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Submission No 70



Nallawilli

**SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPS  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND  
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS**

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**INQUIRY INTO HIGH LEVELS OF INDIGENOUS  
PEOPLE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

**Prepared by the Principals of Excelior, Message Stick  
Group, and Nallawilli**

**FEBRUARY 2009**

[This document is a "short form" submission to the Standing Committee in response to invitations relating to the Inquiry into Indigenous people in the criminal justice system. Excelior, Message Stick and Nallawilli are the Partners in this submission.]



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This submission proposes an initiative that creates an employment pathway to young Indigenous adults in detention. Three organisations (the Partners) who have significant experience in working with young Indigenous offenders have agreed to collaborate and offer a potential solution to the growing issue of Indigenous people remaining in the criminal justice system.

Ultimately, the aim of the program would be to demonstrate that there are better ways forward in life that individuals are capable of achieving, and that there are career opportunities available to them.

Under the program, the Partners would recruit and train eligible young Indigenous offenders to undertake contact centre work on behalf of participating business-to-business (B2B) clients while serving their prison or detention term, with a view to offering them permanent employment and a structured career path upon their release.

As a Registered Training Organisation and experience in working with young Indigenous offenders in detention, the Partners have the expertise to create and deliver a customised training program that will lead to participants achieving nationally recognised industry accreditation.

The program would provide young offenders with the opportunity to build a successful career within the contact centre industry should they choose this path.

This proposed juvenile and young Indigenous offenders training program would not be open to every offender; it would depend on the nature of their crime, their suitability for customer contact work, and their overall willingness and motivation to undertake the training required.

It is envisaged that the program will provide an opportunity for motivated eligible Indigenous offenders to gain formal accreditation and on-the-job experience, and reduce their likelihood of re-offending by providing a positive avenue for them to pursue a long-term career.

The partners believe there is a strong opportunity to create a training and employment program involving the provision of contact centre support to private corporations focused on engaging Indigenous juveniles and young adults that are within the criminal justice system.

We believe our proposed initiatives will significantly grow employment opportunities to reduce young Indigenous people's involvement with the criminal justice system; and support the diversion of these Indigenous people from re-offending.



## THE PARTNERS

### Excelior

Excelior is Australia's leading provider of customer contact optimisation solutions to public and private sector organisations, employing more than 2000 staff across 60 sites in Australia and New Zealand.

Excelior has a long history of engagement with Indigenous communities around Australia, and has invested heavily in providing training and employment to Indigenous Australians.

Our involvement, as part of the SKILLED Group of Companies' appointment as member of the Federal Government's Indigenous Employment Program panel of providers, has focused on working with key government agencies, Indigenous communities, and employers, to identify and develop Indigenous employment and training initiatives nationally.

The SKILLED Group is one of the largest Indigenous employers in Australia, with almost 600 Indigenous employees and contractors.

All members of the SKILLED Group recruitment team, including Excelior, are trained by Diversity at Work, covering the hiring, retention and management of Indigenous people. This provides our recruitment consultants with an understanding of Indigenous backgrounds and culture – ensuring all candidates are effectively evaluated and considered.

SKILLED Group currently has a contract with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to employ Indigenous employees.

The SKILLED Group National Indigenous Employment Plan 2008 – 2010 ("SKILLED IEP") recognises the primary emphasis of the Government's Indigenous Employment Policy (IEP) as creating employment and training opportunities within private sector ranks.



## MESSAGE STICK GROUP

Message Stick is an Indigenous business which has the following Objectives:

- To remain financially independent by producing sustainable and distributable profits for shareholders – without the need for any grants, subsidies, or other “socially based” concessions whatsoever.
- To promote understanding and awareness of the Indigenous community in Australia within the non-Indigenous business community.
- To contribute to the process of Reconciliation by providing a working example, in the business environment of how positive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian’s can thrive and produce meaningful outcomes.
- To support and develop successful Indigenous business executives as role models for the Indigenous community – particularly for the youth within the community.

The Vision of the Message Stick Group is:

- That the first three decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are seen as the period in which economic participation and economic independence for the Australian Indigenous community was substantially achieved.
- That the achievements of economic participation and independence was the result of a planned and co-ordinated effort on behalf of the Indigenous communities themselves, the non-Indigenous business community and our State and Federal Governments.

Message Stick Communications was registered as a private limited company in 2004. At the time of writing, the annual turnover of the business is approximately \$3m. The business has no debt and is highly profitable. No Government funds or grants have been accepted by the Message Stick Group.

The principal founder, Michael McLeod is a member of the stolen generation and a recovering alcoholic and heroin addict.



## **NALLAWILLI**

Nallawilli is an Indigenous owned business with specific experience and expertise in supporting Indigenous individuals and families during times of distress. This experience includes experience with Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system.

Nallawilli provides the Partners with the necessary understanding of the Indigenous individual's circumstances, environment and support networks beyond the justice system.



## **OVERVIEW OF THE INITIATIVE**

The Partners believe there is a very real opportunity to create a meaningful and sustainable pathway to employment for Indigenous people caught up in the criminal justice system.

The partners are prepared to work with the Federal Government and State jurisdictions to pilot a five year program. These five years will be used as a means to learn, understand and develop strategies which are required to create a highly effective and sustainable model which delivers positive results throughout the country.

Initially a prison or detention centre in New South Wales would be chosen as the first pilot. This will require clear support and medium term (five year) commitment from both Federal and State Government. This pilot is proposed to be an action –oriented, results driven exercise, with clear deliverables and a single minded focus.

Outputs are envisaged to focus on successful long term employment placements into the workforce post-release.

The Partners are under no illusions as to how difficult this environment is. Hence the need for great care in designing the pilot and understanding the challenges that exist.

## **CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

The Partners believe the first step is to gauge Federal Government interest in leveraging the strengths of our group in the quest to provide some solutions to repeat offending of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system.

The basis for the Partners coming together is the belief that private enterprise must be a partner in the process of enabling young Indigenous offenders to engage with the economy – either through entrepreneurship or employment. If this principle is accepted then much can be achieved by powerful collaborations between Government, the private sector, individual leaders and Indigenous Australians themselves.

This Inquiry has created a forum for this initiative to be introduced and discussed.