

Inquiry into Indigenous Employment Opening Statement

**William Timouth
Tangentyere Council**

Thank you Mr. Chairman

According to John Taylor of the ANU –“that against the stated aims of key Commonwealth policy initiatives, it is clear that outcomes for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory are deficient. Employment in the mainstream (and in particular the private sector) labour market has declined, not increased as had been intended. The Indigenous share of total Territory income has declined, while the gap in personal income levels has widened.”¹

Tangentyere Councils message to the Inquiry is that redress requires significant investment in Aboriginal people. Our initial submission provided a series of example of what we have achieved in Indigenous employment and details the lessons we have learnt from our experience, they are:-

Employment Pathways

If Indigenous people are to successfully compete for skilled mainstream jobs with other Territory residents and there are deep structural hurdles to be overcome. These include poor literacy and numeracy levels. Therefore pathways need to be created to assist people in the transition to full-time work.

CDEP is a significant tool and stepping stone for hundreds of Indigenous people in Central Australia. It must be recognised as such.

On the Job Training

The experience at Tangentyere shows that training that works best:-

- have an emphasis on practical skills based learning;

- occurs in groups, so that there is group support and encouragement;
- when the trainer or instructor is Indigenous or has plenty of experience in working with Indigenous peoples;
- includes accreditation as part of the process and outcomes;
- builds the learning as part of a project or contract, so that participants learn the requirements of budgets, deadlines and quality control.

Building Apprenticeship Opportunities

The Tangentyere Council submission detailed the success of the construction apprenticeships known as the Central Remote Model. The dilemma with 'New Apprenticeships' is that often the wages are too low for people with families to feed, however employers face supervision and training costs for limited productivity in the first year or two. Government funding assistance to offset these costs to employers should increase numbers commencing and completing – while offering the apprentices a living wage.

Contract Preferences

The inclusion of Indigenous employment requirements in Government and non-Government contracts are an important step in generating employment opportunities. But this is only effective when such contract provisions are enforceable.

From these lessons drawn from our experience we are proposing comprehensive employment generation through an import substitution model like the successful Central Remote Model for housing construction. This needs to be implemented across all areas of service provision including Roads (civil construction); Stores; Community Services (childcare, aged care,) Essential Services, financial services (banking), Administration; Education, Health etc.

While this will not create full employment it will create employment for a significant number of Indigenous people and open pathways to employment in mainstream industries such as mining & tourism. This is imperative given the labour shortage that is

projected to worsen with the ageing of the mainstream population and the drift from rural and remote regions. In contrast the Aboriginal population in the NT is younger and growing.

Of equal importance is the impact on remote communities. We found from the delivery of the Central Remote model that considerable community pride has been developed and that the apprentices are now role models in their own communities. This is very important to increasing participation in education.

The first step to achieve this objective is a detailed regionally-based quantitative assessment of the supply of, and demand for, labour for different economic activities that already exist, or that may be created at the local level. This should then inform the appropriate mix of resources for employment, training and enterprise development.

As always Mr. Chairman, Tangentyere stresses the importance of Indigenous control. Our submission details how we have developed partnerships to ensure that we have access to the professional expertise necessary to undertake these functions.

We also consider that it is imperative for such a program to be undertaken on a regional basis (ie Central Australia) to achieve economies of scale. There are not the monetary or human resources available to achieve this any other way.

Mr Chairman since our written submission Tangentyere has undertaken work with DEWR and the NT Government and we have a viable proposal that targets employment in mining and associated industries. I would like to table this document as an addition to our original submission if I have your permission.

Thank you - now my staff and I will do our best to answer questions.

ⁱ Taylor, J., "Indigenous economic futures in the Northern Territory: The demographic and socio-economic background" CAEPR 2003

Tangentyere Council Indigenous Job Model.

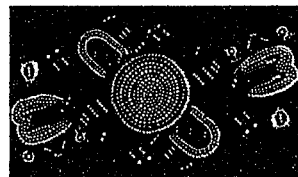
Theory- When it comes to indigenous employment, the employment function, at least in the early stages, is best carried out by an indigenous organisation. What would otherwise be the employer would become the host employer. The steps to achieving this are as follows-

1. Indigenous organisation to establish a labour hire capability .
2. Their first task is to identify an appropriate emerging project that has the possibility of providing a critical mass of suitable job opportunities.
3. Having identified the emerging project the second task is to initiate discussions with the project owners with a view to identifying a critical mass of job opportunities. These job opportunities will most likely be either –
 - Specific jobs (eg drivers) or
 - A process or part of a process that will give rise to an enclave of varying job opportunities
4. Once these job opportunities are identified the next step is to negotiate their outsourcing to the Indigenous organisation
5. Having secured their outsourcing the Indigenous organisation uses the lead time to recruit, select and train a pool of Indigenous people to meet the contract.

Finally the need for critical mass is to ensure economies of scale in work location, type of work, time lines, training needs and ongoing support.

The need for a pool of people to meet the contractual arrangement is so the Indigenous organisation has the flexibility to cover contingencies such as sorry leave and ceremonial leave.

Tangentyere Council Incorporated Indigenous Employment Model



STEP 1

INDIGENOUS ORGANISATION TO ESTABLISH LABOUR HIRE CAPACITY

STEP 2

IDENTIFY EMERGING PROJECTS WITH POSSIBLE CRITICAL MASS OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES.

STEP 3

ONCE PROJECT IDENTIFIED:

- MEET OWNERS
- IDENTIFY CRITICAL MASS OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES
 - SPECIFIC JOBS or
 - ENCLAVE THAT WILL GIVE RISE TO JOBS

STEP 4

NEGOTIATE OUTSOURCING OF JOBS / ENCLAVE IDENTIFIED

STEP 5

USE LEAD TIME TO RECRUIT, SELECT, TRAIN POOL OF INDIGENOUS WORKERS