

Young Indigenous Meatworkers' Gazette

Newsletter of From the Bush Projects – www.fromthebush.org

Issue No. 29, Sunday, 6 December 2015

Jack Wolomby embarks upon his **first** work orbit



Pictured above is Jack Wolomby, aged 16, and his father Eldridge from Aurukun.

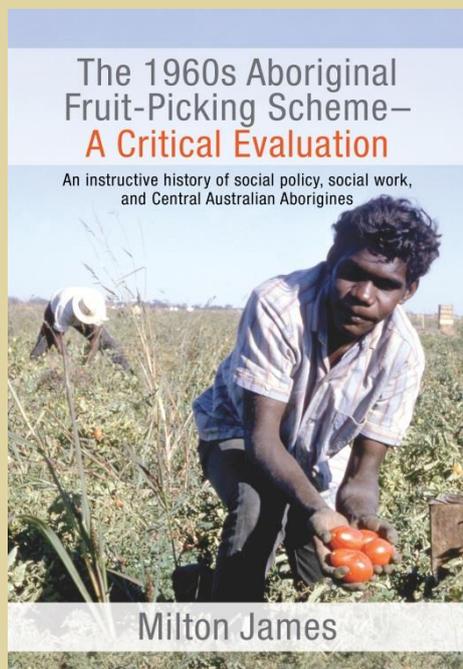
Young Jack has just begun his first work orbit with From the Bush Projects working for SAMEX meat processing plant in Peterborough, South Australia.

This is some of what Jack has to say after 2 weeks:

I like it at SAMEX; they good people. I like the work.. I like the town. I like the food. I am happy with my room.

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.

Print on Demand - Paperback in colour
\$45.00 + \$16.00 postage

Orders can be placed with

mjames@boysfromthebush.org.au

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

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



tasmangroup



Wilson Marbendinar receives Worker of the Month Award



These days too many people get awards for things they really didn't deserve. Wilson Marbendinar is not one of these people. This young bloke has truly earned this Worker of the Month Award for the most improved worker for 2015. It consists of a certificate signed by Milton James and Noel Pearson, and a gift provided by SAMEX Peterborough.

Wilson was the first Aurukun boy to join the Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project. In the beginning, his work performance was not very good, and there was talk of him getting the sack. But after a few weeks he began to lift his game. His work performance is now on par with a fully grown men.



Congratulations Wilson Marbendinar—keep up the good work.

Zantack Walmbeng going well

Pictured below is Zantack on the job in the SAMEX by-products processing plant.



Pictured below is Zantack with Toduadua Ratacinaovalasi, the second of our off-site/on-site residential Fijian supervisors.



From the day Zantack arrived he has given his all. Working in by-products involves working in a hazardous environment. Zantack is a little bloke, but he does what he is told, and does it well, and does it without complaint. The man in charge of by-products has not said a single bad word against him.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



Aurukun boys join the Army Cadets



Pictured above are all 5 Aurukun boys who have signed up with the Australian Army Cadets held every Monday evening at Port Pirie, which is approximately 1.5 hours' drive from Peterborough.

The Australian Army Cadets is a personal development program for young people. Its purpose is to develop the individual, their community and the Australian Army. It's all about instilling courage, initiative, teamwork, and empowering young people to achieve their potential.

The Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project is a holistic project. This means that we focus on all facets of their lives—employment, education, health, social, and spiritual. The Army Cadets is an important after-work activity. It is not an activity that replaces or interferes with their work at the SAMEX meat processing plant and a career in the meat processing industry.

Full credit must go to Christine Duggan for coming up with this idea and carrying out all the behind-the-scenes work.



Pictured above are the boys learning to stand at attention and turning on their heels.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



Recruitment has been slow compared to past projects

We are coming to the end of 2015 and I was hoping to be further down the track with this project than we are.

The difficulty lies at the recruitment end of the project with the usual problem of muddled thinking, high staff turnover, and the lack of skill set for this sort of work.

We now have Ross Walters (pictured below) on board to help out with the recruitment of young people from Aurukun.

Some may remember Ross from the early when he was the Principal of the Wangetti Education Centre and when Boys from the Bush Projects was a young offender program based out at the Centre.

In the years that followed, Ross agreed for all the Cape York boys and some girls to stay at his home in Cairns when they came down to sell their Boys from the Bush oils on our market stalls at Cairns, Port Douglas, and Kuranda.



We feel confident that come 2016 we will see a vast improvement at the recruitment end of the Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project.

Trial of the Fijian on-site / off-site residential supervisors

Our second Fijian supervisor, Toduadua Ratacinaovalasi, arrived in Peterborough on the 13 November 2015 to join Semi Cagilaba who arrived in Australia on the 10 July 2015.

The trial is proceeding well, although they are yet to be tested with a full group. SAMEX Peterborough is very pleased with their on-site performance thus far and is keen to take it even further.

A detailed progress report will be submitted to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection at the end of the year.

Should this trial project maintain its present trajectory it may be the thing that breaks open the logjam that has held back these sorts of projects for the past 50 years.



Pictured above right is Semi Cagilaba and Toduadua Ratacinaovalasi on the left.

An essay on supported accommodation

Milton James

The provision of **supported accommodation** is an essential component of placing disadvantaged, poorly socialised youths from the bush, into work far from home. Boys from the Bush (BFTB) Projects has trialled a range of supported accommodation models in search of the best model for our target group and particular circumstances.

The purpose of this essay is to share my learnings in this area; also discussed in my book titled, “The 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-Picking Scheme—A Critical Evaluation”. This earlier scheme was confronted with the same issues that we are confronted with today, but these issues were perceived differently in those days. This essay provides a new (more refined) way of looking at these things, and by ordering them differently we can better understand and explain what we are doing and why we are doing it.

There are essentially three supported accommodation models that can be used for our target group when placing them into employment far from home. These three broad models are:

1. **On-call/visiting supervisor**
2. **Live-in carer/group home**
3. **Billeting**

All three models have been used by BFTB Projects with varying success. These three models will now be discussed and illustrated. This discussion will include some of the variations within each model along with their respective strengths and weaknesses.

1. **On-call/visiting supervisor model**

The **on-call/visiting supervisor model** consists of young people being placed into accommodation by themselves or as a small group, where they are provided with varying degrees of support and supervision by a visiting supervisor. This accommodation model involves a range of options, including swags laid out or tents set up in a camping ground¹, employer owned accommodation rented to our workers, BFTB Projects owned caravans rented to our workers, caravans owned by caravan parks rented to our workers, BFTB Projects rented homes and flats sublet to our workers, and our workers renting privately owned homes and flats from real estate agents. Some of these variations are pictured below.

¹ This is what we did with our 2005 Waikerie trial group and what the Northern Territory Welfare Branch did with their massive 1967 Griffith group (see ‘The 1960s Aboriginal Fruit-Picking Scheme—A critical Evaluation’, by Milton James.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush





Pictured above are young participants living in employer owned **pickers quarters** in 2005.



Pictured above are **caravans** own by BFTB Projects rented to our young workers in 2006.



Pictured above are **rural** homes rented by BFTB Projects and sublet to our young workers in 2007.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



tasmangroup





Pictured above are **suburban** homes and suburban flats rented by BFTB Projects and sublet to our young workers in 2007 and 2010.

2. Live-in carer/group home model

The **live-in carer/group home model** consists of groups of young people of varying numbers being placed into rental accommodation with a live-in carer/supervisor. This accommodation has consisted of suburban homes, a large motel (Star Lodge), a Yanco Agricultural College dormitory block, and for this Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project, the Peterborough railway barracks. These variations are pictured below.



Pictured above is small and large suburban accommodation rented by BFTB Projects to accommodate our young workers and live-in carers/supervisors in 2009 and 2011.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush





Pictured above is the accommodation block at the Yanco Agricultural College consisting of 20 single rooms rented by participants and live-in carers/supervisors in 2012.



Pictured above is the dining room in the accommodation block at the Yanco Agricultural College.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush





Pictured above is the Peterborough railway barracks consisting of 16 bedrooms. It has been leased from the South Australian Government by the Cape York Institute for this Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project. This barracks is ideal for our situation. In combination with the nearby SAMEX meat processing plant and the town of Peterborough, we could not ask for anything better. I will speak more about SAMEX and meat processing work in the next newsletter.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



Opportunities like this may come along only once in a lifetime, but it is the nature of things that this opportunity will be lost on many people already well entrenched in welfare dependency in both income and services. Similarly, this will be lost on a number of policy officers, and government and non-government service providers who are more engrossed in the management of this dependency.

3. Billeting model

The **billeting model** consists of placing one or two individuals into private family homes where the young person is required to pay for their own board and keep and comply with the rules and conditions set down by their host families. The project Managing-Director was available by phone 24/7 and made fortnightly visits to provide additional support and supervision as required.

The **billeting model** has been used mainly for female workers. Five trials involving female workers took place between 2005 and 2007 using the **on-call/visiting supervisor model**. The first four trials fell well short of a very modest target due to the appalling behaviour of these girls. In some respects they were more difficult to handle than boys. Improved selection and separation from the boys saw a better result with the fifth trial. These girls were the first to complete a 3 month season working in a citrus packing shed in Renmark, South Australia.

Guided by the learning of these earlier trials, in 2011, we billeted out four girls from remote communities in the Northern Territory who had signed up to a 6 month Participation [Responsibility] Agreement to meat processing work at Yanco in New South Wales. Three (75%) went on to complete 12 months. This good result was in large part due to the assessment and selection processes of both the girls and host families, followed by the good support and supervision provided by their host families. Pictured below are some of our young workers with their host families.



Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



The difficulty with the **billeting model** is the paucity of suitable families willing to take in young female boarders. In addition, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) had erroneously compared this model with foster care and thought that the Aboriginal Placement Principle should apply. That is to say, it objected to these young Aboriginal women renting rooms from white families. These DEEWR officers had simplistically and erroneously compared this well thought out multi-dimensional model, with the past simplistic and racist approaches of removing young people from their families and placing them in white foster homes.

One of the strengths of the billeting model is its cost-effectiveness. Carers are not employed by BFTB Projects and it's the young workers who must pay the full cost of their board and keep.

What works and what doesn't work

The trials of supervised accommodation for young workers from remote bush communities have had mixed results.

The **on-call/visiting supervisor model** was used for fruit-picking work groups in the Riverland region of South Australia between 2005 and 2007, and meat-processing work groups in Wonthaggi and Cobram in Victoria, and a meat-processing work group in Albany in Western Australia between 2006 and 2008. It was used again in 2010 for a few young people working at the Rockdale Beef meat processing plant in the Riverina district of southern New South Wales.

This model can only provide low level support and supervision, which proved insufficient for the needs of most young people from remote bush communities. As a consequence, many young people who were in desperate need of behavioural boundaries and others who were in desperately need of care and protection did not receive the required assistance. This had a knock-on effect to their ability to maintain their employment and their acceptance by the host community.

The **live-in carer/group home model** was used properly for the first time at Narrandera and Yanco in southern New South Wales between 2009 and 2013. It proved to be the most successful and beneficial model for participants in the short and medium term. The reasons for its success are that it facilitates:

1. Better care of the rental property.
2. The opportunity for participants to experience an improved standard of **domestic** hygiene and safety.
3. The ability to supervise participants' **personal** hygiene.
4. The protection of participants' personal belongings.
5. The ability to structure time and space, and ensure good sleep hygiene for participants.
6. Sending participants to bed and waking them up in the morning.
7. More effective control of drug and alcohol usage.
8. The provision of nutritional meals.

These benefits will now be discussed in detail.

1. Better care of the rental property

BFTB Projects now places young people into suburban homes that are located as close as possible to the centre of town to reduce the need for transport. But the fact of the matter is that very few landlords would hand over their home to a group of unsupervised young indigenous people from remote bush communities under their own name.

The pictures below show what can happen within a space of a few weeks when young people from remote bush communities are placed in a modern suburban home with insufficient support and supervision (Albany trial group, 2007). \$8,000 damage was done to carpet, doors, walls, blinds, and vanity unit within a few weeks. Note the empty cans and cask of alcohol lying on the floor. All of this occurred under the **on-call/visiting supervisor model**. The obvious question to ask was: *Where was the supervisor while all this was going on?* Of course similar issues can and do arise when people of any low socioeconomic group are moved into assisted or rental housing, and the root causes are similar.



Pictured above is some of the damage done by BFTB Projects participants at 68 Hare Street, Albany, Western Australia, February 2008.



Pictured above is some of the damage done to the flats at 69 Melbourne Street, Narrandera, New South Wales. Bottles of grog were strewn around the flats. An investigation into the matter revealed that local youths were invited to take up residence in the flats by the BFTB Projects participants who were subletting the flats from BFTB Projects. A large amount of alcohol was brought onto the premises, followed by the inevitable drunken brawl, and the vandalization of the flats.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



This event triggered a reassessment of the model, particularly in regards to participants not caring for their homes. I began to think that the vernacularisation and not keeping their homes and surrounds clean and tidy had been exacerbated by the sharing arrangement. This led me to taking up the offer by Summit Employment and Training (a Job Service Australia provider) to place some participants in their single bed-sitter units in Leeton, pictured below.



Pictured above are the single bed-sitter units owned by Summit Employment and Training.

In mid-November 2010, we placed 3 young people from remote bush communities in the Northern Territory into three single person bed-sitter units, under their own name, and without a residential supervisor.

For a while it appeared that this arrangement was working, but one evening one of the participants got drunk and set fire to the neighbouring unit resulting in the near death of its resident and the entire southern wing of the Griffin units burning to the ground. A close examination of what was really taking place revealed that leading up to the fire there was a marked decline in the work performance of participants and a marked decline in their general health and hygiene.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



This event, combined with the damage done to the Narrandera flats, brought an immediately halt to the **on-call/visiting supervisor model** as totally unsuitable for our target group.

The implication of abandoning the **on-call/visiting supervisor model** as a failed model meant that the number of places available at the live-in carer group home was the primary determinant of the overall number of clients that can be supported by a single project. This had a knock-on-effect to the sustainability of the project. That is to say, the cost-effectiveness of the project is a primary determinant of its sustainability, and the number of residents, or to be more precise, the supervisor/client ratio, determines its cost-effectiveness.

2. The opportunity for participants to experience an improved standard of domestic hygiene and safety

Most BFTB Projects participants have not been exposed to or taught basic standards of hygiene and home care. They have been born and raised in remote bush communities where domestic standards are akin to Third World conditions. This requires BFTB Projects carers/supervisors to be eternally vigilant and actively involved in nearly every facet of their domestic activities. Basically, the participants are doing what they have always done back home, and they continue to behave in this same way without too much consideration given to their new environment, or to the immediate or longer term consequences of their behaviour. Most participants had been born into, and only ever exposed to dysfunctional families and communities. They are simply modelling what they were exposed to from birth.

In addition, there are the more natural expressions of adolescent immaturity; i.e. easily distracted, easily influenced, adaptation problems, care-free attitude, disorganised, negative mindset, asserting independence, resisting authority, etc. Very short term goals and unrealistic long term objectives are often the norm.

The following are some examples of behaviour that the carer/supervisor must attend to, some more regular than others.

- Participants leaving the home with stoves, lights, heaters, televisions and air conditioner left on.
- Fridge and freezer doors left open.
- Perishable food items left out exposed to the elements, flies and ants.
- Taps, including hot water taps, left running.
- Sinks piled up with dirty dishes.
- Greasy pots, pans and dishes washed with cold water and without detergent.
- Whistling kettles left boiling on stoves, ignored by all.
- Food left to burn on the stove.
- Participants discarding all waste material where they sit or stand, rather than place it in the bin.
- Regularly spitting in inappropriate places at inappropriate times.
- Serving themselves large amounts of food, eating only a portion, and throwing the remainder away.
- Going down the main street to buy a serve of deep fried hot potato chips just before dinner is served, and then being unable to eat their dinner.

- At work, boys will throw freshly made cut sandwiches of cold meat, cheese, tomato and salad in the bin in favour of purchasing deep fried hot potato chips.
- Rubbish bins not emptied, unless they are told to do so.
- Dirty hands wiped on chairs, lounge suits and walls.
- Urinating out the back or off the veranda.
- Socks never washed; when dirty they are simply thrown away.
- Mattresses, pillows and quilts used without covers.
- Sheets and blankets never washed unless they are told to do so.
- Blankets used in and out of the house in place of warmer clothing.
- Clothing left strewn around the house and yard.
- Recently purchased expensive new clothes and shoes left out in the open exposed to the elements.
- The same clothes worn for a week or more without being washed.
- Placing clothes in a washing machine without washing powder.
- Standing under a hot show for over half an hour, only to still reek of body odour a short time later because they don't use soap and scrub themselves.
- Playing loud music in the middle of the night.
- Drunken family members ringing up participants in the middle of the night waking them up from their sleep.
- Family members ringing participants calling them back home to attend each and every funeral, royalty payment meetings, or to visit ailing family members in hospital.
- Family members ringing participants at all hours day and night wanting money.
- Night shift workers will wake up in the morning and immediately start watching videos and remain watching videos until it's time to go to work, day in and day out.
- Regularly breaking things due to their carelessness, or inability to read instructions, with no thought of repair or knowledge of repair.
- No notion of thrift or budgeting within their means – regardless of income it is always feast followed by famine.
- Personal items such as wallets and key cards regularly lost or abandoned.
- No inclination to greet visitors or expressing gratitude for assistance given.
- Stealing people's personal items.

Again, these are also characteristics of many who have grown up in multi-generationally dysfunctional and abusive families.

Under the **live-in carer/group home model** good hygiene and home care standards can be maintained, while the participants acquire the essential skills to maintain a home in an acceptable condition. This could not be achieved under the **on-call/visiting supervisor model**, as shown in the above photographs, and as testified by the collapse of the Wonthaggi work group in 2009, due to, amongst other things, a number of homes rented for participants being reduced to rack and ruin.

Many of these above listed behaviours continued to be acted out by the participants living in the flats at 69 Melbourne Street, Narrandera. Of the 14 young people that had joined the scheme in 2009, only 2 were considered responsible enough to live in the flats where only limited levels of support and supervision could be provided. And even these young people proved to be unable to maintain their accommodation in an acceptable condition.

3. The ability to supervise participants' personal hygiene

Rarely do participants arrive in the host community with any concept of personal hygiene. They arrive without toothbrushes, soap and towel. Many have not been taught how to scrub themselves when washing. When showering, they simply stand under the hot water. In fact, participants spend more money on perfumed body sprays than they do on soap and a flannel.

On one occasion, the Rockdale Beef shift foreman threatened to send one participant home because of his bad breath. Here again, rarely would a participant arrive in the host community with a toothbrush and toothpaste. It is also apparent that most of them have not been taught oral hygiene and how to use a toothbrush properly. Looking at their teeth, it can be seen that many participants have extremely poor dental health. This is a consequence of:

- little or no oral hygiene practices;
- drinking and eating copious amounts of soft drink and confectionary which is high in sugar that causes tooth decay;
- eating highly processed foods which are often high in sugar that causes tooth decay;
- an inability or unwillingness to access dental care; and
- low fluoride intake in some remote bush communities.

Good oral health is important for good health in general. Dental decay and periodontal (gum) disease can cause pain and tooth loss. One study carried out in the Northern Territory revealed that fewer than 5 percent of pre-school aged indigenous children brush their teeth regularly.

Poor oral health can also contribute to a number of medical conditions and make them worse, as illustrated by the diagram below. ²

² Northern Territory Government: Department of Health and Families: Bush Book Vol 2, Ch 3: Food and Nutrition: Oral Health.





According to Dooland (1998), the economic cost of dental decay in Australia is of the same magnitude as heart disease and diabetes.³ The **live-in carer/group home model** can effectively provide the necessary support and supervision, to ensure that participants maintain a good standard of personal hygiene, whereas the **on-call/visiting supervisor model** cannot effectively deal with this issue.

4. The protection of participants' personal belongings

When individuals join a group they tend to model group behaviour, and feel less responsible for their actions than they do when they are alone. This recognition is supported by substantial amount of research into group dynamics. Darley and Latane were among the first to describe how in groups, the pressure to perform does not focus on any particular participant.⁴ Instead, the responsibility to perform is shared among all the participants and their sense of responsibility decreases in proportion to the size of the group. This process of diffused responsibility has also been identified as a possible factor in a number of other group phenomena such as de-individuation, social loafing, and moral disengagement.⁵

These group phenomena hold individuals back in a number of other ways. BFTB Projects has shown that Aboriginal youths enjoy the opportunity to be the beneficiary of their own labour – to purchase things for themselves knowing that it will not be taken from them, used or consumed by others without their permission.

³ Dooland, M. (1998), The cessation of the Commonwealth Dental Health Program, *New Doctor*, Winter 1998, pp. 4-8.

⁴ Darley, J., & Latane, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergence: Diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 8, pp. 377-383.

⁵ Forsyth, D.R., Zyniewski, L.E. & Giammanco, C.A. (2002). Responsibility Diffusion in Cooperative Collectives. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 54-65.

The young and weak in remote indigenous communities are often disenfranchised when the more powerful expect and the community reinforces 'shared' ownership based on power dynamics. What is not well understood is that our sense of self-worth and control is built through an ability to achieve tangible and enduring outcomes. One participant from the community of Ali Curung said to me:

I like it down here. I like the work and I like the money. My family will not ask me for my money and I own my own stuff, nobody touches it, ... it's good.

When the Narrandera group home was first set up in 2009, a number of participants living in the home complained about others stealing their drinks and confectionary that they had placed in the fridge. This led to the purchase of a second smaller fridge for private items, not to be touched by others. This proved to work very well, as testified by one of the participants from the community of Santa Teresa:

I like the fellas here because they respect my things; they don't steal my stuff – they ask. This is good because I show them my respect as well for their stuff. This doesn't happen at home.

One of the participants from the community of Titjikala that was given his own flat in Narrandera, and supported by the **on-call/visiting supervisor model** with no live-in carer, reinforcing the same point, had this to say:

I don't want anyone from my community down here with me. They won't keep my flat clean; they will just mess it up and eat all my food.



5. The ability to structure time and space, and ensure good sleep hygiene for participants

The ability to structure time and space, and to ensure good sleep hygiene, is absolutely crucial for most participants to enable them to maintain their employment and build their own self-esteem.

5.1 Structure of time and space

The lives of all people are culturally structured along the dimensions of time and space. That is to say, specific activities take place at specific times and at specific places. Each culture has a different emphasis on the elements of what are important in terms of punctuality; activity times and places. However, a sense of engagement and self-esteem are predicated on having a circumscribed sense of engagement within an understood framework. For instance, activities such as work, education, eating, bathing, sleeping, and worship are all carried out in particular places at particular times. That framework is often largely absent in remote indigenous communities.

One of the tacit skills required by a successful worker is to carry out particular activities at particular times. Most work, for instance, involves starting and finishing at a set time, with lunch and tea breaks at set intervals. For daytime workers, it means getting up early in the morning in time to prepare oneself for the working day, including travelling time. This preparation involves washing, dressing, preparing and eating breakfast and cleaning up.

Most young people from remote communities are not accustomed to a more rigid ordering of activities in place and time. The task of getting up early in the morning requires going to sleep earlier, and this is something that is new and sometimes difficult for these young people. They are more used to going to sleep when it pleases them and waking up when it pleases them. More often, they stay up until the early hours of the morning watching videos, or roaming the streets at night and sleeping during the day.

For several decades the Aboriginal service industry had been dominated by those who argue that Aborigines structure time and space differently, and that we ought not judge or place a pejorative value on this difference (cultural relativism theory). Some went further and insisted that this difference should be accommodated by our modern industrial society. Their attempts to bring about this accommodation proved to have catastrophic consequences for the Aborigines, particularly in the areas of education and employment. The folly of their argument was to view the way in which space and time are structured as un-associated with acquisition of superior knowledge and skills and economic prosperity. The arguments were simplistic in that they assumed cultural determinism of time and space, rather than being informed by the two concurrent factors similarly evident in both dysfunctional families and adolescents. Both tend to be unstructured in time, want to stay up late, and awake late.

This lack of order and structure of time and space also helps explain why so many participants are so forgetful of their necessities every morning, such as their work tools, clothing, entry passes, and completing their timesheets, and going to work hungry.

To address these issues and take advantage of the ability of people to adapt to new environments, this structuring or restructuring of time begins immediately participants arrive in the project. Under the support and supervision provided by the **live-in carer/group home model** change can take place fairly quickly, whereas, the changes that occur under the **on-call/visiting supervisor model** are less and more difficult to obtain and sustain.

5.2 Sleep hygiene

Most people need 8 hours of undisturbed sleep. Not getting enough undisturbed sleep can have a profound effect on the daily mental and physical wellbeing of people. Under the **on-call/visiting supervisor model** used in the trial groups, a number of participants were not getting enough sleep. There was also an increase in the number of sick days, and many participants were regularly late for work.

Treating sleep as a priority, rather than something that is squeezed in between walking the streets or watching videos all night is an important step in preventing a number of behavioural problems and medical conditions.

A lack of sleep on a regular basis is associated with long term health consequences, including chronic medical conditions like depression, anxiety, and mental distress. Research has revealed that sleep deprivation is associated with increase blood pressure, impaired control of blood glucose, increased inflammation, cardiovascular disease, and stroke. It is also linked with hypertension, diabetes, obesity, lack of exercise, and overeating.⁶

Considering the many potential adverse health effects of insufficient sleep, it is not surprising that poor sleep is associated with lower life expectancy. Data from large cross-sectional epidemiological studies reveal that sleeping 5 hours or less per night increased mortality risk from all causes by roughly 15 percent.⁷



Pictured above are residents of the Narrandera group home with 2 participants in each room.

Under the **live-in carer/group home model**, carers can effectively ensure that all participants do receive their 8 hours of undisturbed sleep by regulating movement, visitors, TV/DVD usage, mobile phone usage, curfews, lights out, control of drugs and alcohol, and by limiting the number of participants per room to a maximum of two. The Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project has reduced this to one to good effect.

6. Sending participants to bed and waking them up in the morning

It can be an ongoing battle to get some participants up every morning for work. Feelings of sickness or injuries sustained from the previous day's work are common excuses. This is expected from young people with a weak work ethic, poor self-regulation, and who are not in the habit of getting up early in the morning. The carer/supervisor must have the skills to effectively deal with this ongoing issue.

⁶ Strine, T. and Chapman, D. (2005). Associations of frequent sleep insufficiency with health-related quality of life and health behaviours. *Sleep Medicine*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, pp. 23-27.

⁷ Daniel F. Kripke, MD; Lawrence Garfinkel, MA; Deborah L. Wingard, PhD; Melville R. Klauber, PhD; Matthew R. Marler, PhD (2002). Mortality association with sleep duration and insomnia. *Archives of General psychology*, Vol. 59, No. 2, pp. 131-136.

BFTB Projects participants are rarely late for work. This is because the carer/supervisor wakes everyone up in the morning. In the Narrandera and Yanco groups, participants were woken at exactly 4:30am every morning. They had their breakfast, and their lunch was prepared. They all boarded the bus at 5:00am and arrived at Rockdale Beef/JBS Swift at 5:30am. If an individual did not board the bus it was because they were genuinely unwell, in which case they were told to see a doctor during the day and then to return home. This level of efficiency and effectiveness could never be achieved with the **on-call/visiting supervisor model**, where participants are living by themselves.

7. More effective control of drugs and alcohol usage

Jarvis Johnson, aged 17, from Ali Curung has this to say about the drinking in his home community: *There is too much drinking back home, too much violence, too much fighting for wife. It wasn't like this before. It's just getting worse and worse. Too much teenagers drinking, sniffing glues and paints, doing break and enter the shop, and the bakery, and the school, and the office, and steal the government cars. They go crazy.*

Jarvis went on to say:

Ali Curung people drink 24/7; non-stop. Most Ali Curung people now live in Tennant Creek because they love the alcohol more than they love life, and their family. Their family don't want to know them now. They live on the streets begging for money, no job, living on grog.

Anton McMillan, aged 17, from Santa Teresa says: *I like it down here; it's different to back home; away from the noise from the drunks.*

Many of the project's participants have a history of regular drug and alcohol use. They are not only strongly attracted to alcohol, but they are more likely to turn violent when intoxicated.

Mark Goldman, a psychologist at the University of South Florida and his colleagues, have undertaken extensive research in relation to the expectations of college problem drinkers, including adolescents. Goldman and his colleagues found they could predict the likelihood that adolescents would develop drinking problems on the basis of their expectations about alcohol - *before they had begun drinking*. Furthermore, even elementary school children have distinct beliefs about how alcohol will affect them.^{8 9}

BFTB Projects approach confronts and interrupts the pro-alcohol and substance abuse culture that exists in many remote bush communities. It ensures that participants can and do take responsibility for their actions. This is an important consideration because in remote Aboriginal communities, drinkers and those under the influence of illicit drugs are often forgiven for the dreadful things they do to their victims because they were under the influence of alcohol at the time. They are perceived to be unaware or unable to control their behaviour at the time. The perpetrator's offensive behaviour is excused whilst simultaneously reinforcing the abrogation of individual responsibility at the expense of the victim.

⁸ Christiansen, B.A. and Goldman, M.S. (1985). The differential development of adolescent alcohol expectancies may predict adult alcoholism. *Addictive Behaviour*, Vol. 10, Issue 3, pp. 299-306.

⁹ Brown, S.A., Creamer, V.A. and Stetson, B.A. (1987). Adolescent Alcohol Expectancies in Relation to Personal and Parental Drinking Patterns. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, Vol. 96, Issue No. 2, pp. 117-121.

Frequently, these victims are the most vulnerable members of the community, the aged, women, young people and children. This dysfunctional power dynamic becomes an accepted norm and is simplistically confused by some as 'cultural'. In other contexts like property distribution, it is based on 'power over' others. Elements of this can be seen in the following statement said to me by a young person from Mossman Gorge a few years ago.

You can't stop the drinking here; it's too strong. If you want to stop, others will force you into it. You can't say no, they will make you. If you don't drink with them they think bad of you. The only way to stop is to get out of this place.

In 2011, Virgil Downs, aged 17, from Ali Curung comments on BFTB Projects prohibition of drugs and alcohol:

It's good you stop them drinking. They can't control it. They don't know what they are getting into. You are the one looking after us. If they drink they will come home drunk. Then they will say "you hate me, why you want to kick me out", and they will start to fight. But there is a good reason to kick them out.

Embedded in Virgil's statement is the notion that once they start drinking, they will lose self-control, and they will not be aware that they have lost control. While people clearly differ in how their bodies process and respond to alcohol, these differences do not translate into alcoholism independent of individual needs, options, and values.¹⁰

Addictive drinking is one of a range of dependencies that people may acquire whilst attempting to artificially regulate their sense of themselves and their world. Some people become compulsively enmeshed in destructive drinking. They pursue sensations that they are progressively less able to attain through any other means. And yet we cannot take the power, and the seeming inevitability of this self-destructiveness, for proof that it is encoded in the genes.

Mitchell Mahoney, aged 21, is from Alpururulam. Mitchell decided to leave BFTB Projects, but to stay working for Rockdale Beef. He rented a room at one of the local hotels. His sole reason for leaving BFTB Projects was so that he could be free to drink as he pleases. After he left, Mitchell immediately began drinking heavily and was seen drinking all weekend, every weekend. When drunk he would turn violent. When he sobered up the following morning, he would invariably apologise to his victims for his violent acts. What was interesting, come Monday morning, Mitchell made sure he was sober. To do otherwise would risk instant dismissal from his job. This is an example of *Misery rising to meet the means available for its alleviation*.¹¹

The **live-in carer/group home model** can effectively prevent drugs and alcohol from taking hold of the group. It enables:

- control of who enters and leaves the home;
- control of the visitors to the home;
- observing those under the influence of drugs and alcohol, and dealing with them according to established procedure;
- responding in an appropriate manner to the signs of participants planning to engage in drug and alcohol usage;
- responding in an appropriate manner to movement around the home late in the evening or early hours of the morning; times when participants are more likely to sneak off for a drinking session, or to return home after a drinking session; and

¹⁰ Peele, S (1990). Second Thoughts About a Gene for Alcoholism. *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1990, pp. 52-58.

¹¹ *Free to Choose* by Theodore Dalrymple. City Journal, Autumn, 1996, published by Manhattan Institute.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



- carers are able to regularly articulate the prohibition rules, provide information, and counsel participants on drug and alcohol issues in a most timely and efficient manner.

These activities cannot be carried out under the **on-call/visiting supervisor model**, and therefore the model is unable to prevent drugs and alcohol from taking hold of the group.

8. The provision of meals

The **live-in carer/group home model** allows for the provision of meals to all participants. There are a number of reasons why it is best that BFTB Projects provides meals to participants, rather than participants being responsible for providing their own meals. These reasons are discussed below.



Residents of a BFTB Projects group home seated around the dining table eating their evening meal.

8.1 Participants do not know how to cook

Very few participants know how to shop for meals or cook, and they are not that interested in learning how to cook. Even those with some cooking experience only know how to cook the most basic meals. They are almost devoid of knowledge around nutrition and healthy eating. The **live-in carer/group home model** ensures that those who do not know how to cook receive a good breakfast, lunch and dinner every day of the week.

In addition to not knowing how to cook, many participants also lack the most basic knowledge of food storage, food freshness, food nutrition, washing dishes, and using a knife and folk. Nor do they have the knowledge or self-discipline to shop healthily and on a budget or within their means. The **live-in carer/group home model** can more effectively address these issues through ongoing training provided by the resident carer/supervisor.¹²

¹²

An attempt was made to formalise this skills training by engaging a qualified cook to come into the group home to teach the participants about food preparation and how to cook some simple tasty nutritional meals. Recipes were written up, ingredients were purchased, particular utensils and aprons were organised. Unfortunately, all the participants ran off as soon as the cook arrived, “because”, they said, “he looked gay”. Needless to say, the cook never returned. This is just one of the endless frustrations that must be endured when working with this target group.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



8.2 Participants will live on fast food or regularly eat out

All workers in meat processing plants are expected to work hard. When you work hard all day, the last thing young people want to do when they come home from work is to start preparing meals. The temptation is then to go and buy fast food or eat out. Fast foods may not be that healthy, but they are convenient. This habit is not unique to our client group. Teenagers experiencing independence for the first time, and others from low socio-economic backgrounds are often lured by the ease of takeaways.

This is what happens in these remote bush communities. In the evenings, families flock to the community takeaway shop to buy the usual deep fried chicken and chips, soft drink and smokes. What makes this behaviour particularly unhealthy is that community members, unlike BFTB Project participants, are not burning off the sugars and fats by working or some other physical activity. Most are on welfare or CDEP (made-up work with minimal activity).

Living on takeaways or regularly eating out will also entice young people to be regularly on the streets, day and night. This will increase the likelihood of these young people coming into contact, and 'hanging out' with, the more unsavoury members of the local community. Providing meals for everyone in the home reduces this risk.

8.3 Carer/supervisor can more effectively monitor and manage participants' diets

Many of the young people in BFTB Projects are going through a growth spurt. Their rapid height and weight gain requires that they consume additional calories, more than during any other period in life. In addition, they need more of several specific minerals and vitamins, including calcium, iron, and vitamins A, B₂, C and D. There is also a greater need for protein than there is during childhood. If the body does not receive this nutrition, full growth and good health will not be achieved.

Poor nutrition can have a significant impact on their ability to work productively throughout the day, and consequently it will negatively impact on their employment security. Left to their own devices, most participants will live on fast food purchased from the shop, just like they do at home.

An additional health issue is that a number of participants have a tendency to gulp down their food as quickly as possible, which is particularly bad for their digestion. This is due to the considerable competition for food in their home. Slow eaters will usually miss out or have their meal taken from them by others higher in the power structure.

With participants housed under the one roof, their diets and eating habits can be more effectively monitored and managed. The kitchen can also be used as a training tool. The cook can teach interested participants the skill of food preparation and cooking.

8.4 Sharing a meal promotes constructive social interaction

Providing meals to participants also promotes social interaction between the carer/supervisor and participants. Bringing the entire group together for meals creates the ideal opportunity for the carer/supervisor to observe the behaviour of all participants and their relationships with each other. It also offers the opportunity for the carer/supervisor to interact with participants outside of the work environment. This enables the carer/supervisor to establish a more effective relationship with participants by providing an opportunity to share information, stories, experiences, ideas and views. This is an important aspect of building positive relationships between all household occupants. If the carer/supervisor does not understand his clients and does not understand what is going on, his ability to manage their behaviour is severely limited.

A carer/supervisor who also cooks for participants and eats with participants established a degree of humility in his relationship with participants than a carer/supervisor that does not cook for or eat with participants. This can stand in direct contrast to the norm where it is beyond the station of a leader to do the work of a lower rank. He comes not as a King or Conqueror to be served, but to serve. This humility enables him to take the high moral ground in his dealings with participants (and their parents).

8.5 Meals-on-wheels is a regressive service

In 2008, the supervisor of our Albany group introduced a meal-on-wheels service to the Albany trial. Home delivery of meals is a foreign and unwelcome concept to the theory and practice of BFTB Projects. Meals-on-wheels is a service intended for senior citizens living alone, those in convalescence, and those with disabilities so to enable them to remain in their home rather than be placed into institutional care. To provide this service to able-bodied young people does not promote the concept and practice of self-reliance. It sends the message that these young people are in some way inept and incapable of self-reliance—a message that is incompatible with the theory and practice of BFTB Projects. The Albany supervisor did not understand that the provision of meals at cost within the home of the supervisor, like what was occurring at Wonthaggi, was a means of managing the behaviour of the young people and to assist in their transition to self-reliance.

Concluding comments

The **live-in carer/group home model** is the model being used by the Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project at Peterborough in South Australia. What makes this project truly unique is our use of Fijian nationals as on-site (workplace) and off-site (after work) residential carer/supervisors brought to Australia on a 416 visa. This is cutting edge community development work, the likes of which has never before been seen in this country.

For a government that is serious about the cost-effectiveness of indigenous employment programs, the cost of the Peterborough end of the Aurukun Youth Orbiting Project is something to pay attention to. The initial setup cost of the Peterborough site has been substantial, but now that it has been established the ongoing cost of using Fijian nationals as on-site and off-site carer/supervisors is remarkably low.

Meat processing companies that employed Indigenous workers From the Bush



Because of the low cost, for the first time I have been able to use a supervision ratio as low as 1:4. This exceptionally low supervision ratio can substantially increase the quality of care and supervision provided to each participant, which is particularly important when targeting disadvantaged, poorly socialised youths from the bush as young as 15 years old.

With a carer/supervision ratio of 1:4, our carer/supervision cost is \$2,658.25 per participant, per annum. This includes a living allowance, full board and keep, WorkCover insurance, medical insurance, return flight from Fiji to Adelaide, and the visa application fee. This is an extraordinarily low figure. What is more, this project returns to the national economy substantial government savings and significant revenue in the form of PAYE tax and new economic activity. This will be discussed in the next newsletter.

