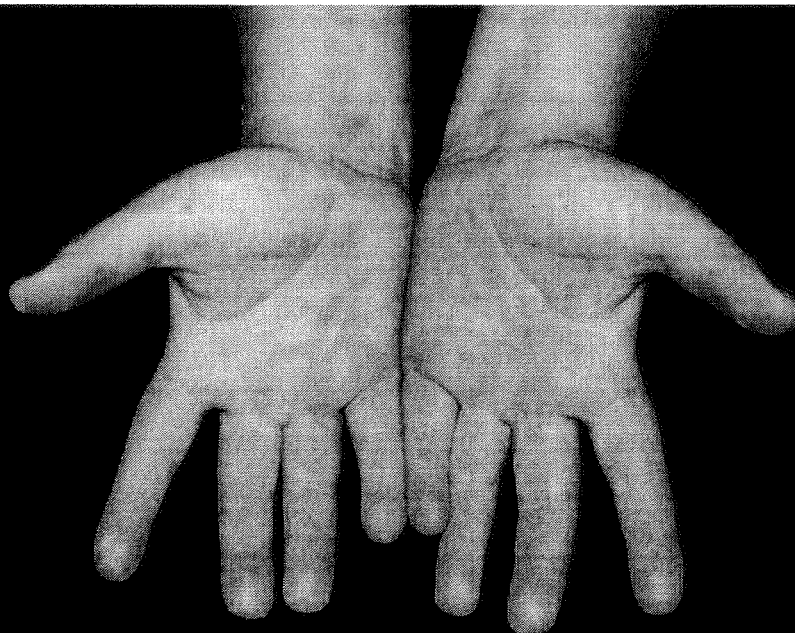


RECEIVED  
22 DEC 2009

Submission No 46

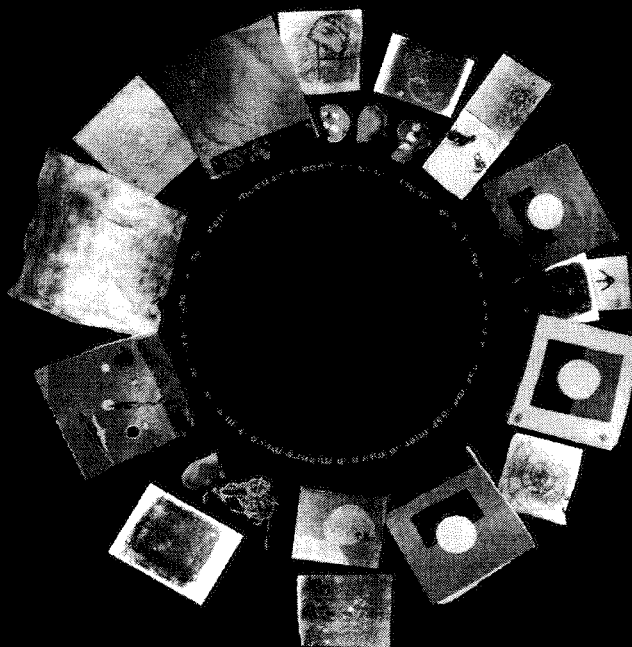
BY: AKIA (S)

*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*



my dream

my art



*For the Aboriginal artist mentors and the young Aboriginal artists, Meenah Mienne was a proud, passionate journey down the cultural pathway towards identity through the arts*

Meenah Mienne was proudly supported by the Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts and the Department of Health and Human Services. Many thanks go to all Meenah Mienne participants, to the young artists Dean, Josh, Leonard and Jade and to their artist mentors Phyllis (Mimi) Mimi, Wai, Gita, Somers, Ruth, Langford and Adam Maxwell for their guidance, energy and inspiration.



*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by  
Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

## **Executive Summary**

This submission will touch upon several of the points in the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. Primarily however we will focus on the point 'Best practice examples of programs that support diversion of Indigenous people from juvenile detention centres and crime, and provide support for those returning from such centres'. The *meenah mienne* (which means 'my dream') mentoring program builds supportive local networks by fostering mentoring relationships between disadvantaged young Aboriginal people, who are already - or are at high risk of being - in juvenile detention, and Aboriginal mentors and cultural practitioners in Northern Tasmania. *meenah mienne* seeks to divert young Aboriginal people from juvenile detention and crime by supporting intergenerational relationships, targeted community building, role-modelling, healing, literacy and skills development through a mentor and 'buddy' system. See Attachment 1 for a short summary of *meenah mienne*'s current activities.

The preliminary results of this approach have been encouraging. Since becoming operational less than a year ago, three young Aboriginal 'buddies' have pursued employment and further educational opportunities. Further, more than 20 young Aboriginal people referred from local schools (high-risk students) and the Ashley Youth Detention Centre are voluntarily and actively participating in the program. Aboriginal detainees and *meenah mienne* mentors have delivered a theatre arts program for Ashley Youth Detention Centre School and Brooks High School under the National School Drug Education Strategy (Indigenous, Rural and Remote Initiative). This involves mentors and potential buddies creating a play and interactive workshop about the consequences of drug and alcohol misuse and devising an arts-based educational resource pack to support student learning about drug and alcohol use. Through various *meenah mienne* activities, supportive and positive networks have been built within the community for young high-risk Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) people as well as community elders. These people are being better equipped and are playing a greater role in diverting young people away from crime and helping them find and make positive and productive life choices.

Much more needs to be done and *meenah mienne* is refining its methodology as lessons are learned with further implementation experience. It is clear from *meenah mienne*'s experience this year that there is a huge demand from young 'high-risk' Aboriginal people for our mentor-'buddy' program. In particular, several funding proposals have been submitted to expand the mentor-buddy network, support and training of Aboriginal community mentors (given high demand for their services), establish a targeted literacy program for 'scaffolding' *meenah mienne*'s current work with educational plans for buddies (and potentially mentors) to develop greater literacy skills through collaborative business planning and marketing of artworks produced through *meenah mienne*.

From our experience working with *meenah mienne* and in the many years of experience with young detainees and high-risk Aboriginal people, we built the following key features into our *meenah mienne* programs which we believe are fundamental to successful outcomes:

**Programs must empower and listen to young people.** Activity planning needs to be flexible enough to build on the wishes, dreams and desires of the young people they are designed to help;

*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

**The replacement of established negative attitude and behaviour patterns with positive constructive ones requires patience, on-going contact and a long-term perspective.** It is essential to prioritise the building of strong and trusting personal relationships in the first three months of the mentor-buddy relationships. Therefore, although education, training and employment issues are discussed with buddies and mentors informally at first, it is not until the three month reporting process when it becomes appropriate to address and document specific education, training and employment planning and outcomes;

**Art is a useful medium through which to engage with young Aboriginal people.** It allows the exploration of issues fundamental to their indigenous belief systems and life experiences and can allow the buddy to control the speed and to what depth they wish to confront and explore those issues with the mentor's support. At the least the buddy leaves having explored and developed their artistic skills and beyond that they can use the opportunity to transform their lives and access resources and support through *meenah mienne* staff and their mentor. Art-based workshops are also a great way to help young people form relationships with others;

**Strong collaboration with other stakeholders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous is extremely helpful for effective and efficient programme implementation.** *meenah mienne* is extremely well networked through its Advisory Group, staff and mentors, and works closely (through joint activities, information sharing etc) with many other service providers to young people exploiting synergies through cooperation. While doing this it is important to keep activities to within the strategic focus and implementation capacity of *meenah mienne*; and

**Continuity, and to the maximum extent possible consistency, of support beyond the environment of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and Ashley school is extremely important.** Social and other environmental factors the young buddies experience post-release often contribute to a return to established destructive behaviour patterns. When a juvenile detainee is released by the court (walking straight out of the court-house onto the street and his/her old world), the already-established relationship with their mentor can be an important factor to help them make the necessary changes to their lives on the outside to avoid re-offending. In a perfect world, continued access to the Ashley Youth Detention Centre School or other specialised educational facility with a special focus on the issues facing young offenders would be extremely helpful. *Meenah mienne*, in part, provides a safe space for these young people to connect meaningfully and regularly with individualised support and guidance which is culturally appropriate.

*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

**Program description**

*meenah mienne* ('my dream') is a mentoring program that brings young people and artists in the Aboriginal community together 'to share time, tell stories and make really deadly art'. Through one-on-one mentoring, arts activities, and special cultural projects, *meenah mienne* provides assisted pathways for young Aboriginal people to education and employment, in addition to referrals to other service providers. It also provides a space for community members to model good leadership and raises the profile of Aboriginal arts and culture. *meenah mienne* aims to:

- provide an enhanced arts and cultural skills-base amongst young Aboriginal people
- be a welcoming community space
- improve self-esteem, communication skills, willingness to participate in decision-making, and planning for the future
- build positive relationships with older people in the community and enhanced sense of belonging for young people
- provide supportive networks within the community including young people, mentors, community people and service providers
- improve perception by artist mentors of their value and place in the community
- showcase the arts as a valuable personal and community development process

Established by Tasmanian Aboriginal elders and artists, *meenah mienne* is governed by an Advisory Group of Aboriginal community members and expert advisors in youth justice and business, chaired by Aunty Phyllis Pitchford. The program targets indigenous young people connected with, and at risk of connection with, the youth justice system in Tasmania. Mentors are Aboriginal artists or cultural practitioners who have completed extensive screening, national police checks and ongoing training as a condition of registration. *meenah mienne* operates from Launceston shop-front premises and through outreach to Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) and the community. *meenah mienne* is auspiced by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Child Care Association and staffed by a part-time Coordinator and Community Project Worker. The core program is early in its second year of operation, currently supporting over 20 young people.

**Community involvement**

We formed a community advisory committee chaired by Aboriginal Elder, Aunty Phyllis Pitchford. This committee comprises 100% Aboriginal community membership including artists, government workers, and community workers. Expert advisers to the committee include Neil Warnock, former Youth Justice Manager (North) and Wayne Cuthbertson, Director of Good Earth Tasmania business consultancy. We also consulted with current *meenah mienne* mentors, and community workers from other organizations in the North and North West who support young people and members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, including Colony 47, MALAK, Whitelion, and Youth on Paterson. As we have strong links with schools and the Education Department, we have also consulted with teachers and Aboriginal Education workers.

### **Achievements in 2009**

- Of the 18 young Aboriginal 'buddies' who are currently active in the meenah mienne program, 4 have been engaged for 9 months, 4 have reached 6 months, 5 have been with us for 3 months, and a further 5 are in early stages of referral and matching. Of the other referrals that meenah mienne has received (28 in total since the beginning of the program), two young people have moved on from the program into employment, two have moved away from the Launceston area. Six young people initially referred have not continued with the program due to ineligibility, geographical distance or disinterest (mainly due to mis-targeted referrals by referring organisation).
- Of the young people who have been with meenah mienne for over 3 months, one young person has successfully completed his first term studying art at Tasmania Polytechnic (his enrolment was facilitated through his involvement with meenah mienne), all school-aged buddies have maintained full-time connection with their schools while with meenah mienne, one is currently in Ashley Youth Detention Centre long-term, and two young people are successfully transitioning from detention with regular contact with meenah mienne mentors. (Note, the 2 young people who have also moved on from the meenah mienne program were also supported through post-detention transition through meenah mienne).
- Through the 'Ashley School Artcards Project' a mentor worked with 12 Aboriginal students at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre to create a series of artworks which were printed on postcards. The young detainees were delighted to see their artwork published and have reported that the project was a real morale booster for them. This was a unique 'hub mentoring' opportunity which provided potential buddies with the opportunity to meet a mentor and to engage in art activities of the type that *meenah mienne* mentors offer. This project was supported by the Tasmanian Government's Children and Youth Advisory Service. Since then, the artcards have been promoted by the national organisation, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, and promoted through their merchandising catalogue.
- Three mentors have delivered a theatre arts program for Ashley Youth Detention Centre School and Brooks High School under the National School Drug Education Strategy (Indigenous, Rural and Remote Initiative). This involves mentors and potential buddies from Ashley Juvenile Detention Centre creating a play and interactive workshop on the consequences of drug and alcohol misuse and devising an arts-based educational resource pack to support student learning about drug and alcohol use. This program will be followed up with a collaboration with the Indigenous Hip Hop Project (a mainland organisation) for Youth Week 2010.
- Demand for the *meenah mienne* from high risk juvenile Aboriginals has far outstripped mentor capacity at this early stage in the program. Additional Mentors are currently being trained.
- The *meenah mienne* artist-in-residence program has provided employment for professional Aboriginal artist, Vicki West. This has been a valuable initiative that has helped young

*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

people view the arts as a viable career option. *Meenah mienne* also currently has a volunteer artist-in-residence, Dawn Blazely, working with buddies and mentors until February 2010.

- There is visual evidence of mentor engagement throughout the *meenah mienne* centre, including painting designs on the studio and gallery walls, pottery sculptures on display, spears made by mentees and their mentors, and the design of the outdoor courtyard. Buddies have also actively created small craft pieces as gifts for the Christmas season.
- Mentor engagement was profiled and celebrated at the May 15 opening event of the *meenah mienne* centre. Mentors and buddies had been involved in painting, gardening and preparing the *meenah mienne* centre for opening (for example, establishing a garden in the back courtyard, painting the Aboriginal flag on the back courtyard wall, and painting other walls and doors in the centre). During the official proceedings of the opening event, a mentor and their buddy also shared their experience of mentoring in their own words to the assembled crowd of family, elders, other community service providers, artists and dignitaries.

**Plans for 2010 (see Attachment 2 for a detailed project plan)**

Funding was recently approved for *meenah mienne's* *Literacy Through Art and Business* project through the Tasmanian Community Fund, a three year proposal that extends the foundational work of *meenah mienne's* innovative arts mentoring model.

The **goal** of the *Literacy Through Art and Business* project is to improve literacy and numeracy levels of Aboriginal at-risk young people, their mentors and families through an educationally-robust and culturally-appropriate program of individualised learning pathways based on the real-life context of establishing a community-led, sustainable arts business.

The **objectives** of the project are:

- To provide a meaningful, real-life context for enquiry-based learning that encourages young people to improve prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills.
- To integrate a focus on literacy development and assessment into *meenah mienne's* current mentoring program in partnership with the Department of Education and other youth services and registered training providers.
- To establish a community-led social enterprise that is sustainable beyond the life of the grant provision.

The **core activity** of the project is for Aboriginal young people, their mentors, and other family members ('the participants') to establish and run a business to make, market and sell their artworks:

- at local craft and tourist markets such in Launceston, Evandale, and Salamanca (2010 focus),
- on the internet through a *meenah mienne* website 'shopping cart' (2011 focus),

*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

- at meenah mienne's Tamar St gallery through curated exhibition planning and management (2012 focus).

For the participants, the **main literacy building strategies** are to:

- research traditional and contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal art and cultural practices,
- write project schedules,
- develop business plans,
- write and design catalogues,
- write and design advertising materials and other publications,
- publish websites,
- communicate with the public at markets, on the internet, and in the gallery,
- work collaboratively with others,
- evaluate and write reports about projects.

**How the project will improve adult and family literacy**

In 2005, the Tasmanian Department of Education released figures that indicated that 65.7% of Aboriginal young people exiting compulsory education (Grade 10) achieved minimum standards in literacy compared to 83.7% of non-indigenous young people (Christopher Bantick, *The Age*, Nov 28, 2005). This indicates that not only are a significant number of Aboriginal young people not succeeding at school, but there is a substantial number of adult members in the community who exit formal education without minimum literacy standards. The project will improve adult and family literacy by providing culturally-appropriate literacy learning pathways based on one-on-one mentoring and real-life projects for at-risk young people, their mentors and family members who have low level literacy skills. By participating in year-long projects supported by an educationally-rigorous individualized programs, skills monitoring, and assessment by a qualified teacher and Registered Training Provider, this project will target individuals who have not succeeded or do not succeed in conventional mainstream teaching and learning environments as a result of multiple barriers in their lives (see the following detailed plan for more information on 'youth at risk'). The Aboriginal community – through meenah mienne – aims to develop this innovative *Literacy Through Arts and Business* project to support those at multiple disadvantage in our community to raise their literacy competency, thereby improving their life situations, and enabling them to be inspired by seeing tangible outcomes for their work which also raise the esteem and profile of the community. The improvement in literacy skills levels will occur as a result of intensive one-on-one mentoring support from within the Aboriginal community (therefore also strengthening and empowering community kinship and bonds), backed up by educationally-sound methods of evaluation and assessment, and a motivational learning context which is goal-oriented and collaborative.

Examples of specific project activities that will support their growth in literacy skills are:

- Prose literacy: understand texts about Tasmanian Aboriginal culture, history and art; and create texts for brochures, media, websites, and exhibition catalogues.
- Document literacy: research business opportunities by understanding charts, tables and case studies; create business plans; write project plans including schedules; write evaluations and reports.
- Numeracy: understand and use numeracy to predict and manage cash flow.

*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

- Problem solving: participate in group decision-making to solve various types of problems encountered in establishing and managing a business.

Participants will be required to commit to individualized learning pathways for the year – a resource-intensive but proven social and cost-effective means of gaining the best outcomes possible for people at multiple disadvantage. Individuals will be monitored and assessed during their participation to ensure programs are tailored appropriately and improvements in skills levels are made to ensure their success.

This project is about community-led and community-based literacy development through the real-life learning context of establishing a sustainable social enterprise. While the establishment of *meenah mienne*'s core business has been sponsored by a Shared Responsibility Agreement between State and Federal governments, the *Literacy Through Art and Business* initiative is about supporting community-led learning and action. Therefore, while it is *meenah mienne*'s aim to continue to partner with government for various aspects of its service provision – particularly its through-care of Aboriginal young people transiting from detention and State care – the primary feature of the *Literacy Through Art and Business* project is to develop an innovative and empowering approach to community-led, community-based learning, skill-exchange, and enterprise beyond government subsidy.

This project will provide long term **value** and **benefit** to the Tasmanian community by:

- improving literacy levels in groups of people who have not or do not access conventional educational programs due to multiple disadvantage (particularly Aboriginal young people in connection with the youth justice system);
- supporting more positive perceptions of Aboriginal cultural identity and more positive networks of kinship and community belonging;
- contributing to the lowering of offending and re-offending rates among Aboriginal young people;
- increasing opportunities for social and economic participation by people at multiple disadvantage;
- providing ongoing work opportunities for young people and artist-mentors;
- building community capacity to self-manage a sustainable social enterprise; and
- contributing to the growth of Tasmania's vibrant and multi-cultural arts industry.

**Information on Target Clients**

***\*See more information in the following detailed project plan.***

The three target groups for this project are:

1. Aboriginal young people aged 15 (post compulsory school age) to 25 years who are involved, or at risk of involvement, in the youth justice system and who are disengaged from conventional teaching and learning environments.
2. Aboriginal young people under 15 years who are disengaged, or at risk of disengagement, from full-time participation in schooling.
3. Aboriginal adults who are parents, mentors and family members of the above target groups who have low levels of literacy and numeracy.



*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

The project will cater to 20 participants a year (Approx 30-35% Target Group 1; 30-35% Target Group 2; 30% other community members). Each participant will be individually assessed to determine their literacy learning pathway through the *Literacy Through Art and Business* project.

**How the project might be transferable to other areas**

The *Literacy Through Arts and Business* project is innovative in that it provides a culturally-appropriate, activity-based, creative approach to community-based learning. With effective planning, coordination and evaluation, this project model could be transferable to other communities that aim to empower marginalized or disadvantaged members who, for whatever reason, may not be able to participate in conventional school or institution-based settings. By sharing information via sound evaluation practices, professional networks, community organizations, and publications, the *Literacy Through Arts and Business* project could provide a model for the way that literacy, business and many other 'real-life' skills can be developed while at the same time fostering vital community networks, relationships, and economic opportunities.

**Partnerships with other organizations**

*meenah mienne* partners with numerous community-based organizations, schools, and government agencies to deliver its program. For instance:

- White Lion Mentoring Program in the provision of mentor training
- Tasmanian Aboriginal Child Care Association in the provision of human resource management and financial administration,
- Ashley Youth Detention Centre in the provision of programs for Aboriginal young people in detention and in post-release pathways,
- The Department of Education in the provision of mentoring for Aboriginal students disengaging with classroom learning,
- Other youth service providers such as Youth On Paterson and Headspace in collaborative youth activities and sharing of resources.

The *Learning Through Art and Business* project will further these relationships as well as formalize specific partnerships with:

- the Department of Education through the secondment of a consultant teacher to guide in planning and assessing literacy-based learning; and to provide specialist advice in accrediting literacy learning through a Registered Training Provider.
- StarDesign.com in the provision of specialist advice and training in print document design (such as catalogues), and website design.
- Youth on Paterson and Whitelion by collaborating on 2010 market stall projects to ensure there is a volume of artworks to sell.
- Launceston Polytechnic in the use of printing resources.
- Business Development and Arts organizations – such as the Indigenous Business Incubator program, Viscopy, and Arts Law Australia – in the development of business plans, and copyright provisions and protocols on the sale and reproduction of works by participants.
- Cornerstone Youth Services Inc – on brokering further partnerships in relation to upcoming youth health and well-being initiatives in the Northern region.

*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

**Value for Money**

The *Literacy through Art and Business* project provides for individualized learning pathways which is a resource-intensive but highly-appropriate way of supporting people who have not experienced success in conventional education environments and who have experienced multiple-disadvantage in their lives. There are very few opportunities for people in this situation to be supported in an educationally-robust program which is led and sustained by fellow community members. There are, therefore, value-added community development outcomes provided by investing in this initiative. Furthermore, by specifically targeting young people at risk, the project provides important diversion from the youth justice system whereby it costs the community \$800 a day to keep a young person on remand, and approximately \$250,000 an annum to keep one young person in detention at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Diversionary and intervention projects such as this are therefore highly cost-effective in the long run. In addition, the cultural enterprise aspect of the project offers longer term value for money by contributing to the tourism and arts and cultural industries in Tasmania – industries which attract visitors to the State, improve the State's 'bottom line', and provides ongoing jobs and social support.

**Evidence of records of attendance**

- Records of attendance are kept in the abovementioned mentor/buddy meeting schedule files in a secure cabinet at the *meenah mienne* centre.
- Of the 28 referrals received:
  - 2 buddies have moved on from the program after their transition into the community from detention.
  - 4 buddies have been with the program for 9 months: 1 is in long-term detention, 1 is in post-release transition from detention, 1 is living independently and has just completed his first term studying art at Launceston Polytechnic (facilitated through *meenah mienne* involvement), and another has continued with full-time schooling. All are meeting their mentors on a weekly/fortnightly basis.
  - 4 buddies have been with *meenah mienne* for 6 months. All are continuing in full-time school, with two receiving significantly improved reports from teachers and parents since their involvement with the program. All are meeting their mentors on a weekly basis.
  - 5 buddies have been with *meenah mienne* for 3 months. Four have continued with full-time schooling, one is going through post-release transition from detention. All are meeting their mentors on a weekly/fortnightly basis.
  - 5 buddies are in early stages of matching and establishing their mentoring relationships.

Of the further referrals, matches have not been or made due to ineligibility, geographical distance or disinterest on the part of the young person (due to inappropriately facilitated referrals by the referring organisation).

**Examples of specific activities which focus on re-engagement with education or employment opportunities**

- The community project worker worked with partner organizations, Youth on Paterson, Salvation Plus, Whitelion, Break Free and Connections to plan a Youth and

*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

Employment Showcase to be held in Albert Hall on September 22. This new event provided an opportunity for young people to showcase their talents and interests and present them with real opportunities to gain work experience, employment or further education enrolments. The event was particularly aimed at young people whose needs are not being met by the current employment, education and support setting.

- The coordinator and community project worker developed a program in partnership with Brooks High School to support six buddies referred by the school into *meenah mienne*. Each fortnight this group met for a workshop facilitated by one or more *meenah mienne* mentors in an activity that extends their cultural knowledge and social and literacy skills. (To date, workshops have been held in poetry writing, spear-making, and bush experience). Three to five of these buddies also attend on alternate weeks to meet individually with mentors and engage in other arts activities. Three of these buddies are regularly suspended and/or absent from school.

**Evidence of mentor engagement with ‘buddies’ (Aboriginal young people referred into the program)**

- Written evidence of engagement is recorded in individual mentor/buddy meeting schedules which outline the date and duration of each meeting; the activities completed; activities planned for the next meeting; and date and time of next scheduled meeting. This is signed off by the mentor and a *meenah mienne* staff member.
- Written evidence is also included in monthly mentorship updates which summarise the progress of each referred young person (including those who do not progress to a matched mentorship). These records indicate any issues arising and list actions to be taken by *meenah mienne* staff in the following month.
- In addition, case notes are kept to record buddies’ changing circumstances or other matters relevant to mentor engagement (for example, change in care or living arrangement).
- Quality of engagement is assessed through continual observation by *meenah mienne* staff; 4-weekly check-ins with partners regarding their relationship and progression of arts projects; and 3-monthly formal feedback meetings, recognition activities and written reports evaluating the progress of the mentorship. The 3 monthly reports will include specific feedback and assessment on arts skills development and achievements; training and employment planning; connection with community, culture and family; and mentoring relationship issues.
- There is visual evidence of mentor engagement throughout the *meenah mienne* centre, including painting designs on the studio walls, pottery sculptures on display, spears made by mentees and their mentors, and the design of the outdoor courtyard.
- Mentor engagement is regularly profiled and celebrated at launch events, seasonal get togethers (eg Christmas) and other community events.
- Mentor engagement is also evident in the Ashley School Artcards Project whereby one mentor worked with 12 Aboriginal students to create a series of artworks suitable for printing on postcards. This was a unique ‘hub mentoring’ opportunity which provided potential mentees with the opportunity to meet a mentor and to engage in art activities of the type that *meenah mienne* mentors offer. This project was supported by the Children and Youth Advisory Service.

*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

- In addition, *meenah mienne* mentors have engaged with potential mentees in Ashley to devise a forum theatre play based on drug and alcohol education. This project was supported by the National School Drug Education Strategy (Indigenous, Rural and Remote Initiative) and involved the Community Project Worker facilitating the creative production and presentation of the play and an associated education resource pack. The project is still running and was recently performed to *meenah mienne* mentees and their classmates from Brooks High School at the Tasmanian Elders Centre in Launceston.

**Examples of specific activities which focus on the development of life-skills, capacity and esteem building, and work skills**

- Apart from the specific arts skills developed by most buddies during their meetings with buddies (such as drawing, painting, sculpting, woodwork, writing, computer design, set design, traditional arts) which can lead to work skills as a professional or allied artist or educator, the nature of the positive role-modelling by mentors facilitates the building of positive self-esteem and esteem for culture and family. Mentors are encouraged to share aspect of their cultural knowledge and show respect and pride in their identity. This has lead to numerous opportunities for buddies to ask questions about culture and cultural practice.
- Life-skills are facilitated by the requirement that, with their mentors, the buddies prepare and put away the materials they use during their meetings. Life-skills are also facilitated by the expectation and encouragement that all buddies prepare their own drinks and snacks when at the centre and clean up after themselves.
- Capacity-building has been apparent in mentoring processes at *meenah mienne* which value young people making choices about their mentorships and their projects. All contact is supported by a *meenah mienne* workers' policy of placing the young person as much as possible at the centre of all decision-making and helping to build their capacity to make decisions and to lead their actions and those of others.
- A recent activity with the Brooks students included research on inspirational sayings and slogans of, for example, their favourite sports team. They were then encouraged by their mentors to develop their own inspirational sayings to paint on the walls of *meenah mienne*. This activity developed literacy skills, positive esteem-building and tapped into each young person's individual passions (such as sport) in a fulfilling and educative way.

**Details of contact with employment and other stakeholders for mentees**

- As indicated above, the community project worker has been in contact with employment service providers and has arranged to meet with other employment support agencies in Launceston to assist buddies to gain access to training and employment. Our difficulty so far has been in negotiating the changed field of employment service providers in the past few months and our focus on establishing mentor partnerships that are able to reach the stage of addressing training and employment goals and outcomes.
- Prior to significant recent changes in employment service provision, *meenah mienne* staff were also in contact with the former JPET and Centacare and other organizations with a former employment focus.
- Other contact with related stakeholders has included Youth Justice, Child Protection Services, Studentworx, Edzone, Connections, Break Free, Headspace, Tasmanian Elders

*Submission by meenah mienne to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*

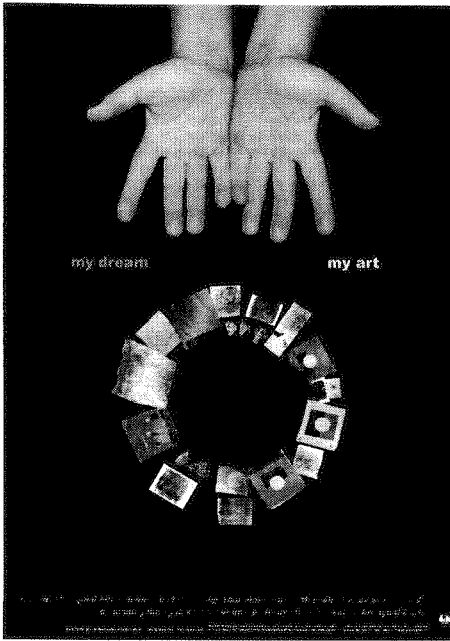
Centre, Aboriginal Education unit of the Department of Education, Arts Tasmania, Regional Arts Tasmania, University of Tasmania, Tasmania Museum, TasDance, Whitelion, Youth on Paterson, Ashley Youth Detention Centre, and Launceston public high schools and colleges.

**Summary of meenah mienne's program development to date**

In the first 18 months of this program, the coordinator and community project worker (each working a 3 day part-time week) have:

- Set up an office and standard office and communication procedures
- Sourced and purchased all office and arts workshop equipment
- Devised policies and procedures for the recruiting, screening, and matching of mentors
- Devised an appropriate training model for mentors in partnership with established mentoring organization, Whitelion
- Devised an appropriate referral process in consultation with key stakeholders and partner organizations
- Searched for and facilitated the leasing and move to a new premises
- Devised occupational health and safety policies and procedures for the premises (ongoing)
- Recruited 12 mentors
- Sourced and received 28 referrals as at December 2010. There is currently a waiting list.
- Established relationships with the mentors, buddies, various referring individuals, and each buddy's family (where appropriate).
- Consulted and networked with Aboriginal, youth work, social service, youth justice, employment, educational and arts organizations, and onward referred young people as required
- Developed collaborative project partnerships with Ashley Youth Detention Centre, Ashley School, Youth on Paterson, Whitelion, and Brooks High School
- Submitted and been awarded 3 major community-based grants worth a total of \$52,000 for allied program activity (such as artist-in-residences, school-based programs and communications strategies)
- Managed the above allied activities, including hiring of project staff, evaluation, reporting and celebration events
- Submitted applications for multi-year operational funding
- Participated in training and seminars in mentoring, first aid, drug and alcohol use, arts funding, and Aboriginal Health
- Reported to and maintained contact with funding bodies
- Hosted publicity and community events, such as the Opening, the community performance of the forum theatre project at the Tasmanian Elders Centre, and the Launceston Employment Showcase, the launch of artist-in-residence Vicki West's installation, seasonal get-togethers.
- Been commissioned by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to create a public work for its Hobart Office.
- Been commissioned by Colony 47 to create a public 3D mural for its new Launceston premises.
- Attended community events, youth service network meetings, other special events.





Attachment 1

# meenah mienne ('my dream')

## SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AGREEMENT

### Project Partners

- © Aboriginal community – Launceston region
- © Tasmanian Department of Health & Human Services
- © Tasmanian Department of Education
- © DEWHA/DEEWR/DoHA/FaHCSIA
- © Tasmanian Aboriginal Child Care Association

### Project Aim

Through arts-based mentoring, *meenah mienne* aims to foster confident cultural and community connections and better emotional health and wellbeing for young Aboriginal people at risk of, or in contact with the justice system.

### Project Description

A community-incubated project, *meenah mienne* operates from a Launceston shopfront premises and through outreach at high schools and the Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC). Spanning a range of cultural and artistic media, the project matches Aboriginal artists and young people in mentor/buddy relationships. Group mentoring and workshops are offered, in addition to training for mentors.

The project provides assisted pathways for young Aboriginal people to education and employment, in addition to referrals to other service providers. It also provides a space for community members to model good leadership and raises the profile of Aboriginal arts and culture.

### Evidence of Success

- © 18 buddies referred
- © 12 Mentors recruited
- © Awarded \$52,000 further grant funds
- © Artist in Residence program employs professional Aboriginal artists
- © AYDC Artcards project: 12 participants produced 11 cards and 3 bookmarks for commercial sale
- © Forum Theatre Project: 5 AYDC residents collaborated with mentors in producing a play for performance at Brooks High School, AYDC and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Elders Council

### Project Outcomes

- © Enhanced arts and cultural skills-base amongst young Aboriginal people
- © A welcoming community space
- © Improved self-esteem, communication skills, willingness to participate in decision-making, planning for the future
- © Positive relationships with older people in the community and enhanced sense of belonging for young people
- © Supportive networks within the community including young people, mentors, community people and service providers
- © Improved perception by mentors of their personal value and place in the community

### Closing the Gap Targets

- ✓ At least halve the gap for indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020
- ✓ Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade

### Building Blocks

- ✓ Schooling
- ✓ Economic Participation
- ✓ Safe Communities

"meenah mienne (ME-nah me-EN-ne)  
working to bring Aboriginal young  
people and artists together to share time,  
tell stories and make really deadly art"

### Box 4.12.2 'Things that work'— Culturally appropriate justice practices

The Meenah Mienne project in Tasmania brings together at-risk Aboriginal young people and Aboriginal artists to prevent crime and provide care for young people in detention. The project achieves its aims through mentoring and supported arts pathways to education and employment. Activities have included: setting up a community arts centre in Launceston; accepting referrals; facilitating matches between young people and mentor-artists and conducting arts skills workshops.

Outcomes include: Improvements in the emotional health, wellbeing and self-esteem of Aboriginal young people; and positive perceptions of cultural identity and networks of kinship and community belonging (Tasmanian Government, unpublished).



I  
C  
C  
  
T  
A  
S  
M  
A  
N  
I  
A



G  
O  
O  
D

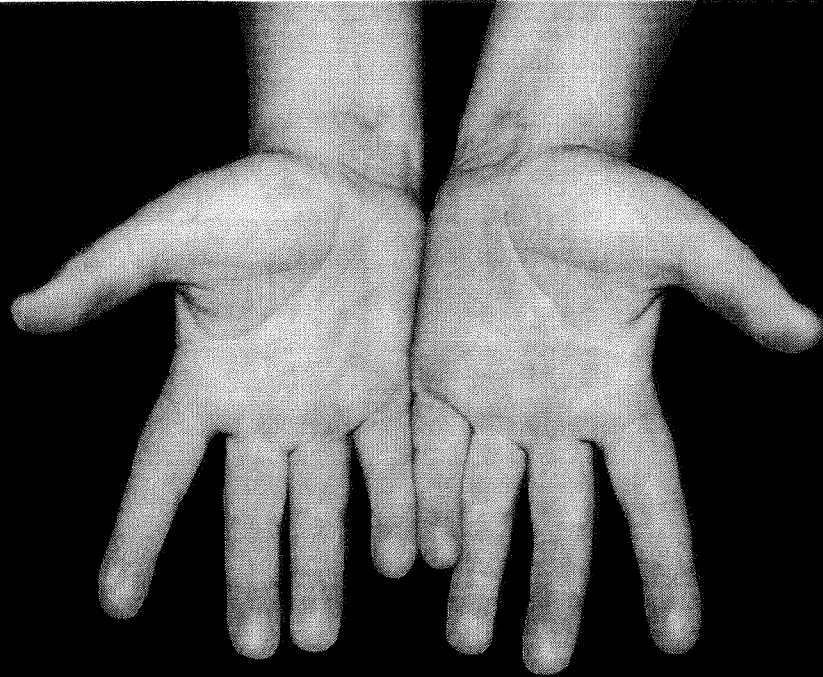
N  
E  
W  
S

S  
T  
O  
R  
Y



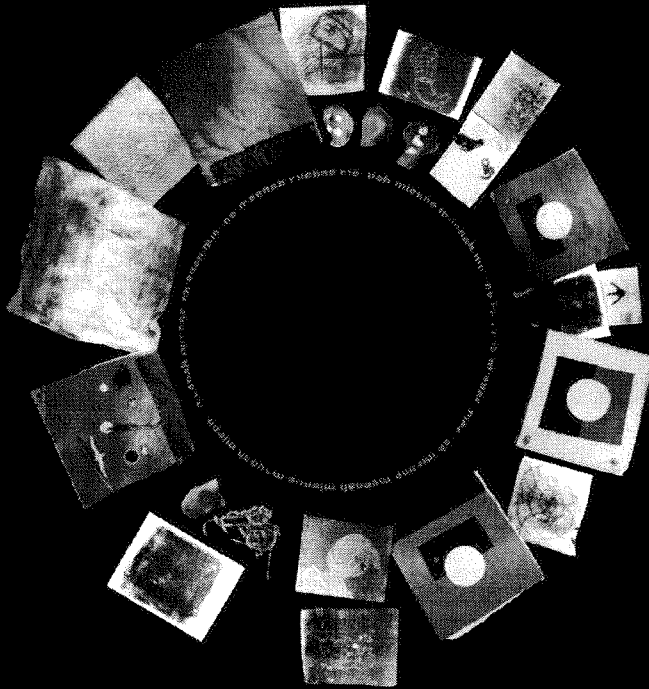
I  
C  
C

T  
A  
S  
M  
A  
N  
I  
A



my dream

my art



*For the Aboriginal artist mentors and the young Aboriginal artists, Meenah Mienne was a proud, passionate journey down the cultural pathway towards identity through the arts*

Meenah Mienne was proudly supported by the Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts and the Department of Health and Human Services. Many thanks go to all Meenah Mienne participants, to the young artists Dean, Josh, Leeland and Jade and to their artist mentors Phoebe Pickford, Vicki West, Della Summers, Ruth Langford and Alan Macken for their guidance, energy and inspiration.





Submission by *meenah mienne* to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system

**ATTACHMENT 2**

**Detailed Project Objectives, Performance Measures and Outcomes**

**Project title: Building Literacy Through Art and Business**

**Goal:** Improvement in prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills among Aboriginal young people, their mentors and families through the community-led establishment of a sustainable, integrated, business arm to *meenah mienne*'s mentoring program.

**Objective 1:** To provide a meaningful, real-life context for enquiry-based learning activities that encourage young people to improve prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills.

Activity	Performance Measures and Milestones	Outcomes
Establish a community-led, community-based arts business to market and sell original art.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project staff of coordinator and administrative assistant to begin on three year contracts by February 15, 2010.</li> <li>• Business consultant and design consultant to be contracted each year by February 28 (one month later in 2010, first year of set-up)</li> <li>• 20 participants to be registered in the project each year (40% in Target Group 1 – Aboriginal young people 15-25; 40% in Target Group 2 – Aboriginal young people under 15 disengaged or at risk of disengagement from formal schooling; 20% in Target Group 3 – Aboriginal community members/mentors/families). <i>*Note – each year may include a different cohort of participants.</i></li> <li>• Annual business plans completed by registered participants by March each year (one month later in 2010, first year set-up).</li> <li>• Provision of a market stall staffed by project</li> </ul>	Short term <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in participants' knowledge and skills in making and implementing business plans.</li> <li>• Improvement in participants' level of skill in prioritizing and completing tasks and reaching goals.</li> <li>• Improvement in participants' level of self-esteem in reaching goals and seeing their work sold.</li> </ul> Long term <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More positive networks of kinship through activity-based mentoring and collaborative planning and goals.</li> <li>• Contribution to the lowering of offending and re-offending rates of Aboriginal young people through meaningful and development diversionary activity.</li> <li>• Increased community capacity to sustain a social enterprise.</li> <li>• Growth in Tasmania's vibrant arts and tourism industries.</li> </ul>

Submission by *meenah mienne* to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system

	<p>participants at each of the following markets at least once by the end of 2010: Home Spun market (Launceston), Evandale market, Deloraine craft market, and Salamanca market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 'website cart' on the <i>meenah mienne</i> website designed and managed by project participants by November 2011.</li> <li>• An exhibition planned and managed by project participants promoting sales of <i>meenah mienne</i> participants by November 2012.</li> <li>• Compliance as a registered trading business auspiced by TACCA with the State of Tasmania by November 2010.</li> <li>• National recognition as registered Australian Indigenous arts business through listings on national arts and indigenous organizations databases by November 2010.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth in Australia's mass and international reputation for innovative indigenous arts and cultural industries.</li> </ul>
<p>Develop individual enquiry-based literacy learning pathways for participants which may be based on one or all of the following activities within the business: researching and writing business plans; researching and communicating aspects of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture and art; writing project schedules; writing and designing catalogues and advertising materials;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All participants to complete literacy skills testing by March 31 (one month later in 2010) and December 31 each year.</li> <li>• All participants to have individualized plans and learning pathway goals within the project documented by April 30 each year.</li> <li>• 60% of project participants to demonstrate improvement in skills testing results each December.</li> <li>• 50% of post-compulsory school aged participants to achieve Grade 10 minimum equivalent literacy standard OR to be re-engaged in a formal education or training pathway by the end of the three year project.</li> </ul>	<p>Short Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in participants' literacy and numeracy levels.</li> <li>• Improvement in participants' levels of social skills and work-ready skills.</li> <li>• Professional public interface for the <i>meenah mienne</i> program.</li> <li>• Creative, well-written documents sharing information about Tasmanian Aboriginal culture with the wider public.</li> </ul> <p>Long Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing opportunities for social and economic participation for disadvantaged young people.</li> <li>• Contribution to increased community capacity in literacy, numeracy and business development.</li> </ul>

Submission by *meenah mienne* to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system

publishing websites; communicating with the public at markets, on the internet, and in the gallery; managing money; working collaboratively with others; evaluating and writing reports.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive representation and perception of Aboriginal cultural identity.</li> <li>• Increased feelings of self-worth and community esteem through individual and group achievements.</li> </ul>
--	--	---

**Objective 2:** To integrate a focus on literacy development and assessment into *meenah mienne*'s current program in partnership with the Department of Education and other government and non-government youth service providers.

Activity	Performance Measures	Outcomes
Engage the services of a seconded teacher from the Dept of Education for ongoing advice, support and assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seconded teacher to be contracted by February 28, 2010.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three year committed partnership with the Department of Education.</li> </ul>
Construct a learning and assessment framework for the business development activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher in consultation with staff to develop a concise, plain-English learning framework document which articulates the 'what', 'how' and 'when' of skills learning and assessment by April 30, 2010.</li> <li>• Teacher to evaluate and revise framework document annually according to the differing business focus each year.</li> <li>• Teacher to plan and implement skills tests and assessments for participants of compulsory school age.</li> <li>• Teacher to liaise with RTO (if required) on skills testing and assessment for post-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust and rigorous learning processes and assessments.</li> <li>• Increased professionalism and commitment around <i>meenah mienne</i>'s aim to support young people to re-engage with learning pathways.</li> <li>• A bench-mark for integrated community-based, culturally-appropriate, and educationally-sound activities which can become model for other organizations.</li> </ul>

Submission by *meenah mienne* to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system

	compulsory school age.	
Train mentors and staff in ways to support literacy learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training sessions with mentors and staff conducted quarterly each year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased level of community leadership, skills-base and empowerment.</li> <li>• Increased confidence in mentors through experience of being trained and supported.</li> </ul>
Create key stakeholder partnerships with AYDC School and a Registered Training Provider to deliver assessment services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memorandum of Understanding to completed with AYDC/Dept of Education by June 2010.</li> <li>• Memorandum of Understanding to be completed with an RTO by June 2010.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More formalized partnerships with key stakeholders.</li> <li>• Improved network and support for meenah mienne in youth services and youth justice sectors.</li> </ul>

**Objective 3:** To establish a community-led social enterprise that is sustainable beyond the life of the Tasmania Community Fund grant provision.

Activity	Performance Measures	Outcomes
Research other models and bench-marks for social enterprises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact made with at least 2 other with model social enterprises (such as Speak Out in Brisbane) by December 2010.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased professional support and sense of professional community for staff.</li> <li>• Increased promotion of the project nationally.</li> <li>• Increased rigour for the program through effective bench-marking.</li> </ul>
Make the business financially viable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate increasing annual sales of artwork.</li> <li>• Complete a final business plan (by participants in consultation with business consultant, meenah mienne advisory group, and staff) which demonstrates how business returns might enable the continued employment of staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased long-term opportunities and benefits for the growth of the project and meenah mienne generally.</li> <li>• The creation of work in the business beyond government subsidy.</li> </ul>
Explore further funding options to support the social enterprise aims of the projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one application annually to other relevant funding programs to support social enterprise development, professional networking, and professional development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access to resources to fully meet desired outcomes and attain long-term benefits.</li> </ul>

Submission by *maenah miernne* to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system

<p>Fully document the process and conduct robust evaluation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contract an external evaluator by July 2012 for completion of evaluation report by December 31.</li><li>• Engage volunteers and seconded students from arts and social science faculties of University of Tasmania by March 31 each year to observe and document the project.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A well-researched and thoroughly evaluated project which becomes the model for others and provides the foundation for sustainability.</li><li>• Stronger partnerships with University of Tasmania and Launceston's community of volunteers.</li></ul>
--	---	---

Submission by *meenah miene* to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the high levels of involvement by Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system