

# Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education  
References Committee

## **Inquiry into indigenous training and employment outcomes**

---

**Submission no:** 4

**Received:** 18/06/2004

**Submitter:** Mr Tim Schinkel

**Organisation:**

**Address:** PO Box 2191  
PALMERSTON NT 0831

**Phone:** 08 8988 2047

**Fax:**

**Email:** [timschinkel@yahoo.com](mailto:timschinkel@yahoo.com)

---

*Contents*

Core Training Issues.....page 2  
Specialised Training Issues.....page 4  
Rural and Remote Communities.....page 5  
Management of Indigenous Communities.....page 6  
Conclusion.....page 7

## Core Training

The core training provisions of our CDEP are within the area of driver training (C class licenses, mini-bus licenses, fork lift tickets etc) and first aid certificates. Organising and managing these training events reveals our first problem, poor attendance and a 'laissez faire' attitude.

There is a pervading attitude within CDEP participants that training is a service which can be switched on and off. Government funds pay for training, participants are paid to attend training (training contributes to CDEP hours) and they are driven to and from training venues (even within urban areas). And yet,

- participants do not turn up at pick ups for training (no warning or advance notice nor any later apology or explanation),
- they turn up intoxicated or inadequately prepared
- they disappear mid-way through a course or do not complete

There is no pressure on them to attend or succeed because they know there is no penalty system and they will have another chance to attend (or not attend) similar training in the future.

I often ask participants how much they think the training they are attending has cost and they are stunned when I tell them; yet many will refuse to pay (for example) eighteen dollars for a learner's license.

I have worked within enough culturally diverse environments to know that this is not a problem of 'cultural differences' or of having to apply 'ethnic sensitivity'. And I have spoken to enough responsible and motivated aboriginals to realise that this negative behaviour is part of an increasing trend by a generation that has been reared on state benefits. Were CentreLink to offer the training arrangements I have outlined above to non-indigenous people I have no doubt there would be similar abuses and problems. This is not a problem of race or culture but of systems.

There are embargoes and penalties which individual CDEPs can introduce but we are essentially toothless tigers and the participants know this.

The introduction of an end date (ie a fixed time period) for CDEP participants in urban areas would be a step towards remedying this situation. The problem would not stop over night but at least ongoing training expenses would be minimised with participants beginning to regard training opportunities with more respect. An end date would also stop participants regarding CDEP as an easily manipulated 'soft option' upon which they have to neither look for alternative work nor improve themselves.

## **Specialised Training**

As a CDEP committed to education and training we encourage our participants to embark upon 'education pathways' and work closely with our local university, accessing recurrently funded training courses for our participants.

Many begin at certificate I or II level which poses no problem. However, at certificate III and above we encounter a 'glass ceiling' in the form of the administrative charges that are accrued for each contact hour of a course. For a business certificate III course this totals around \$480 which is a sizeable (if not insurmountable) obstacle for someone earning \$217 a week.

I would like to encourage more participants to go past the Cert IV level and undertake diplomas or degrees because this would provide positive role models for the community and skilled, educated indigenous workers for the economy. But, as the student progresses these charges become more formidable whilst the work opportunities the training provides do not rise in a similar manner.

Again, this is a situation which is not exclusive to indigenous people but as a hugely under-represented group in further and higher education it represents a hurdle to those who are bright and committed. It is these bright and committed people who we must be fostering and nurturing rather than penalising with increased fees as they progress.

Action must be taken by individual universities to address this situation if they are serious about getting aboriginal people into the higher levels of TAFE never mind academia.

## **Rural and Remote Communities**

Our CDEP straddles both urban and rural areas and the problems faced by both are very different. Some of the urban issues have been addressed above.

However, on rural and remote communities (RRC) there appear to be issues of direction. Those communities which are succeeding are those which have identified a single enterprise and have focused upon this 'core business' to make it a success before then using it as a springboard for further 'satellite' enterprises.

For example, one of our CDEP RRCs has focused upon weeds management; beginning with small council contracts it is now winning larger state contracts. We are now initiating a food services program which will provide lunches for the weeds workers; it is hoped that later down the track this will then branch out into other areas of food preparation such as ceremonial functions, sporting occasions etc.

This is the structure used by Kibbutzim in Israel and as someone who worked for a year on a Kibbutz (a community linked by religion) I believe the Kibbutz model should be studied by this enquiry and used by RRCs (communities linked by ethnicity).

To identify a sustainable and ingenious business idea before then proceeding with a strategic plan requires vision and training beyond the resources found on most RRCs (and sadly in short supply in mainstream Australia as well). As such I believe the government should be looking beyond national and regional boundaries, thinking outside the square and consulting creative thinkers.

The managing of such development projects would require further outside assistance and despite the supporters of self-determination the fact is that (at least here in the Territory) there are not enough indigenous people with the necessary skills, abilities and education to fill current managerial vacancies.

## **Management of Indigenous Organisations**

The policy of self-determination is not working and the dismantling of ATSIC is undoubtedly a positive move. From discussions with colleagues and peers and from my own experience issues of nepotism, corruption and incompetence appear to be widespread throughout urban indigenous organisations.

Due to the lack of qualified and experienced candidates for middle and senior management positions there now exists a coterie of 'leaders' who are in their mid-to-late twenties on the strength of their 'aboriginality'. These managers are on generous salary packages and enjoy ostentatious shows of wealth and influence; unfortunately they are less comfortable with planning, strategy, motivation or leadership, instead adopting dictatorial approaches and perpetuating family or 'political' feuds. They base their performance on the 'management behaviour' they see on film and television and are unaware of what a manager actually *does*.

They have achieved their position through family ties, connections, favouritism or simply because they are the best of a bad bunch. Either way there is no drive towards quality, improvement or positive achievement; actual work is done by trainees or the never-ending round of assistants whose positions are financed by government funds. These people see the behaviour of their managers as the role model to work towards, they are offered a more senior position and the cycle begins again.

Indigenous managers need to be properly qualified to comparable industry standards, whilst organisations should take notice of the market forces which drive private enterprise and embrace the demands and disciplines of successful NGO's. All indigenous organisations must become slimmer, streamlined and far, far more efficient by being managed with genuine skill and talent regardless of ethnicity.