later, I was sitting in Bob Welsh's office telling him this story. Bob is an elderly man who was the coordinator of the Aurukun Justice Group. As I was telling Bob this story his face lit up and with a bit of a smile he said, "I know all about this, I was one of the people who took them down." I couldn't believe it. Not only had he confirmed the story, but of all the people in the country to tell this story to, here I was telling it to the very man that was the supervisor of this earlier Shepparton group. In my search for the details of this almost forgotten history, I would experience a number of these incredible coincidences.

My fruit-picking scheme had been operating for over 1½ years, and I was now being told by Bob that I was not blazing a trail, and that I was following in the footsteps of men who had been down this road over 45 years earlier. Very few people alive today know about the 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-Picking Scheme, and I was to learn that even Bob never knew the full story—and what a mighty story it is when told in its entirety.

The scheme began in 1965 and continued on up until 1973 with a number of groups going down every year. The size of these groups ranged from 6 to 274 men. Some groups included women and infants; other groups were exclusively for women.

This is a story that would be of interest to all those Australians wanting to know how the problems in remote Aboriginal communities began, and to know that it did not have to be this way. It has taken me many years and thousands of kilometres to research this history, and there was probably no better person suited to the task. I am a social worker with intimate knowledge of these remote Aboriginal communities and the southern horticultural industry. By way of coincidence, I was to learn that the man who visited our fruit-block at Waikerie in South Australia, back in 1977, and introduced me to social work, had been a supervisor of one of these fruit-picking groups. It also turned out that many of the young people involved in my scheme are the grandchildren, nieces, and nephews of those that participated in this earlier fruit-picking scheme. All things considered, I think this makes me somewhat of an expert on this subject.

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