

Report

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2011

Report of the workshops on Supporting livelihoods and small businesses

Identifying clever ways of creating and
supporting better livelihoods for desert
Australia

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The Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (2003–2010) was an unincorporated joint venture with 28 partners whose mission was to develop and disseminate an understanding of sustainable living in remote desert environments, deliver enduring regional economies and livelihoods based on Desert Knowledge, and create the networks to market this knowledge in other desert lands.

Foreword

The role businesses play in an economy is widely recognised. In desert communities, they are critical for providing goods, services and employment for desert residents. Over the years, various governments have initiated programs to support businesses with varying success. However, we cannot keep creating new initiatives without thoroughly understanding which ones work and why.

Researchers at the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, in an attempt to understand how best to support desert businesses, have been looking at what programs and initiatives are available, what works and the important ingredients to make them work.

This report presents highlights of Supporting Livelihoods and Small Business in Desert Australia workshops, held as a part of the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre's DesertBiz™ project. The aim of DesertBiz™ is to find out how small businesses and business networks can effectively deliver livelihoods for desert people.

We describe key themes that emerged from the initiatives presented in the workshops, and key elements of their success. We discuss major gaps in service delivery of the initiatives, what inhibits their success and key opportunities for supporting desert businesses. We hope that the report contributes valuable information about the range of initiatives available and the strategic approaches that could improve the success of these programs for desert people.

Jan Ferguson

Managing Director, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre





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Executive summary

DesertBiz™ researchers held a series of workshops on supporting livelihoods and small business in desert Australia. The key theme of the workshops was ‘Identifying clever ways of creating and supporting businesses and better livelihoods for desert Australia’. The aim of the workshops was to identify government programs and initiatives that work, understand why some programs worked well and others were less successful, and identify factors that are likely to make them work better.

Researchers invited government agencies, industry bodies and organisations operating in the desert to participate in the workshops. The workshops were held by the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre’s project DesertBiz™. The aim of DesertBiz™ is to find out how small businesses and business networks can effectively deliver livelihoods for desert people.

The workshops were held in Adelaide, Alice Springs, Brisbane, Canberra and Perth. The objectives were to:

1. find out about the initiatives by industry, government, companies, and organisations operating in desert regions in Australia that aim to enhance economic development and deliver livelihoods for desert residents
2. identify the challenges that inhibit effective businesses and livelihoods of desert residents
3. identify possible solutions to improve livelihoods for desert residents
4. foster networking among program providers and workshop participants.

The key themes that emerged from initiatives profiled in the workshops included:

- the diversity of initiatives by various government departments
- the confusing processes and departments for customers
- the philosophical conflict between economic and social development
- the key ingredients for success in establishing and operating micro- and small businesses
- the opportunities that arise from skills shortages
- the importance of programs that focus on cultural change and foster independence
- the role of effective networking.

We found that the scope and nature of government initiatives are diverse, perhaps in response to the many desert contexts. However, links between the initiatives seem weak (or in some cases, non-existent). They operate discretely, generally with limited time frames, and are often ‘pilot’ projects.

The myriad of programs, initiatives, personnel and resources can be confusing for business owners, so getting timely support for business development can be a challenge.

There was also concern about the potential philosophical conflict between economic versus social development. Workshop participants recognise that economic development is the key driver to self-sufficiency for desert Australians, but unique cultural and family conditions can affect a business’s economic sustainability. These cultural and family elements have potential to both enhance and inhibit this economic success.

A consistent theme across all workshops was that economic sustainability in the desert is more challenging. This means expecting a better outcome for desert businesses is inappropriate.

Participants agreed that what is perhaps missing to take advantage of emerging opportunities are initiatives that focus on cultural change, encourage independence, and demonstrate that they understand the realities of commercial contexts. This is a significant challenge, particularly in remote contexts, where there is little access to new ideas or possibilities. However, all participants agreed that the ‘status quo’ is not an acceptable option and that it is important to find new ways of working to get better outcomes.

Participants identified three key elements of successful initiatives:

- the attitude of the participants – both service providers and customers (individuals, community, businesses and governments)
- the resources available
- the processes involved.

Getting these three elements right can go a long way to ensure the success of government initiatives.

Participants said government perspectives need to be more inclusive, and take into account attitudes from community and the broader society. There is a clear desire to work together more and concentrate more on client needs. It can take a long time for projects to have an impact, so projects need to have realistic, long time frames and adequate resources.

Finally, research, monitoring and evaluation were identified as important. Participants said that it is critical to monitor and review programs and initiatives so they can be continually improved.

1. Introduction

Programs and initiatives geared towards promoting business and increasing employment come and go – some as fast as the change in governments. Although the performance of some programs has been abysmal, others have had large, positive impacts and changed people’s lives. In these tough economic times, it is crucial to sort through these programs, identify which ones work and what makes them work.

Why are some programs successful and others less so? What are the critical factors that programs need to be most beneficial for desert people? It is in this context that the workshops on supporting livelihoods and small business in desert Australia were conceived by the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC).

In this report we outline the key findings from a series of workshops held around Australia as part of the DKCRC’s DesertBiz™ research. The workshops were held in Adelaide (South Australia [SA]), Alice Springs (Northern Territory [NT]), Brisbane (Queensland), Perth (Western Australia [WA]) and Canberra (Australian Capital Territory).

Researchers wanted to use the workshops to:

- better understand the nature of initiatives (business, government and community) operating in desert regions of Australia which either deliver a livelihood for desert residents or have the potential to do so
- identify successful initiatives and the elements that determine their success
- identify the challenges that inhibit the effective livelihoods of desert residents
- look for possible solutions to improve livelihoods for desert residents
- give business owners, program providers and desert residents a chance to network.

2. Background

The DesertBiz™ project was one of the DKCRC’s core research projects. The DesertBiz™ project aimed to understand and seek solutions to overcome constraints of businesses in remote areas, and to make small businesses more resilient, profitable and able to engage with the wider economy. The purpose of the project was to understand how small businesses and small business networks can more effectively give desert people livelihoods based on natural and cultural resources and service delivery, in ways that are environmentally sound and socially appropriate.

There were three areas of DesertBiz™ research – these workshops were part of the audit area. One of the aims of the audit research was to give insights about the industry sector profiles of desert businesses. Another aim was to identify successful initiatives produced by government agencies, industry, companies, non-government organisations (NGOs) and small businesses. These initiatives aim to:

- increase employment and improve economic development in desert areas
- create opportunities for livelihoods
- develop skills and give support needed by individuals, employers and businesses
- attract and retain staff in remote desert communities.

It is important to note the context in which these workshops occurred. The ‘landscape’ of desert Australia was experiencing a turning point because of a range of factors, including:

- the demise of the Australian and Torres Strait Island Commission
- the NT Intervention strategy implemented by the Howard government early in 2007
- the 2007 election of a new federal government, the subsequent national apology to the stolen

generations ('Sorry' statement) by the Prime Minister, including stated targets to halve gaps in:

- life expectancy
 - child mortality
 - literacy and numeracy
 - employment
 - four-year-olds' access to education
 - Year 12 schooling retention
- the demise of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program, which was a very important employment strategy in desert communities.

These factors mean the workshops were timely – participants were seeking effective strategies for economic development in remote regions of Australia. They also wanted to move towards closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, and many Aboriginal Australians live in our desert regions.

3. Objectives

The main objectives of the workshops were to identify:

5. government programs and initiatives that aim to support livelihoods and small business in desert regions
6. successful and less successful programs
7. challenges that inhibit effective livelihoods for desert residents
8. possible solutions and strategic approaches to improve businesses and livelihoods for desert residents.

4. Approach

Researchers were committed to making DesertBiz™ a stakeholder-driven project. To do this, they wanted to hear the views of their partners and stakeholders: business owners, community leaders, Aboriginal people, agency workers, government staff, local employees and more. The series of workshops was held to identify initiatives and opportunities for livelihoods and business development.

Five workshops were held across Australia in:

1. Adelaide (SA)
2. Alice Springs (NT)
3. Brisbane (Queensland)
4. Perth (WA)
5. Canberra (Australian Capital Territory).

States with significant desert areas were chosen for the workshops, plus Canberra (which gave an opportunity to engage federal government departments). A workshop was organised for Sydney (New South Wales), but because of the low response rate from invitees, researchers did not hold this workshop, and instead asked respondents to attend the Canberra or Brisbane workshop.

Representatives of federal and state government departments, industry bodies and other desert organisations were invited to attend the workshops. Participants totalled 48, representing 36 government departments and organisations. A full list of participants is included in Appendix 1.

In each workshop, participants gave a 10-minute presentation about their organisation, their objectives, the scope of their work, key programs geared towards supporting businesses and livelihoods in desert areas and the lessons learned. These presentations set the scene for the ensuing workshop discussions. The rest of the workshop sessions were spent brainstorming and discussing three key areas:

1. opportunities for livelihoods and enterprise development in desert regions
2. main issues, and current and future challenges facing small business development in the desert
3. possible solutions and actions to solve these challenges.

The following section presents the proceedings of the workshops, highlighting some of the government programs and initiatives presented during the each workshop. It is evident that there are many initiatives to support the development of desert livelihoods across Australia. The summary below is by no means a comprehensive list of government programs; rather, it is a selection of the programs and initiatives presented in the workshops and the lessons people have learned from them.

5. Government programs and initiatives

5.1 Canberra workshop

5.1.1 Presentations

The workshop in Canberra was held at the Australian National University. Nine organisations were represented by a total of 11 participants. Seven federal government agencies and departments presented, including:

- Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE)
- Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)
- Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), which is a statutory authority within FaHCSIA
- Department of Energy, Resources and Tourism
- Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
- Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

The purpose and main programs of each organisation is outlined below.



ABARE forecasts about commodities, does applied economic research and analyses Australia's rural and mining industries and the management of its natural resources. It provides economic research, briefings and consulting to policy makers, farmers and miners. Its programs tend to be focused on macro-economic issues in agriculture and trade, climate change and the environment, productivity, fisheries, and resources and energy. Caring for our Country is one of ABARE's major projects. The project integrates the previous Natural Heritage Trust, National Landcare Program, the Environmental Stewardship Program and

the Working on Country Indigenous land and sea ranger program (see <http://www.nrm.gov.au>). The Australian Government has approved more than \$403 million in Caring for our Country funding for a wide range of organisations to undertake environmental and sustainable farming projects.

FaHCSIA's purpose is to improve the lives of Australians by creating economic and social participation opportunities for individuals, families and communities (see <<http://www.facs.gov.au/about/overview/Pages/default.aspx>>). The department wants to create greater alliances in economic, social and community engagement for four groups of people:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- seniors, people with disabilities, carers and young people
- families and children
- strong and resilient communities.

The first group is particularly relevant for DKCRC's DesertBiz™ project – greater alliance and engagement of Aboriginal Australians. There are two areas within FaHCSIA that play a government coordination role: Indigenous Affairs and the Office of Women. Most of FaHCSIA's work in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people relates to closing the gaps mentioned in Council of Australian Government (COAG) targets. For example, in December 2007 COAG announced its intention to close the life expectancy gap within a generation; to halve the gap in numeracy and literacy levels within 10 years; and to halve the child mortality rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within 10 years. In March 2008 there were further targets: halve the gap in employment outcomes within 10 years, halve the gap in four-year-olds' participation in early-childhood education in remote areas within five years and reducing the gap in Year 12 student retention. FaHCSIA has a number of programs that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. The Office of Indigenous Policy and Coordination (OIPC) operates a 'whole-of-government' network of Indigenous Coordination Centres to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to customise and shape government investment and service delivery, including through negotiated Regional Partnership Agreements and Shared Responsibility Agreements. As well, there are strategic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing and accommodation infrastructure programs which target remote communities in the NT and are administered by the NT government. Part of the program is using local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment for construction and maintenance. There is also the Northern Territory Emergency Response. The Northern Territory Emergency Response is part of the government's wider strategy to close the gap in life expectancy, education, health and employment outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Finally, the CDEP program is very relevant to desert businesses. The CDEP program aims to help unemployed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to develop skills and improve their work readiness. This will help them move into employment outside of the CDEP program and to meet community needs. The overall aim is to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to achieve economic independence.

IBA helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to engage in the wider economy and to build their assets through economic development. IBA works closely with the private sector and local community groups to foster economic independence and home ownership among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. This is a 'whole-of-Government' objective (see <<http://www.iba.gov.au>>). IBA has four main programs:

- IBA Homes
- IBA Partnerships
- IBA Investments
- IBA Enterprises.

IBA Homes, established in 1975, is about providing concessional home loans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

IBA Partnerships, also established in 2005, supports IBA's vision of increasing the economic independence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It commissions, participates in, and funds research to identify additional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic participation opportunities for IBA. It also builds collaborative relationships with government, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and with the private sector.

IBA Investments invests about \$1 million to build joint ventures and private sector and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships. IBA Enterprises is of most interest to the DesertBiz™ project because it provides micro-finance through concessional loans and start-up business support. The program is geared towards helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians succeed in business and bridging a gap in private sector funding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access. Each business proposal put to IBA Enterprises needs to demonstrate commercial viability.

The purpose of the Department of Energy, Resources and Tourism is to provide advice and policy support to the Australian Government about Australia's resource, energy and tourism sectors. The department develops and delivers policies to increase Australia's international competitiveness. These policies are consistent with the principles of environmental responsibility and sustainable development (see <<http://www.ret.gov.au/Department/about/Pages/AboutUs.aspx>>). Tourism Australia, a statutory authority, is of particular interest to DesertBiz™ because it promotes travelling through Australia as a tourism destination or journey (and Australia generally). The Indigenous Tourism web portal (see <<http://www.indigenoustourism.australia.com>>) is a rich source of information about starting and running a business, including possible funding sources to help ensure the owner's and business's readiness.

The purpose of the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science and Research is to encourage the sustainable growth of Australian industries. It is doing this by developing a national innovation system that drives knowledge creation, cutting-edge science and research, international competitiveness and greater productivity (see <<http://www.innovation.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>>). The department suggested that a \$251 million fund for the Enterprise Connect Initiative may be relevant to the desert business group. The Enterprise Connect Initiative has manufacturing centres and innovation centres. The innovation centres research clean technology, creative industries, defence industry, innovative regions, manufacturing, resources technology and remote enterprise.. The launch of the \$10 million Enterprise Connect Remote Enterprise Centre in Alice Springs in December 2008 could boost business to outback tourism, Aboriginal arts, carbon trading, land management, livestock, and manufacturing. Remote enterprises are seen as particularly important to the NT economy, given the state's challenges of climate, isolation, staffing and infrastructure.

The Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy is developing a world-class communications and information technology sector for Australia (see <<http://www.dbcde.gov.au>>). A program of particular interest to DesertBiz™ was Backing Indigenous Ability (part of the \$1.1 billion Connect Australia funding). The program was introduced in March 2006 and aimed to deliver a comprehensive package for telephones, Internet and videoconferencing to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander radio and television. A new \$30 million Indigenous Communications Program, introduced with the change of government, begins in 2009–10 to help improve communications services in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This program replaces and expands the Backing Indigenous Ability telecommunications program. The program will:

- install a fixed or mobile satellite public community telephone to around 300 remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that do not currently have access one
- monitor and maintain around 550 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community telephones (comprising around 300 new phones and 250 existing phones)
- give public Internet access and deliver computer training in up to 120 remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that have limited or no public access to Internet facilities (in collaboration with state and territory governments).

The importance of telephone and Internet connections for remote and very remote business networking and sales cannot be underestimated for future opportunities.



The programs presented by government agencies range from general, as at ABARE, to specific, as at IBA. All are relevant, but some clearly have more relevance to the operations of business, while others are more relevant to the policy framework within which desert businesses operate.

The desert is characterised by variable climatic conditions, low economic productivity, a sparse and mobile population, and long distances to markets and suppliers (Stafford Smith 2008). Desert businesses have to make the most of opportunities that come their way, and capitalise on the

desert's unique context. Support programs that are available to desert communities range from programs specifically targeted towards outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities, to programs applicable to all people in remote and very remote areas in Australia, whether desert-based or not.

5.1.2 Critical success factors and strategies for more effective programs

After their presentations, participants discussed factors critical to the success of their organisations, programs or initiatives, as well as the gaps, and inhibitors to success. They then had a discussion and brainstorming session to think of strategies to meet the gaps, and how to design and implement more effective programs.

Table 1 summarises the participants' ideas of critical success factors, gaps and inhibitors to success. Table 2 gives their identified strategies for more effective programs.

Defining a successful program depends on each program's purpose, expected outcomes, format and who runs it. However, certain traits seem to characterise successful programs:

1. People need to know that the programs to help desert business are there. It can be hard to find out about the programs, so each program has to have a strategy to communicate its presence.
2. It needs to be recognised that some businesses do not exist just to make money. Each business has a purpose, and its purpose might be to maintain and enhance social capital in the desert communities rather than to maximise profit.
3. It is very important to network between remote (and very remote) areas and the metropolitan areas where demand for products will mostly come from. It is also important to network with suppliers and funding bodies, such as IBA. Networking also involves a 'coming together' of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to mentor, coach and encourage the seed of Aboriginal businesses to blossom. This will happen through education, advice, professional development, training, the transfer of ideas, communication technologies and quality of life (appropriate standards of living in housing, education, medical services, defence and welfare).
4. As illustrated by IBA Business Enterprises, businesses need to break even at best, or provide a return on the cost of their monetary capital and be commercially viable.
5. When funds are entrusted to a desert business by financiers or government initiatives and programs, there needs to be accountability for those funds.
6. Individuals need to take responsibility for action and accountability, rather than relying on shared responsibility, which can lead to no-one taking responsibility.

Table 1: Critical success factors and gaps/inhibitors of program success (Canberra workshop)

Critical success factors	Gaps/inhibitors to success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a recognised desire/need for change from within government, communities and general public • communities' needs are self-driven; communities have a state of readiness, governance and resourcefulness • local knowledge, region-specific and 'in' country • flexibility: for example, IBA changing the indicators of success. Context is understood and adapted to as change occurs • gaps are being identified and planned for • accepting and using information technology as basic infrastructure • good school attendance—performance improvement is a critical starting point and leads to increased choice • networking among community, enterprises and agencies • coordinated roles, which leads to a multiplier effect • seizing opportunities, using assets, identifying and capitalising on comparative advantages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of security; for example, access to finance, starting a business, financial flexibility • models being imported, not adapted, to the local situation; this leads to lack of flexibility, lack of process to engage, ensure ownership and top-down models • lack of coordination across agencies and business, lots of people acting in isolation, a lack of understanding of what programs are on offer, large size of public service, remoteness, poor communication • lack of recipient point of view – and the current perception is that the process of accessing programs is overwhelming • poor education, numeracy, literacy and communication • challenging natural environment – extremes of temperature, lack of water, lack of understanding of the environment and impact • lack of resources and poor use of resources; high resource use means high risk projects • the welfare culture, humbugging, poor incentive structures • finding creative ways to overcome remoteness using logistics, managing information and using information technologies • difficulty in applying for and evaluating projects; plain simple language versus complicated legal requirements • business imperatives versus cultural issues; commercial enterprise versus environment and culture. • negative stereotypes – myths, lack of good stories and lack of role models

Table 2: Strategies for effective program design and implementation (Canberra workshop)

Desired outcome	Strategy
Demands are met (assistance useful)	improve coordination of strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify critical stakeholders, consult and have realistic lead times for new initiatives • ensure there is a key leader/driver • get commitment to participate
	look at delivery – it has to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • method, process and feedback • localised, flexible but accountable • scheduling/timetabling • good partnerships/relationships • equal contributions • clear lines of accountability
Business risk is reduced	nurture local leadership
	develop a media strategy with good stories, positive role models and mentor programs
	underwrite the risk – for example, create equitable partnerships
	give managerial/operational training
	build infrastructure
	build and promote expertise
	share the risk and accept that there will be failure
Capital development and social infrastructure is sustainable	plan but be flexible and organic
	monitor and review continually
	share responsibility
	build opportunities for Aboriginal business to provide, maintain and operate
Private Aboriginal entities are built	strengthen the broker structure (e.g. legislation or provide resources)
	look at Māori corporation as a possible model
	reduce intervention, to create self-sustaining projects over time (beyond short-term programs)

5.2 Alice Springs workshop

This workshop was held at the DKCRC Precinct. Fifteen people from nine organisations participated. There were eight presentations about current initiatives in the NT that aim to create and better support livelihoods for desert Australia.

5.2.1 Presentations

Charles Darwin University



The first presentation outlined Charles Darwin University's change in approach. Although there have been many educational programs delivered and certificates awarded in regional and remote communities, some people felt there had been a lack of coordination, a duplication of training and probably insufficient adult education.

In future, Charles Darwin University intends to deliver programs through interactive technology, with a number of learning hubs staffed with skilled, qualified teachers in communities. After 4000 skills and qualification audits were done in the NT to

identify suitable people for this role and find out what clients want, it was revealed that there were many people willing to participate in training and well-suited to contribute.

Charles Darwin University plans to bid for \$5 million to run the initiative. The project will use floating lecturers throughout the community, and community leaders in their communities will be asked to identify what educational pathways could be developed for that community. Relationship-building is a key aspect of the proposed approach. Rather than adopt a 'push' system, where community members are offered courses that have been selected and designed by remote academics, a 'pull' system will be developed where the focus will be on the customers' needs, as identified by a community member.

There will be challenges in the transition from a short-term 'do good' approach to a long-term, responsive relationship with individuals and communities. Such challenges include how to deal with staff turnover, how the project's expected outcomes will change and how to 'Aboriginalise' materials – which are mostly internal challenges for the institution.

Department of Business Enterprise and Regional Development

The second presentation showcased a DKCRC-funded bush tomato project at the Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development (DBERD). A major challenge for the project was its financial sustainability. Other challenges include irrigation, unreliable infrastructure and staffing (enthusiastic volunteers lose their enthusiasm working in temperatures above 40°C and often leave early). Organisers are trying to minimise labour needs by using mechanical harvesting.

Increasing the commercialisation of the product is essential. Chutney producers ('down south') want guaranteed prices, quantity and quality of stock, which are problematic because of wild harvesting, unreliable rains and other factors. The plan is to have two markets; one wild-harvest market where prices are higher and fluctuating, and another market for the chutney producers which relies on mechanical harvesting.

Educational opportunities identified in this project include:

- training Aboriginal people about production and harvesting so they can avoid damaging plants when harvesting
- holding a post-harvest workshop to identify potential problems and how to implement improvements in the future (in collaboration with DAFWA)
- educating Aboriginal women about the value chain so that they feel more empowered, and can become price makers instead of price takers
- using the labour of prisoners so that they learn horticulture
- employing youth for weeding so that they gain training.

Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines

The Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines focuses on enabling participants, not on training them. Their facilities are regarded as community assets which they manage. They also provide technical support to NT Government activities. Significant projects that the department is involved in are Aboriginal horticulture and Aboriginal pastoral projects which are now doing mainstream business.

The department looks for opportunities to enable business and industry initiatives, piloting people through barriers to establish and grow enterprises. One participant added that the real challenge is to find ways to do things, because nothing happens when a risk avoidance approach is taken.

Another presentation from the department outlined the need for business plans. The department has an Aboriginal and regional business plan for the primary industry sector across the NT, and they provide information about government regulations and policies and industry development. Their clients are industry bodies and community groups. This includes six producers, 170 employees and 14 enterprises. They produce lettuces, lemons, olives and more.

Irrigation is a major challenge, as well as population and market demand changes. This has led to a move from a traditional agricultural development to a community development approach.

Kungkas Can Cook



Rayleen Brown, an Aboriginal entrepreneur from the Alice Springs area, presented about Kungkas Can Cook. Rayleen started a food processing business two years ago. She sold products such as chutneys, catered for groups and operated from a mobile kitchen. For example, a large schoolteachers' meeting was held 'out bush' for the first time and included a lunch of authentic bush products prepared by Rayleen.

Rayleen explained how her Alice Springs business was based on increasing interest in tourism, culture and Aboriginal food. Rayleen receives many requests for

employment from young Aboriginal people. She takes them into the kitchen for three to six months, which helps to 'break their shyness'. They can then move on to other training and/or activities.

Rayleen also sells her products to locals as well as tourists. She has problems with transporting her products, paying labelling costs and meeting high food standards. However, she sees positive outcomes, particularly when Aboriginal people buy her products: 'Through the product we are also educating them for healthy eating and connection with the land and a lot of other things'.

Although Rayleen admitted that she does not understand many of her financial statements and seldom refers to the business plans she had help developing, she praised the accounting education she got from a program called 'The Money Game'. Rayleen said the process of developing a business plan helped her refine ideas for the business and also encouraged her to take action to run the business.

Rayleen said that she:

- was not overly concerned about financial statements, but tried to 'work and do'
- helped other Aboriginal people to learn on the job, as this is the best way for them to learn
- was motivated by a group of strong women who are passionate about everything they do – 'they are there and want to stay there'
- found that Aboriginal people work best in family groups with some hands-on help, working alongside them and giving 'third party comments'
- was practical (for example, who will work when there is a funeral)
- thinks it is important that Aboriginal people mentor Aboriginal people
- wanted people to follow their own ideas, not those imposed on them by others (because those ideas will not survive)
- learned from others, such as the arts industry and Aboriginal rights movement
- listened 'to what people want – we cannot do anything without understanding people'
- was proud to be a role model.

Indigenous Business, Economic and Regional Development

The Indigenous Business, Economic and Regional Development Unit forms part of Indigenous Business, Economic and Regional Development (IBERD). IBERD has three sections:

1. Indigenous Economic Development, which provides strategic direction (such as 'local jobs for local people', and Indigenous Business Hub) and secretarial support for 'whole-of-government' agencies and Indigenous business coordination
2. Indigenous Business Industry Services, which provides 'actual services' to Aboriginal groups and has its own resources to do so
3. Regional Development, which encourages people to come to the unit with ideas and assists them to 'get up and running'.

There are nine economic development committees across the NT. They are advisory bodies to the Minister and they try to involve community people. Projects are managed by the committees so that communities can comment on what the department does and the government's direction. The Regional Development group conducts surveys, such as one in Alice Springs in 2007 to assess business confidence. The survey was useful because, contrary to expectations, business confidence was shown to be high.

The Regional Development group also developed an employment action plan for the towns of Anmatjere and Ti Tree. The plan was to increase Aboriginal participation in work and increase work attendance. Strategies included radio ads, media interviews about the positive and negative consequences of going to work and getting people to tell their stories. The Regional Development group and CSIRO are further exploring the cause of non-attendance. Another initiative targeting the same problem was a breakfast program run by the Ti Tree Shire Chief Executive Officer (CEO), to encourage people to come to work. The presenter also elaborated on a training package being developed with the Alice Springs Chamber of Commerce, which is designed to help employers to employ Aboriginal workers.

An element of this speaker's presentation was to recognise poor information-sharing between agencies, and note how useful this workshop was for networking and finding out what other agencies were doing.

DBERD's Regional Business Centre

DBERD's Regional Business Centre in Alice Springs has a project called 'Moving Alice Ahead'. The objective of the project is to position Alice Springs and its businesses as a preferred supplier to key industries in the region (specifically mining, tourism, defence, pastoral and horticulture). Success will be measured by:

- the volume of supplies and services that are provided by local industries
- the increase in business in Alice Springs
- the frequency of winning business instead of it going to interstate suppliers.

To make this happen, the Regional Business Centre needs to:

- research the supply needs of the key local industries
- improve relationships with key purchasing managers in the target industries
- create opportunities for purchaser–supplier interaction (for example, the Mining Services Expo, which stimulated local sales of several million dollars and led to four more jobs in the area).

Supplier gaps are identified through research with purchasing managers in the four targeted industries. Skills shortages are also being identified and some employers are providing training to improve the employability of locals. DBERD works with businesses to help them register their business name, give them start-up and up-skilling workshops, and paying for consultants to take the business to the next level.

Ultimately the project should increase the number of jobs, business opportunities and growth, and provide better access to facilitated networking events where suppliers are invited.

Alice Springs Shire

The final presenter explained the change to local government in the NT: condensing 63 communities, community councils and association councils into nine shires. MacDonnell Shire, for example, has a population of 6500 in 14 communities, with over 150 outstations.

These shires provide a new level of governance and are responsible for a wide range of issues and services that most shires would previously not have experienced. There are three levels of services:

1. core services, such as parks and open spaces, waste management and animal regulation
2. agency services, which are Commonwealth-funded services and outsourced to the shire
3. commercial services, such as art centres and horticulture that councils will continue to run.

The shire is involved in community business but not individual or entrepreneurial businesses. All positions are fully funded, not CDEP- or federally-funded.

5.2.2 Critical success factors and strategies for more effective programs

After the presentations, participants in three small groups discussed ideas for future successful programs. The key desired outcomes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Desired outcomes and key strategies (Alice Springs workshop)

Desired outcome	Key strategies
Achieve financial independence and self-sufficiency Get self-respect back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share information • commit • business networking using <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IBA for linking and mentoring • Indigenous Mining and Enterprise Taskforce • get on the Business Register • use the Bush Food Cooperative • use technology to access 'the world' • unlock people's imagination • use Water in the Desert as an opportunity for Aboriginal business • identify skills in the community and link to opportunities • make sure ideas are owned by the community
Keep desert people in the desert if they desire Keep 'desert knowledge' – the knowledge of desert people Open up choice by identifying gaps to be filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitate communication between groups and share stories • release services back to the community in a phased, funded way
Locally source goods and services Reduce the turnover of residents Improve cooperation of and coordination between agencies Meet the demand for skills training from local population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create an 'NT made' logo • research the buying habits of major industries • market central Australia as an attractive place to live • promote natural attractions • hold regular networking sessions at the project officer level • map shortages • expose young people to people working in various industries by visiting workplaces and cultural settings different from their own • promote work experience

It is important to note that the key strategies (in the second column of Table 3) overlapped between groups and targeted outcomes.

In the workshop, participants identified a need:

- to adapt, be flexible and recognise that one size does not fit all cases
- for local knowledge
- to establish a community-driven state of readiness, governance and resourcefulness
- for cultural sensitivity
- for locally driven policies and service provision
- to have flexible support networks
- for two-way education and understanding which brings an exchange of knowledge and skill sets between desert community members and non-community members.

Participants said that business success requires:

- monitoring and evaluating the success of the business more closely
- providing the right input at the right stage of development
- giving access to funding
- using flexible models that are adapted to local conditions
- coordinating the business at the macro and micro level
- educating community members
- identifying suitable role models.

Participants expressed a belief that there needs to be a paradigm shift by redefining the term 'job' and the motivating factors. Participants thought that people could 'maintain purpose' through meaningful activities. They also said resources are needed for projects but funds that are returned over time could be reinvested in future projects.

5.3 Brisbane workshop

Seven organisations presented on initiatives and lessons learned at the workshop in Queensland.

5.3.1 Presentations



Two models, two network initiatives and one program were discussed at the Brisbane workshop. Successful features of these programs and initiatives are detailed below.

Models

The two models discussed were the Alliance model and the Awards model.

The Alliance model is more commonly referred to as the ‘Main Roads Alliance Model’ because it was first successfully implemented by the Main Roads Department. Participants said this very successful model generated culturally appropriate development activity.

A number of salient features contribute to the success of this model:

- All board members have equal rights to robustly debate issues of concern. No prioritisation is given based on a person’s cultural dominance, social connectedness or administrative experience. The person’s capacity to contribute is restricted only by their own assessment of their capability.
- Contracting is the essence of the model. Success is achieved by contracting people to carry out the activities that the board members have agreed to support.
- Rewards and reward structures are important for sustaining people’s interest in development activities. The model relies on non-financial incentive as a reward for individuals to continue to operate in the community well beyond the life cycle of the project.

The model’s success is measured by the extent of the multiplier effects it creates. The idea is to churn people through so that when they move on they create a ripple effect in the community.

The Awards model is built on a premise that recognising excellence –especially of entrepreneurs – promotes sustainable development practices well beyond the scope of a project. Awards can include cash incentives, public recognition and social recognition, and can also bring people together in the community. Getting people to engage is essential to increasing participation in economic activity in the community.

Networks and forums

The Pacific Enterprise Network and the Managers Forum both focus on the exchange of ideas. The Pacific Enterprise Network is designed to help entrepreneurs build their own capacity and be empowered, while the Manager’s Forum gives people a deeper understanding of how to appraise options.

The participants highlighted the important contribution that the forum and network made to promoting regional development and individual betterment.

Through practical discussions in these forums and networks, professionals from a wide range of industries, with a range of expertise and experience, help each other to understand and translate ideas into action.

Mentoring

DEEWR, through the Structured Training and Employment Project (STEP), provides funds to train mentors.

Mentoring is considered a valuable way to develop a community of people who can initiate and manage change. People participating in these programs are considered ‘change managers’ or champions of change who are essential for generating economic activities. Champions of change are needed at all levels of government, in politics, in communities and the private sector.

Mentoring needs total commitment from the mentor and mentee. It requires creating an open and trusted environment. The mentor helps to build the mentee’s self-confidence by meeting with them once a fortnight over 20 weeks. This generates a structural change.

Training and expertise that is not used or is not in context is seen as a waste. In a cross-cultural context and in remote areas, mentor/mentee relationships establish complex ‘circles of learning’. Through both formal and practical mentoring exchanges, training is made possible.

Mentoring is not just an opportunity for mentees to benefit. Mentors with specific technical expertise and experience benefit from being exposed to the reality faced by the mentee. As a result, mentoring is seen as developing a ‘partnership’ on an equal footing. This helps to promote a sense of shared responsibility for the success of the mentoring. Mentors with mentoring experience are more useful in the early stages of the program than people with a business background only.



Mentoring programs are seen as confidence-building opportunities that require an open and trusting environment. Therefore, the way in which they are conducted is important.

Mentoring can help reduce mental conflict that people can experience when they need to make money to live but also balance their cultural, business and societal obligations. To acknowledge someone else’s knowledge, and learn from them, mentors/mentees must have open minds and relationships.

5.3.2 Lessons learned

The Queensland experiences suggest a need for adopting a systems-based approach to government initiatives for achieving better livelihood and small business outcomes. Initiatives would do well to focus on the similar challenges faced when creating market chains.

This requires adopting a more practical ‘on-the-ground’ approach for prescribing policies and initiatives. The approach should help:

1. create conditions for entrepreneurship to flourish
2. promote understanding so people can better manage local risks
3. plan projects that build something meaningful for the people concerned.

The critical success factors and strategies identified by the group are summarised in Table 4 and Table 5, respectively.

Table 4: Critical success factors and gaps/inhibitors to program success (Brisbane workshop)

Critical success factors	Gaps/inhibitors to success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having time to talk and reflect honestly • using learning circles and action research • being willing to change • knowing that the status quo is not an option • managing knowledge systemically • understanding that there is not one solution and one size does not fit all • having a shared understanding, language and focus • having passion • being able to make hard decisions about viability, realistic time frames, clear outcome of economic benefit, realistic resource input at point of need • having a key driver/leader in community; community-owned, good governance • making genuine, equal and shared partnerships • integrating thinking about assets (natural or skills), incentives and motivators, across all levels of hierarchy and stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of broad experience that is shared and widely understood • difficult to monitor and evaluate; need to determine how to measure success (both qualitative and quantitative) • having right input at the right stage of process.

Table 5: Strategies for effective program design and implementation (Brisbane workshop)

Outcome	Strategy	Who
Having 'our house' in order, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear roles and responsibilities • clear and agreed outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having one forum (group, structure) for economic development in remote communities • having a practitioner-level group to supplement, link with CEO group to bring together cross-agency threads • using an informal network? • having communication and linking • having a structure to build alliances. 	Lead agency in getting key stakeholders on board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • private • public • community Individual participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having ongoing conversations • being critical friends to each others' work • having commitment to connect

Creating entrepreneurs is not a simple task. Government needs to recognise entrepreneurial development as career and professional development. Financial skills, numeracy, literacy, education, work skills and the future of programs such as CDEP have significant influence on whether entrepreneurs can achieve genuine progress. In the words of one participant: 'Money is important when you show the connectedness to other things you can do with it. It is about grabbing that attention'.

There are many forms of risk – financial, managerial, cultural, social, policy and environmental – that need to be recognised and addressed for achieving genuine progress. Financial risk is by far the most familiar to many people, because option appraisal of innovative ideas from the grass-roots level is largely based on calculating the Net Present Value. While there are many successful attempts at addressing other forms of risk above, the skills available to manage these are limited. It is important for policy makers to recognise that having a good business case is the beginning, and not the end result, of discussions.

There are several ideals that could help address the above risks:

- better information flow in which information about programs is embedded to transform organisational cultures rather than be limited to a specific policy or initiative
- better governance and support structures in place in the community context to enable a business to be established in a sustainable manner
- a clear set of rules for transition arrangements to be put in place for transitioning people from CDEP to business, or from outstations to shires.

Planning projects requires designing and implementing features that take into account some key concepts:

- Business owners need a clear understanding of their business obligations – this involves an explicit understanding and incorporation of legal and policy parameters affecting the business enterprise as

well as the industry and place in which business is located. ‘When it comes to business there are some basic tenets that people need to understand. We go out and sugar coat it.’

- Policy makers need to make sure that legal, political and policy requirements are well understood. Focus is needed to communicate the importance for the agenda to be set properly.
- It is also necessary to recognise that building capacity is different to identifying a progression path for the business person. A person’s role in economic development is not necessarily determined by their capacity. Building a person’s capacity is not synonymous with ensuring that she/he will contribute to economic development.
- Assessment criteria also need examining. Instead of evaluating the success or the failure of initiatives and programs, many people suggest an assessment based on outcomes rather than outputs. Programs need a pre-specified and agreed set of indicators for assessing the impact of policies and initiatives. As one participant pointed out, ‘one of the things we can improve is the way we measure. We are still measuring outputs more than outcomes. If we are talking about halving the gaps, we want outcomes. That’s what we want to measure’.

5.4 South Australia workshop



This workshop was held in Adelaide at the University of South Australia. Fifteen participants representing 12 government departments and organisations attended. Below is a summary of the workshop presentations and outputs.

5.4.1 Presentations

Workshop discussion covered Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal small business initiatives and opportunities in desert Australia.

The Workforce Development Directorate is one of the main government programs and initiatives. The directorate is taking

a statewide approach to skill development. This initiative was established in 2006 and has produced a document titled *Modelling what works well in SA works in the regions* (SACES 2008). The initiative aims to create a highly skilled workforce and active and high quality employment, and to recognise the importance of planning for future worker demographics. The exigency for producing the document is that the workforce is aging, which means society has to be more creative with its workforce. The directorate has close links with TAFE, which conducts training for the directorate. It also has links with the state’s Industry Skills Board and the national Industry Skills Council.

Another important government program is a state partnership between the Department of Trade and Economic Development, Department of Primary Industries and Resources, and the Skills Board. This partnership works very closely with the agrifood industry and food councils from different sectors, including farming and food manufacturers.

The resource industry is making significant contributions to programs and initiatives which support livelihoods in desert Australia. They have taken a statewide approach instead of a community and industry approach. They have prepared a memorandum of understanding between the state government, Aboriginal movements and councils, and industry to work together towards a strategy for employment.

In association with the Minerals Council of Australia, the resource industry has eight pilot programs between industry and communities. Resource companies such as BHP and Oxiana are working in partnership with state agencies.

IBA is a statutory organisation established under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Act as an Indigenous Commercial Development Corporation. IBA works to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-management and self-sufficiency, and advance the commercial and economic interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by accumulating and using capital assets for their benefit. IBA has four main programs in place:

1. IBA Investments, which is involved in buying and investment of all types of assets
2. IBA Homes, a service which helps Aboriginal people to own homes
3. IBA Partnerships, which is the policy development and major negotiations section of IBA
4. IBA Enterprises, which provides business support, business finance and economic development initiatives.

IBA plays a key role in CDEP projects in all states and territories. In SA's CDEP, there are six organisations throughout the Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC) regions. For example, there is one organisation that serves the Port Augusta region; the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Lands; and the Flinders area. CDEP plays a pivotal role in providing sustainable livelihoods in the desert and is part of the fabric of many remote communities.

What are the successful initiatives and elements that have contributed to this success?

Some of the successful programs include Iga Warta Cultural Tourism Centre, Art Centres and the Ku Arts Project in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands. In addition, 32 Anangu SA Certificate of Education students from Waltja, mining companies and the ICC (which provides a one-stop shop service for a number of Australian government agencies). They are partners with FaHSCIA; Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts; and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). ICC reviews initiatives from SA's government departments and identifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander opportunities. ICC also considers mainstream opportunities/services and how to link them to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

5.4.2 Critical success factors and strategies for more effective programs

There are key elements that have created success in these initiatives:

- providing or producing quality products (goods or services)
- having hardworking and reliable employees
- finding accessible markets for products (service and tangible goods)
- accessing finance
- having community support
- having capable corporate leaders and managers.

What were the challenges and what were the solutions?

There were challenges that had to be addressed in order for businesses to optimise their operations. One such challenge was using resources effectively at the local level through the network of different agencies, by looking at different opportunities and creating those programs to arrive at something that is native on the ground. When working in that setting, capturing the right people is a real challenge.

Understanding individual business situations is also a challenge. Previously, Australian government agencies did not work together easily. Agencies are now trying to work better together through regional development boards. For example, agencies from the Flinders Ranges area are working with Port Augusta Regional Development Board.

Agencies are also challenged to identify resources. There are so many wonderful initiatives happening but agencies may be unaware of them.

Creating sustainable jobs is another challenge – in particular, for the resource industry. This industry is currently not a model employer in regards to increasing their employees' skills, career planning and succession planning.

One of the challenges throughout developing industries in SA is up-scaling existing enterprises to enable that enterprise to develop.

A key challenge, especially for Aboriginal Australians, is the need to disassociate their personal and social obligations from their business obligations, in order to operate successful businesses.

Another major challenge is that the resource industry in particular must change how it employs Aboriginal people. Ideally, the partners (mines and employees) should aim for long-term and generational commitments which would replace short-term, three-year commitments. This is a huge challenge, but industries like mining can implement these changes through genuine partnerships.

The art industry is a key industry that can establish real livelihoods for people in the desert. There are many success stories, but there are also many challenges. For example, maintaining a high quality of art is a major task. In addition, market factors also pose potential challenges – marketing and promoting works of art, problems with funding and infrastructure are all huge issues. Understanding the concept of money in Aboriginal communities, sharing with family and managing money for the art centres is also a real challenge. To that end, there are cultural issues which must be negotiated as more young people enter the art industry. It is about transferring the practice of art to the youth, from the older generation, as well as thinking about art as a business.

There are many challenges for CDEP projects:

- the low numeracy and literacy of workers
- the limited skills and experience of workers
- a lack of understanding of how business operations differ from CDEP
- a lack of corporate governance and leadership
- a reliance of Aboriginal communities on white people to run their business enterprises for them. Aboriginal communities are attempting to change this mindset.
- a fostering of a dependency mentality – especially in remote areas – which becomes a potential constraint on remote (Aboriginal) businesses. Put another way, many people in remote communities cannot imagine not having CDEP and, in turn, cannot imagine a business operating without CDEP.

One thing that CDEP grapples with is establishing businesses. It is very hard to establish a business for a range of reasons. One of the challenges for government is how to use CDEP to support business enterprises, especially remote and desert Aboriginal businesses.

Where are the gaps and what might be done to fill those gaps?

There are difficulties in operating small businesses in desert Australia: substance abuse, transition from school to work, skill levels, the perception of the world of work and work ethic (or lack of it).

Table 6 shows participant suggestions for strategies to close the gap.

Table 6: Strategies for effective program design and implementation (Adelaide workshop)

Outcome	Strategies
Using a collective approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> having genuine engagement with a broad range of communities by going to the community, over time, and coordinating it
Using a bottom-up approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supporting communities with their solutions/stories understanding that money is not the only solution – relationships and leadership are critical valuing the assets in place and giving these assets status supporting 'us' to get our act together.
Ensuring a reasonable livelihood for people in remote communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> defining 'reasonable living' educating people building social capital – independence, self-responsibility, building on assets (e.g. the key role of women) having genuine community development working with individuals to build collective strength supporting relationships, over time supporting strategic, holistic, ongoing (permanent, consistent) self-reliance and an exit strategy fostering cultures from dependence to independence with a defined, overt strategy

Among the key strategies to close the gap are collective engagement, valuing and listening to what the community is saying, and capacity-building (including social capital building). Capacity-building can include education and skills training (particularly in business management), and business planning training for Aboriginal enterprises (as is currently done by FarmBis, which supports virtual classrooms for isolated people in desert areas).

There several opportunities for supporting livelihoods and small business in desert Australia, at least in principle. For example, the Native Plant and Vegetation Guidelines present a great opportunity. A mining company is going to replace 10 times more native flora than they have removed, depending on what the original land use was. This is a golden opportunity to involve and grow Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses.



It is worthwhile mentioning that mining companies now must employ local people in the mines. Mining companies can also train Aboriginal Australians so that they can acquire knowledge and skills to enable them to secure sustainable jobs in the mines and beyond.

Creating and supporting Aboriginal business enterprises by the resource industry is crucial to support livelihoods and sustain small business in desert Australia.

5.5 Perth workshop

The workshop in Perth was held at Curtin University and attended by eight participants from government departments and organisations, including Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Committee (WAITOC), the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the Office of Aboriginal Economic Development (AED), Department of Industry and Resources, the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC).

5.5.1 Presentations

Department of Environment and Conservation

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) was formed in July 2006 by merging two departments: the Department of Conservation and Land Management, and the Department of Land Management. DEC is responsible for managing wildlife and land, and performs the regulatory role of the previous departments. DEC has a corporate plan, available on their website. A priority of DEC is effective engagement with Aboriginal people in natural resources management. Working with Aboriginal people in an effective way is key to the way DEC works. DEC manages about 27 million hectares of land in WA, which is 13–14 per cent of WA's land. This includes national parks, nature reserves and conservation lands. The department is responsible for managing feral animals and fires. Their stakeholders are the people of WA. A significant portion of the land they manage is classified as desert or in-desert fringes.

Their vision is a healthy, diverse and well-managed Western Australian environment. DEC's mission is, by working with community, to make sure that WA's environment is valued, protected and conserved for its intrinsic value, and for the appreciation and benefit of present and future generations.

DEC has several programs of interest to this study. DEC has a Joint Management agreement with Aboriginal people. They drew up Memoranda of Understandings with Aboriginal groups to jointly manage some properties. Some of these are rangeland areas and some include parks and properties. Activities involve de-stocking and returning the land to what they hope is its natural state. Aboriginal people are engaged to work with them in paid employment. In the Goldfields and Pilbara regions, for example, DEC has employed Aboriginal people through local, shared management agreements that have been drawn up in each region with the communities.

DEC has also developed Demonstration Park Councils, a formal council with representation from relevant stakeholders to manage national parks. The Demonstration Park Councils are interim steps to help decide what systems will be the most appropriate in the longer term.

DEC also runs a successful program called MATES: Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme. DEC places about 10 Aboriginal trainees a year, who then become full-time employees within the department. These are the people who will manage national parks. The idea is to integrate MATES graduates across all the activities of the department. The success of this program comes from the interaction and strong engagement with Aboriginal people. Over the last 20 or 30 years, DEC has learned an enormous amount of knowledge from desert Aboriginal people. For instance, they have established what types of animals used to exist, when they disappeared and the habitats they lived in. Part of DEC's work is to re-colonise and re-stock those areas where certain species used to occur. Aboriginal people shared their stories about their rich culture and the different species of animals that used to exist which should be reintroduced. The knowledge gained through interactions with Aboriginal people is critical to DEC's work.

Training and mentoring is crucial for the success of the MATES program. Participants receive weekly mentoring contact over about three years. Another factor contributing to the MATES program is support from a trainee's family. The mentoring is not only given to the trainee, but adopts a much more holistic approach which includes their family and involvement with the culture. The program has a high profile and is strongly supported within the department.

Development, Department of Industry and Resources

The Aboriginal Economic Development (AED) is a division of WA's Department of Industry and Resources. It is the lead agency for Aboriginal economic development and provides leadership and innovation in Aboriginal economic development. Its priorities are sustainable business development,

investment and asset ownership, and increasing opportunities for sustainable employment. The project staff are very understanding and flexible about working in different areas.

AED has a state Indigenous Economic Development Framework which brings together other state government agencies working toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic development. The division also works with Commonwealth agencies such as ICC. AED is a key part of the state and Commonwealth bilateral relations in Aboriginal affairs. Strategic priorities are industry sectors and regional areas. These areas offer the best prospects for Aboriginal employment and business development opportunities and where an Aboriginal competitive advantage exists.

The implementation of the Indigenous Economic Development Framework brings together all stakeholders. AED works with non-Aboriginal organisations as much as with Aboriginal organisations; with industry partners and with government and NGOs.

AED identifies Aboriginal business enterprise opportunities and Aboriginal employment opportunity projects. They help to link people with employment and training organisations and help interpret and facilitate Aboriginal business and employment initiatives that may arise from Native Title legislation. AED also supports the commercialisation of Aboriginal art centres. They also have a long-term relationship with WAITOC in support of Aboriginal tourism development.

AED has examples of successful initiatives. For example, AED has helped to foster Aboriginal business development in the Pilbara. It provided business development support to the Pilbara Meta Maya Regional Aboriginal Corporation and Meta Maya Building Services Ltd. These organisations are now growing as reputable companies in the building and construction industry in the Pilbara region. Apart from helping to resolve the problem of Aboriginal housing in the area, this initiative is creating opportunities for traineeships and apprenticeships that are likely to lead to long-term employment.

Another successful initiative is AED's partnership with View Consulting. They recruit, train and mentor Aboriginal people from the Goldfields who are unemployed but willing to work, and place them in full-time employment in local transport and mining industries. They began with 43 people and mentored them throughout their training. Although only 14 remained through their placements, 10 of the 14 are now employed in full-time jobs. One of the key success factors in this initiative is providing on-site mentoring when people start their jobs, so they stay.

Other opportunities exist in the mining sector. For instance, there is a nickel mine near the NT, SA and WA border area. There are more opportunities for Aboriginal people and businesses to be involved in land management.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is a Commonwealth Government department. DEEWR has a national office in Canberra and various state offices. They also have regional offices and contribute staff to ICCs (which is under FaHCSIA). In WA, there are ICCs in Perth, Kununurra, Broome, South Hedland, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Derby. The staff working in those locations look after CDEP programs. DEEWR also employs a solutions broker: a senior staff member who is in charge of creating links between programs which focus on regional issues.

Following Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology and strategy to deal with the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, DEEWR is addressing three priority areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage: health, housing and employment.

The CDEP program is a program of DEEWR. CDEP provides income and employment opportunities in many communities. In addition, DEEWR also manages specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment programs, and a variety of other programs, from childcare to education. To the wider community, DEEWR is perhaps seen as the agency for job opportunities, because it administers the Job Network, work for the dole, Environmental Impact Statements, Jobs Pathway Program, Harvest

Labour and a host of other programs. These programs help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on CDEP must be registered on the Job Network.

Previously, people receiving Centrelink benefits had to participate in a work, training or education activity to access their payments. Some very remote communities have limited opportunities to be involved in those types of activities, so DEEWR was able to handle exemptions for those people.

DEEWR also has a range of programs specifically targeted towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. For example, the Wage Assistance Program helps small- and medium-sized employers to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Employers can use the money from the program to provide training, mentoring or other forms of support.

Another program is STEP. This program is targeted towards medium and large organisations who want to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in their organisation. The organisations might be private sector, state or local government, NGOs or community organisations. Employers can use the funding for cross-cultural awareness training and other related activities. STEP funding is substantially higher than the Wage Assistance Program, and an employer cannot access funds from both programs. STEP assistance can also be provided for recruitment and retention or for special projects.

DEEWR has a number of state contracts – for instance, with mining companies. The program involves wage assistance for companies to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff for a period of two years. DEEWR partnered with the DEC, and STEP was used in the MATES program. DEEWR also has ongoing contracts with resource companies.

Another DEEWR initiative is the Indigenous Small Business Fund, which is geared to assist individuals and NGOs to start or expand a business. If the business is run by an individual, then it is assisted through IBA. If the business involves a community group, support is provided by DEEWR. Funding up to \$100,000 will be provided to help with feasibility studies, start the business, develop business and organisational plans, but not for capital costs. DEEWR also has an Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme, which encourages the finance sector to finance businesses.

Another DEEWR initiative is the Emerging Indigenous Entrepreneurs Initiative, which provides funding for initiatives that will improve economic development, business skills and financial literacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This program is coordinated from DEEWR's head office in Canberra.

Eighteen months ago, DEEWR created a program called STEP Employment Related Scheme. STEP helps employers put Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on, while STEP Employment Related Scheme is for individuals or organisations that can help people find, train for, take up, or get mentoring at jobs.

DEEWR's STEP program has a high retention rate and is considered successful. Why is STEP successful?

One reason for the program's success is because it links directly with employers. STEP encourages links with DEEWR's mainstream programs. For example, participants are encouraged to put themselves on Job Network. Through Job Network, participants are given job seeker training. If participants have access to funding and programs, they are in a better position to be targeted by and marketed to employers. Often resource companies embed the program in their dealings with contractors and subcontractors.

Finally, DEEWR has solution brokers and a number of Shared Responsibility Agreements between community and governments. A Shared Responsibility Agreement is a mutual agreement between government and community that the community is doing something and, in return, the government is

providing services. The department also has Regional Partnership Agreements. Currently, they have several agreements but more needs to be done beyond employment to incorporate health, education and childcare issues.

Small Business Development Corporation

The SBDC is an organisation responsible for promoting the development of small businesses in the state. SBDC employs about 60 people working in various units. They have a shopfront-style business information and licensing centre. Clients can call and get information about any type of business and license. They have a range of small business publications available.

The SBDC have a small business services area which provides free, one on one information and business advice service. SBDC has marketing, commercial tenancy and franchising business specialists. They also provide business workshops on topics such as starting a business, business planning, employing people and contracting.

The policy and planning area of SBDC provides support and advice to the Minister for Small Business about a range of government initiatives and legislative issues. SBDC also runs a small business advocacy, helping small businesses who are having difficulty in dealing with other government departments. SBDC can communicate and advocate on their behalf and facilitate solutions if appropriate.

SBDC maintains relationships with key stakeholders in the small business area. The area is broad and consists of local and regional chambers of commerce, small business networks, local government organisations, and business and industry organisations. SBDC also has a small business centre network. It is a network of independent organisations that are funded through SBDC and receive administrative support from SBDC. There are seven centres in metropolitan areas and more in regional WA. The centres provide local assistance to the area. They provide similar services, including organising workshops and individual assistance.

SBDC services are offered to any small business, but are not specifically targeted to the needs of remote or Aboriginal businesses. That is something SBDC is working on. SBDC have discussed this with key agencies and government in Perth to find out what is already available to avoid duplicating it. They have recently started a pilot program through their small business centre in Derby to gather data on Aboriginal small businesses and find out whether they can help. The small business centre in Derby has identified three businesses that they are starting to work with.

SBDC has identified some barriers for Aboriginal small businesses. There are cultural issues that need to be addressed – SBDC is how to deal with those issues. SBDC is also looking at what role mentoring and peer support plays in encouraging and supporting Aboriginal small business development.

SBDC can help to improve the coordination of the delivery of government services. A strength of SBDC is that programs are individually tailored and flexible. They understand that solutions need to be developed locally, adapted to the area and that support needs to be practical.

WAITOC Association

WAITOC started as an informal committee and is now an NGO with many members. WAITOC works with tourism organisations under different business models. It works closely with Tourism WA, Tourism NT and other tourism organisations in Australia.

The roots of WAITOC can be traced back about a decade. The Federal government organised an Indigenous Tourism Forum in 2000. At that time, no-one was fully aware of the cultural experiences people could make available through Aboriginal tourism. A couple of workshops were organised in WA and 15–20 operators met in Sydney for a national forum. However, they wanted to know what they could do within WA before going to the national forum. The operators networked with other tourism

operators in WA, then assembled into a formal committee, comprising 11 Aboriginal board members and one non-Aboriginal member. This was to make sure that different representatives of language groups were properly represented. The group was initially financially supported through AED. Later, a partnership was formed with Tourism WA to get more tourism support for Aboriginal operators, which they felt was non-existent.

WAITOC sits on a number of advisory committees. The WAITOC CEO sits on the Australian tax office committee, giving information and feedback on issues affecting Aboriginal businesses – down to basics such as getting an Australian Business Number. They act as a one-stop shop for government and industry and sit on various steering committees. WAITOC works closely with Tourism WA and Tourism Australia to make sure that there is Aboriginal representation in activities and events. Unfortunately, WAITOC cannot provide any financial advice to its members. However, being a WAITOC member could be considered capacity-building because of the networking opportunities for members. People in remote and regional areas have fewer opportunities to network, which urban people may take for granted. Many Aboriginal people have never been tourists – when they travel they usually stay with family and friends. It is important for them to understand the tourism industry from the other side, and WAITOC helps them get that support.

WAITOC provides a voice for individual operators to raise issues with state government and other industry bodies. In addition, they give the mainstream tourism industry an opportunity to get involved with Aboriginal tourism. Many mainstream organisations do not know how to engage Aboriginal tourism operators. WAITOC gives them help to work with Aboriginal businesses.

WAITOC's resources are limited. Similarly, Aboriginal tourism operators face the problem of a lack of capital and many other issues. Numerous outstations in regional and remote areas have 99 year leases, so they cannot be used for equity. With recent changes to CDEP, some businesses are threatened. Many people do not know where to go for help, and do not feel confident to ask questions. Also, many people think that a successful business needs to operate under traditional, Western definitions of success. For some Aboriginal people, any business that can generate enough money to support their family is a success, although this is not necessarily the view of the organisation and government agencies.

WAITOC receives many résumés from young Aboriginal people applying for jobs. Some of them do not get unemployment benefits because of the paperwork involved. WAITOC gives the résumés of young Aboriginal people to employers who are seeking Aboriginal employees.

WAITOC developed a business link with Tourism WA based on the Tourism Today program. WAITOC takes the program out to regional and remote areas to identify their needs before delivering a generic approach. For example, in partnership with Tourism WA, WAITOC is doing a workshop in Kalgoorlie. They want to make sure that the workshop has modules that give a realistic understanding of the industry and its key contacts. They want to express that, for example, tourism is not all fun and glamour, that it is a 7-day, 24-hour business. They also understand that some people are not comfortable asking questions in group situations, so they will offer one-on-one consultation for these individuals. The aim of these workshops is to develop an action plan with individuals or families about their plans for the next six months and talk about what WAITOC can do for them to help them develop. WAITOC is trying to get away from the one-off workshop approach, which can leave people not knowing what actions to take after the workshop. WAITOC would check if people achieved their goals in six months' time and, if not, what stopped them. They also cater for businesses that are at the higher level and who want to know about marketing, distribution and commission levels. WAITOC covers those issues in 16 workshops.

WAITOC also has some projects with AED and Tourism Australia. One is on business and the one is on accreditation. One of the projects involves benchmarking the Aboriginal tourism industry. WAITOC is working with Tourism Council WA, who are working one on one with Aboriginal tourism operators to

give them accreditation. WAITOC has developed an Aboriginal accreditation program which businesses can use to promote the authenticity of their tourism experience and guarantee their product. Other businesses have capitalised on Aboriginal words and culture, and authentic businesses are upset about it. WAITOC encourages mainstream operators to partner with Aboriginal businesses. WAITOC's aim is to train 10 Aboriginal business accreditors so the accreditors can learn business processes. WAITOC has been invited to the National Accreditation Advisory Committee to look into developing one accreditation system for the whole of Australia.

With Tourism Australia and Tourism WA, WAITOC is updating Aboriginal business experiences on the national Australian Tourism Database. There is some funding available to enter tourism operations in the database for free and hence those tourism operators can gain from national and international exposure.

A challenge for WAITOC is developing and keeping up to date with emerging market-ready Aboriginal products. WAITOC was initially dealing with 15–16 sustainable Aboriginal businesses, but now works with 55 export-ready businesses that are Aboriginal-owned and operated. WAITOC promotes over 100 experiences. Many Aboriginal businesses are seasonal, or part-time or casual.

It can be very difficult for business owners to talk about business within their community because of family confidentiality issues. There are major infrastructure issues in remote and regional communities, such as lacking Internet access for a month, which create barriers for Aboriginal-owned and operated businesses.

An issue for tourism businesses is occupational health and safety and accreditation. Many people are not familiar with liability insurance. They may take on tourists believing an accident is unlikely, and if something happens they may not be insured. People know about their product, but may not be aware of some issues of running a business.

Following the 2000 federal Indigenous Tourism Forum, WAITOC has created several initiatives. Four years later, they organised a state conference to review their progress. WAITOC has organised well-attended forums in Alice Springs, Perth, Fremantle and Townsville. These forums celebrate success stories, which does not happen often enough. WAITOC is responsible for the Indigenous Tourism Awards which acknowledge and celebrate individuals and businesses. At conferences, WAITOC organises business 'speed dating' and instructs the participants on how to sell themselves – something relatively foreign to Aboriginal culture.

WAITOC has won two international awards. In 2004 a German tourist organisation awarded them with an Environmentally Responsible Tourism award. WAITOC recently won the 'TO DO!' award, awarded in Berlin at the International Tourism Exchange for Socially Responsible Tourism, for giving back to communities through tourism. There was media coverage and national acknowledgement through the Australian Tourism Export Council which published it in a national publication. The Australian Outback newsletter also featured the award.

International recognition is important. It has been hard to promote Aboriginal tourism. One of WAITOC's main strategic objectives now is to consolidate Aboriginal tourism. Board membership is voluntary – members lose money by sitting on the board instead of running their business, but they do it to support and develop the industry.

Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia

The Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA) aims to improve the capacity and profitability of WA's agricultural industries, in which Aboriginal people play an important role. DAFWA looks for collaborative partnerships with people and funding agencies. At the moment about

30 per cent of agricultural land in WA is in Aboriginal custodianship. DAFWA works with about 80 Aboriginal-owned private businesses. DAFWA is working with people to give training, mentoring and management understanding.

DAFWA's strategies for each project include managing production, marketing, monitoring business and building capacity. They have a team of 22 people, half of whom are Aboriginal and are funded by a multitude of funding agencies. This can pose another problem – administering the funds is a full-time commitment. Funding agencies require substantial reports to be written and reports on key performance indicators. DAFWA gets its core funding from the state and the rest from Commonwealth government, Indigenous Land Corporation and mining companies. Capacity-building funds used to come from FarmBis, which has now ceased.

Entry into projects is by mutual invitation. A group volunteers for a project then DAFWA assesses their capacity. The result depends on the level of development which includes the group's structure, stability within the community, wanting to learn to be a success (which is probably the most important consideration) and that the director has a desire to make their primary industry businesses successful. DAFWA rarely takes on the role of business incubator. Rather, they mainly work with businesses which are already running.

There are also bureaucratic challenges. For instance, there is a huge amount of reporting, and finding funding requires writing regular submissions to funding bodies. However, it is slightly easier because DAFWA's work has been internationally recognised, and they have won several awards for the work they have been doing.

For Aboriginal communities, funding is a major stumbling block for enterprise development. For a primary industry enterprise, the start-up capital investment is at least \$1 million. Many communities have lands handed back or purchased on their behalf, and the infrastructure is poor and run-down.

Support funding for occupational health and safety equipment (such as boots) is also important. DAFWA does not allow people to work with cattle unless they have appropriate footwear.

Another problem area is having the right people in their teams. DAFWA has 22 people who are merit-selected and also meet the normal requirements of public service and their ability to work with business. DAFWA employees are there for 'the long haul'. For instance, one community had the same officer for 12 years, which indicates that person's level of dedication. It is a business relationship which is built on mutual respect.

Within the businesses themselves, DAFWA must continually determine people's capacity. They do a lot of analysis of governance and people's individual skills. DAFWA gives everyone receives skills analysis, and individual planning and development help.

In addition to long-term commitment, other crucial factors include timing and the availability of resources. Timing is very important – a business or individual must have the right support from the community at the right time. Resources are likewise critical.

DAFWA provides a substantial amount of training, funded through partnerships. This is primarily business training.

DAFWA has numerous successful projects, some of which are outlined in Appendix 2. One example is the case of Noonkanbah, a pastoral station 300 km from Derby. It is one of the six businesses which has generated significant employment on a fully commercial station as part of the Kimberley Indigenous Management Support Services project. With Kimberley Indigenous Management Support Services, the projects are strongly supported by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-affiliated projects and staff within DAFWA; none of the projects are done in isolation. They have formal administration, reporting and solid support systems in place; these contribute to its success.

5.5.2 Opportunities and challenges

Participants worked in two groups to identify opportunities and challenges.

One of the main challenges identified by the groups is the lack of funding for businesses, especially Aboriginal businesses. Would-be entrepreneurs must demonstrate the viability of their business through a business plan. It usually takes time, sometimes several years, for a business to become viable. Usually Aboriginal businesses start in backyards – they do not have major cash flow immediately. Similarly, with government programs, the funding model is yearly. If long-term commitment and monitoring is provided, businesses are more likely to be viable – people require this level of commitment. This is a real issue that even successful programs have to face.

Secondly, financial institutions often consider Aboriginal businesses as non-bankable as they have no collateral. There are few available grants or special funding for Aboriginal people from mainstream financial institutions. They have to compete and prove the viability of their business, so it is very difficult to obtain funding.

A third challenge is complicated paperwork: there are many departments requiring different forms, often asking the same things on different forms. Most Aboriginal people need help with completing these forms.

Furthermore, there are too many departments to keep track of. People do not know where to go and what each department offers. An effective website which serves as a portal or a one-stop shop would be very useful. It would also be useful to have a list of programs that are available to help businesses.

Another challenge is Regional Partnership Agreements. There appear to be few successful ones. Most are very complex and takes a long time to be enacted. There are opportunities with mining companies, but are often inflexible and slow.

The same is true of reporting requirements: it is often too complex, to too many partners and most Aboriginal organisations cannot afford to do it. To meet their cultural needs, people want to go out, work and maintain their relationship with their community.

There is also lack of corporate governance in some instances, which is an important element in business, particularly in a community business model. This could be solved by training in governance and leadership. For better management and knowledge, people need to build their capacity to manage businesses, and manage taxation and governance.

Participants also noted the role of mentors, role models and networking. People were motivated and interested in business ideas after hearing about successful people and businesses. Joint ventures or having mentors can help in developing Aboriginal businesses.

An important cultural issue is understanding work culture and work ethics. For instance, most workplaces expect employees to come to work. However, some Aboriginal people may have family or cultural reasons for not being able to do so (such as funerals or cultural obligations), or may not like shift work, and are unable to work in the mines. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people need to understand each other's expectations.

There is a lot of goodwill from the Rudd government to review the programs and develop appropriate programs for Aboriginal enterprise. Participants in the workshop mentioned:

- opportunities for trade and export
- closer state and federal-level relationships
- opportunities from the climate impact strategy
- increasing interest in Aboriginal issues, particularly for improving remote and economic independence
- encouragement of social and economic independence
- telecentres becoming more proactive instead of being reactive
- DEC becoming more proactive with their funding and operations.

Critical success factors and key desired outcomes are listed in Table 7.

Table 7: Critical success factors and desired outcomes (Perth workshop)

Critical success factors	Desired outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funding • Community Business Facilitators • infrastructure development support • mentor/partnering • facilitated networking • business development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feasibility assessment • finance sourcing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a cost-benefit analysis that shows desert communities and enterprises are contributing to the wealth (social, economic, environmental) of the nation, not costing it • thriving desert businesses and communities • services in the regions and bureaucratic 'backroom' functions in the centres

As shown in Table 7, some critical factors to support the development and growth of desert businesses include: culturally appropriate, long-term mentoring, combining mentoring with funding to implement the programs, making programs commercially realistic and creating business incubators. There is also a need to celebrate successful programs and initiatives and Aboriginal business success more, because there are many successful initiatives.

Finally, for desert businesses, it is important to use existing networks more effectively to expand their market reach.

Suggested strategies to achieve the desired outcomes are listed in Table 8.

Table 8: Strategies to support businesses and livelihoods in desert regions, Perth workshop

Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review what has worked elsewhere (Canada, New Zealand, Norway) • improve infrastructure; in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure consistent delivery • promote research • improve coordination between government departments (across agency and levels of government) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have user-friendly services • have regional focus • get better access to finances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use micro-financing models • find capital finance • show proof of viability beyond the dollar benefit • improve the harnessing of information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use good news stories • use a better process for listening (WAITOC has a good model) • keep it simple • create a community development policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure corporate responsibility • modify work practices • business need to have ownership of their trajectory

Services and bureaucracy need to be more decentralised. For example, the Western (and one that may not meet Aboriginal community needs) banking model is perhaps a reason why it takes a long time to start businesses. There is a need to empower and teach local staff, similar to the Grameen banking model. As with all banking, risk management is critical.

When developing a policy or a strategy it is often a question of supply and demand. For example, in deciding on what training and programs to provide for Aboriginal people in a region, government will consider how many Aboriginal people are industry-ready by using a set of criteria. Regional demand becomes clearer when government analyses how many people are ready for employment, or who needs

pre-employment or life skills training. Then supply should be considered: how many people could appropriately fill the available jobs? It is more relevant to think about supply and demand instead of simplistically saying that there are 300 jobs available in the mines.

Other issues to consider are whether people are interested in work and wealth creation. Sometimes wealth creation can be individually motivated, but most of the time Aboriginal people prefer to create wealth for their community. That means they are not interested in individual work because their motivation is quite different. Community wealth development is a completely different thing, so an appropriate strategy may not be securing employment in the mines but, rather, investment in business.

Simplicity and flexibility is key – it is important steer clear of creating extra complications and barriers. Long-term investment is important because change will not happen overnight. Unfortunately, government is based on three-year electoral cycle, so politicians generally have 18-month milestone requirements. This does not fit with long-term and generational approaches, which are needed for effective programs.

6. Key themes from the initiatives profiled in the workshops: synthesis and lessons learned

The key themes emerging from initiatives profiled in the workshops were:

- the diversity of initiatives by various government departments
- how confusing it is for customers
- the philosophical conflict between economic and social development
- key ingredients for success in establishing and operating micro and small businesses
- opportunities arising from skills shortages
- the importance of cultural change
- status quo is not an option

Each of these themes is discussed below.

6.1 Diversity of initiatives

An overview of the initiatives presented at the workshops and the key elements of these programs are found in Appendix 2 and are classified by jurisdiction (state and federal programs). The scope and nature of these initiatives are incredibly diverse. This diversity can be seen as a positive response to the myriad of contexts and macro- to micro-levels of application.

The downside is that there is a collection of many programs that often do not ‘add value’ or connect to other programs. They operate discretely, generally over shorter time frames, and are often ‘pilot’ programs.

The high turnover of personnel at all levels means that sound knowledge management and continuity is rare. This results in few long-running programs and little independent evaluation to determine the long-term impact of initiatives.

6.2 A confusing maze for customers

From a customer perspective, the myriad of programs, initiatives, personnel and resources is very confusing. One participant identified 29 state and federal government agencies dealing with Aboriginal development issues. As a full-time worker in the field, she found it impossible to have genuine and useful engagement with all these diverse stakeholder groups. She despaired at how community groups and individuals seeking support would find their way through the maze to get the right support, at the right time, for their enterprise development.

Recent events such as the NT Intervention, which introduced Government Business Brokers, attempted to address such issues. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such initiatives significantly improved coordination and that tools such as the Local Partnership Agreements have the potential to foster genuine partnerships.

6.3 Economic versus social development



An issue that emerged from some workshops was a potential conflict of emphasis on economic and social development. While participants in most workshops were happy to be ambiguous about whether enterprise created economic and social benefits (or both), participants in one workshop were adamant that economic development is the key driver to self-sufficiency for desert Australians, and that economic development and sustainability, in a mainstream context, should be the key outcome for any development work.

Participants recognised that unique cultural and family conditions exist that affect people's economic sustainability (in a mainstream sense). These cultural and family elements could enhance and inhibit this economic success.

6.4 Success in establishing and operating micro and small businesses

A consistent theme across all workshops was recognition that economic sustainability in small to medium enterprises was incredibly challenging in mainstream contexts, even before considering the many complexities facing desert enterprises. With a failure rate of 75 per cent in mainstream business start-ups, it was acknowledged that expecting a better outcome in a desert context was inappropriate.

A lot of discussion focused on a need for alternative and realistic measurements of success that did not detract from – and in fact, strengthened – the genuine need to improve outcomes for desert Australians. As alluded to in Section 6.3, unique cultural and family conditions exist in the desert. This is particularly true for Aboriginal-owned businesses where cultural and family goals may feature highly in the business's goals. Conventional financial measures should not be the only indicators of business success. These indicators should reflect the business owners' multiple goals.

6.5 Opportunities arising from skills shortages

Workshop participants identified the emergence of new and creative solutions that have come from the current skills shortage in Australia. Out of necessity, large and small enterprises have explored strategies to engage people previously not employed, including long-term unemployed or underemployed people. Strategies have emerged that focus on:

- pre-employment programs that get people ready for work. They cover literacy, numeracy, basic occupational health and safety (including equipment use), rights and responsibilities in the workplace and work experience opportunities.
- during employment: skills development and capacity building
- career development: providing opportunities for training and development to expand career options.



Other enterprise opportunities in the desert identified during discussions include bush tucker production, livestock harvesting, mine rehabilitation, community maintenance services, community garden maintenance, tourism, Aboriginal culture and art promotion, and virtual business incubation centres.

6.6 Importance of cultural change

Participants agreed that what is perhaps missing to take advantage of emerging opportunities are initiatives that focus on cultural change, encourage independence, and demonstrate that they understand the realities of commercial contexts. This is required by service providers and program recipients. This is a significant challenge, particularly in remote contexts, where there is little access to new ideas or possibilities, such as career advice and work experience opportunities.

6.7 Status quo is not an option

A strong and very positive theme emerging from all workshops was that this ‘watershed’ stage of desert economic development in Australia was a very positive development. Programs initiated in the past had limited success because of fewer sustainable enterprises and the requirement for new ways of thinking and doing.

All participants agreed that the ‘status quo’ is not an acceptable option and that it is important to find new ways of working to get better outcomes.

7. Elements of successful initiatives

Apart from presenting and reflecting on the critical success factors and current gaps of their individual programs, participants used their considerable collective experience to outline key elements of successful initiatives. These are summarised below.

Attitude

- having tenacity and passion
- being willing to change (all parties)
- creating a safe environment to learn and develop confidence
- making hard decisions about enterprise viability and making it clear who will ‘profit’ (who benefits and how, community versus individuals, re-investing in the business).

Resources

- time to plan, build genuine relationships, reflect and learn
- information and knowledge management systems to make sure programs were not duplicated
- a key visionary/driver/leader from within the community with the ability to say ‘no’ in order to achieve a bigger vision
- a strong asset base to build on, of land management, art and culture
- experienced people, significant comparative advantage to be utilised
- mentoring support – appropriate support at different stages of enterprise development. Mentoring programs worked when they:
 - integrated work, family and community at every level
 - happened over a long time

Process

- a shared understanding, language and focus about what was being undertaken
- communication and genuine relationships/partnerships for the long term
- context-specific programs, taking into account the community’s assets (land and people)
- integrated thinking across agencies and stakeholders, at macro and micro levels
- sound, simple and appropriate governance practices
- quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation over time
- development of local capacity where possible
- support providers who know when to move people from dependence to independence
- recognition that some enterprises are driven by individuals and some by whole communities and that both models should be supported to succeed.

Specific enterprise opportunities in the desert identified during discussions include bush tucker production, livestock harvesting, mine rehabilitation, community maintenance services, community garden maintenance, tourism, Aboriginal culture and art promotion, and virtual business incubation centres.

8. Current gaps and inhibitors to success

After identifying critical success factors, participants reflected on the major gaps in service delivery and inhibitors to success. These are summarised below.

Attitude

- a culture of welfare/dependency on both sides of equation – return of self-respect required
- family and cultural expectations, leading to such things as ‘humberging’
- a lack of knowledge about alternative options, leading to few realistic and positive role models or information about realistic alternatives

- a risk-averse and over-accountable public sector that is not flexible enough to undertake the creative responses required. There cannot be innovation and entrepreneurship without risk.
- negative stereotypes, many myths, a lack of good stories and positive role models.

Resources

- programs are resource-intensive, but more needs to be done to focus on long-term benefit, rather than just short-term cost.
- a lack of capacity in skill levels, turnover of key personnel, access to the right skills at each stage of enterprise development
- a lack of telecommunications infrastructure to access world markets
- current inflexible access to finances, meaning very few individuals or communities have the security required to source funding for business start-up and/or expansion
- the massive size and complexity of the public sector leads to uncoordinated efforts, duplication and short-term projects rather than long-term development.
- the diversity and complexity of agreements, applications, reporting and acquittal processes, which becomes a very time-consuming and expensive process, often needing external professional expertise. There are few people with these skills.
- a difficult physical environment: heat, lack of water and remoteness.

Process

- a lack of overarching framework, strategy or networks to create focus and provide support across enterprise, community and/or agencies.
- a lack of coordination
- a lack of capacity in effective corporate governance and leadership
- inconsistent knowledge management – it is currently too dependent on the work and experience of individuals (who come and go); there is no systemic way to capture experiences and share knowledge.
- a lack of information sharing – no formal networks across support service providers, business enterprises and communities; difficult to reach remote locations
- a lack of processes that make sure the intellectual property of desert people remains theirs
- limited, short-term traditional economic measurements of success
- top-down implementation of programs, which do not allow for tailored initiatives, and do not encourage engagement or ownership of solutions
- few mentors and role models, who are also difficult to employ (logistics and expense) in remote areas
- few flexible employment models for Aboriginal Australians
- it is overwhelming!

Legislation

- taxation and employment laws that mitigate against sustainable remote micro-businesses
- tension between legal requirements and making documentation (planning, monitoring, acquittals) ‘real’. A whole industry of wasted resources goes into these accountability frameworks. While accountability (especially in relation to public funds) is critical, a new more workable approach is required.

9. Key opportunities to improve outcomes

Reflecting on the past and anticipating an improved future, workshop participants identified current opportunities that would enhance the success of initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods for desert Australians. These revolve around attitude, processes and resources.

Attitude

Participants recognise a need for government perspectives need to be more inclusive, and take into account attitudes from community and the broader society.

Process

There was a clear desire to achieve a more collective approach, with a genuine focus on the client. For instance, a one-stop shop could reduce duplication and lack of coordination. Likewise, a top-down, bottom-up approach could incorporate a micro-macro balance.

Making an impact can take a long time – increase implementation time frames could help with this. This also has planning and funding implications.

Improved focus is required – an overarching framework with common understanding, language and commitment to agreed outcomes could help with this. The current COAG process has the potential to deliver on this.

Other aspects which need consideration include:

- defining ‘business’, ‘profit’, ‘commercial’, and ‘sustainable’ for remote and Aboriginal contexts
- improving knowledge management to share lessons over time
- improving monitoring and evaluation
- networking between businesses and service providers
- using the power of mentoring to create genuine engagement and relationships
- understanding that successful programs:
 - integrate family and community
 - integrate learning with real work, on the job
 - tailor learning to individual readiness and capacity
 - use the stories and assets ‘in’ community in a bottom-up approach
 - create genuine partnerships focused on ‘supporting us to get our act together’
- getting the balance right between mainstream and Aboriginal economic sustainability
- celebrating, marketing and profiling ‘good news’ stories as an example to others (success breeds success)
- using flexible business models which consider cultural and family imperatives.

Resources

Many of these changes cannot occur without adequate resources. Participants note that most of these changes are time- and resource-intensive. They said that focus is needed over a long time to move people and communities from dependence to independence.

Finally, participants recognised the role of research. It is critical to monitor and review the programs and initiatives, to continually improve micro- and macro-initiatives and share this research for everyone’s benefit.

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Appendix 1: Participants in the workshops for Supporting Livelihoods and Small Business in Desert Australia

Alice Springs, NT (Thursday, 13 December 2007)

- Gabby Hargreaves, Industry Development Officer, Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines
- Kez Hall, Development Coordinator, Department of Local government, Housing and Sports
- Maritana Richards, Course Coordinator and Lecturer, Charles Darwin University
- Matt Darcey, Director Crop, Forestry and Horticulture, Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines
- Mike Steller, Regional Manager, Department of Business Enterprise and Regional Development
- Paul Fitzsimons, Director Remote Coordination, Charles Darwin University
- Phil Anning, Regional Director - Central Australia, Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines
- Rayleen Brown, Business Owner, Kungkas Can Cook
- Sue Harley, Regional Development Officer, Department of Business Enterprise and Regional Development
- Prof. Gweneth Norris, Charles Darwin University
- A/Prof. Ram Vemuri, Charles Darwin University
- Jan Ferguson, Managing Director, DKCRC
- Prof. Murray McGregor, General Manager Research, DKCRC
- A/Prof. Fay Rola-Rubzen, Project Leader, DesertBiz™, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre & Curtin University of Technology
- Delgermaa Altangerel, DesertBiz™, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre & Curtin University of Technology

Facilitator: Wendy Newman, Quintessence

Perth, WA (Wednesday, 2 April 2008)

- Angelique Fransen, Executive Officer, WAITOC Association & Tourism WA
- John Gill Senior, Project Officer, Office of Aboriginal Economic Development, Department of Industry and Resources
- Kay Bodman, Manager, Farm Business Development, Department of Agriculture and Food WA
- Keith Morris, Principal Research Scientist, Biodiversity Conservation Group, Science Division, Department of Environment and Conservation
- Lauren Stone, Small Business Policy Development Officer, Small Business Development Corporation
- Steve Scanlon, Business Development Officer, Indigenous Employment Program, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- A/Prof. Fay Rola-Rubzen, Project Leader, DesertBiz™, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre & Curtin University of Technology
- Delgermaa Altangerel, DesertBiz™, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre & Curtin University of Technology

Facilitator: Wendy Newman, Quintessence

Adelaide, SA (Tuesday, 15 April 2008)

- Andrew Curtis, Program Manager Workforce Development, State Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia
- Don Phillis, Deputy State Manager, Education, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relationship
- Glenda Mather, Senior Policy Officer, State Department of Further Education and Employment
- Ian Dickson, Senior Community Enterprise Development Officer, Indigenous Business Australia, Alice Springs
- Jon Bok, Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Linley Shine, State Manager, Indigenous Coordination Centre, South Australia
- Maralyn Leverington, State Manager, Commonwealth Government of Environment, Water, Heritage & the Arts
- Robert Hodge, Networker, FarmBis
- Stephanie Walker, Director Indigenous Relations, South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy
- Frances Wyld, University of South Australia
- Gido Mapunda, University of South Australia
- Joan Gibbs, University of South Australia
- Tricia Vilkinas, University of South Australia
- A/Prof. Fay Rola-Rubzen, Project Leader, DesertBiz™, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre & Curtin University of Technology
- Delgermaa Altangerel, DesertBiz™, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre & Curtin University of Technology

Facilitator: Wendy Newman, Quintessence

Canberra ACT (Wednesday, 21 May 2008)

- Dr. Ailsa McManus, Manager, Innovation Centre, Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
- Birgitte Ingram, Policy Officer, Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
- Glenn Webber, Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism
- Kirsti McQueen, Assistant Manager - Policy & Research, Indigenous Business Australia
- Matthew James, Branch Manager – Performance and Evaluation, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination
- Dr. Thilak Mallawaarachchi, Senior Policy Officer - NRM Strategies & Climate Change, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australian Government
- Ian Coombes, Program Officer - Indigenous Telecommunication, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
- Isabelle Nicoll, Graduate - Indigenous Telecommunication, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
- Prof. Roger Burritt, University of South Australia
- A/Prof. Fay Rola-Rubzen, Project Leader, DesertBiz™, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre & Curtin University of Technology
- Delgermaa Altangerel, DesertBiz™, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre & Curtin University of Technology

Facilitator: Wendy Newman, Quintessence

Brisbane, QLD (Friday, 23 May 2008)

- Eva Lietzow, Manager - Economic Participation and Welfare Reform, Indigenous Government Coordination Office, Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Colin Neville, Principal Advisor - Strategic Directions, State-wide Planning, Department of Main Roads
- David Brown, Industry Development Officer, Department of Primary Industries
- John Parke, Manager, Pacific Entrepreneurship Network
- Liz Logan, Manager, Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry
- A/Prof. Fay Rola-Rubzen, Project Leader, DesertBiz™, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre & Curtin University of Technology
- Delgermaa Altangerel, DesertBiz™, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre & Curtin University of Technology

Facilitator: Wendy Newman, Quintessence

Appendix 2: Overview of initiatives presented at the workshops

It is recognised that many initiatives exist to support the development of desert livelihoods across Australia. This summary only represents an overview of those presented at the workshops held.

1. Federal Government

Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations

Recent significant events:

- newly formed department (post-election)
- Prime Minister's apology focused on three pillars, with targets being set in the areas of:
 - health
 - housing
 - employment
- COAG agreement on a process to set and monitor targets in each area

Department structure:

- national office in Canberra and a state office in each capital city
- regional structure through ICCs
 - locations: Kalgoorlie, Derby, Geraldton, South Hedland, Broome, Kununnurra, Perth
 - 'Solutions Brokers' set up to link individuals and groups to the right program in the right area. Mechanism is Shared Responsibility Agreements

Programs:

- Job Network, a no-cost employment agency
 - coordinates work for the dole
 - New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) for business start-ups
 - Job Placement and Employment Training (JPET) is for jobs pathway employment training
 - in remote communities, lift exemptions for Centrelink recipients (i.e. they currently must engage in some activity for payments, for example, prepare for work, training, education; this is difficult in remote contexts)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment programs
 - wage assistance for small and medium enterprises employing job seekers: \$4400 in supplements for training/support
 - Structured Training and Employment Project (STEP) for medium to large employers; gives contracts to supply training. STEP is used in the Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES) program, recruitment and retention strategies and special facilitation projects.
 - STEP Employment Related Scheme: a tender process for provision of pre-employment, employment placement and mentoring
 - Indigenous Small Business Fund: for individual and not-for-profit organisations starting or expanding which funds feasibility studies, business plans and growth plans
 - Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme: encourages financial sector to finance initiatives
 - Emerging Indigenous Entrepreneurs Initiative: for economic development, business skills and financial literacy
 - Corporate Leaders for the Employment of Indigenous Australians
 - Emerging Indigenous Leaders Initiative

- Education programs: for example, English as a second language, Supplementary Recurrent Assistance, Indigenous Tutorial Assistant, Indigenous Youth Mobility Program (in two Adelaide schools)
- Indigenous Leadership Program.

Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Background to CDEP

- A prototype mutual obligation program – those participating in community-based work dropped from 34,000 to 24,000.
- At best, CDEP is a pathway to employment, connecting employees to employers.
- At worst, an alternative to income support – seen as a ‘disincentive’ to real employment, fostering a mentality of dependence.
- Challenge is moving on from this mentality of dependence.
- State-based organisations are part of the fabric of many communities
- Removal of CDEP in Northern Territory (NT) has huge impact, leaving a big hole.
- Funding on an annual basis makes it difficult to implement long term strategies.
- Announcement about the general future of CDEP is due any moment.

There are some success experiences with some participants being employed while some are moving to other programs (e.g. STEP).

Opportunity exists for research to better track CDEP participants to determine where they are, what they are doing, what training they got as a result of CDEP.

Challenges

- In the remote area context it is getting more and more difficult to find jobs for CDEP participants. Supply is the real issue. The regional model might be the way to go, but communities might not agree on this.
- Welfare reform removing exemption from activity testing – i.e. ‘meaningful activity’ does not mean provision of essential services to communities, as this is the core business of other agencies.
- Lack of will to tackle cross subsidy – the provision of services through CDEP that are the responsibility of other agencies.
- Credibility of CDEP in relation to training and skills development.
- CDEP participants are employees, but not taxed and don’t get superannuation.
- CDEP and Job Network participants competing for scarce opportunity.
- In establishing a business, it is too difficult to achieve key performance indicators (KPIs) especially in a remote context.
- Business success outside CDEP support is really questionable.

Successes

- Employment levels achieved

Issues arising

- The future of CDEP – Future support and community sustainability needs to be linked to income management strategies (as per Northern Territory initiatives).
- Money management is a key issue requiring clever solutions
- Regional service delivery as an alternative model – has both positive and negative implications
- Success is dependent on capacity

- Community versus broader community perception
- Importance of training – links to Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and universities
- From dependency to own business is a huge step – even in non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, non-remote areas.

Successful CDEP happens when there is:

- A strong Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Good Council
- Not dependent, used as a springboard to real employment.

Australian Bureau of Agricultural Regional Economics (NRM Strategies and Climate Change, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)

Background: Community forecaster, economic researcher. It is the only remaining economic research bureau in Australia.

150 staff based in Canberra:

- Agriculture and trade
- Climate change and the environment
- Productivity, water and fisheries
- Resources and Energy

Activities:

- Analysing and forecasting commodity markets
- Economic research and consulting
- Farm surveys and primary data collection

Stakeholders:

- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)
- Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (DRET)
- Other government departments

Broad issues:

- Farming – most products are exported, increasing productivity critical
- Market opportunities – proximity to Australia, non-traditional markets in East & SouthEast Asia
- Decreasing terms of trade for farmers
- Managing uncertainty – climate change impacts
- Rate of productivity needs to improve to mitigate negative impact

Challenges:

- Better coverage of data
- Regionally based analysis
- Challenge of productivity growth and climate change
- Policy change required as a result of data analysis
- Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resources Sciences (ABARES) research capability about 'hugeness' of desert
- Pastoral coverage but acknowledge some frames of information are missing
- Issue of confidentiality when critical mass is not there
- Opportunity cost in new enterprise/remote areas low.

Approach:

- Active engagement with clients and stakeholders
 - Collaboration and partnerships
 - Regional outlook conferences
 - Internet-based publications

Key program:

- Natural Heritage Trust – Federal/State Natural Resource Management (NRM) agencies
 - Bottom up projects
 - Top down national priorities

Meet at point of common need of top down, bottom up priorities. Common objectives negotiated.

www.abareconomics.com

Innovation Centre, Enterprise Connect Branch, Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

Background

- \$200m over 4 years to increase capacity of SMEs
- Manufacturing Centres
- Innovation Centres – Remote Enterprise Centre (Western Australia Queensland, Northern Territory and South Australia). Focus on networking/linking across sector, broad eligibility, start-ups and established business.
- Connect to new technology and knowledge bank
- Drive the knowledge economy.
- Will be launched throughout 2008

Delivery mechanism

- Business Advisors
- Matching funding
- Access and link – expertise, research, knowledge

Opportunities

- Ensure service does not overlap with existing support e.g. after start up....
- Department will work with Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC) in Alice Springs, NT to identify service gaps
- Not bricks and mortar, focus is on service provision.

Issues arising:

- Direct versus indirect models of engagement. Tend to be indirect through private providers - people must be able to make links to education providers, government providers, industry associations
- Policy and program need to be integrated.

Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism

(New Department from Industry, Tourism and Resources.)

Tourism Division is a policy agency. Minister Ferguson is developing National Tourism Strategy. It will focus on supply side, aimed at maximising the economic contribution of tourism.

Business Ready Program:

- 4 years, 6 regions (6 mentors) with 4 businesses each = 24 enterprises, half in remote areas.
- Desire to continue mentoring support focus throughout life of business.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ value of tourism comes from domestic market, yet very little engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business. Most are international businesses.
- Business profiles vary from micro to medium, sole traders run by individuals rather than community

Networking is critical – collectives such as Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC) and Indigenous Tourism Australia (ITA) are successful case studies in this regard.

Indigenous Telecommunications, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Programs:

- Broadband Guarantee
- Clever Networks
- Backing Indigenous Ability
- Community Connectivity

Backing Indigenous Ability (BIA)

- Remote, very remote discrete communities, 6 key elements
telephones, internet access, videoconferencing, training skills development, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander on-line content, regional agents (assist with application development)

Round one applications approved and being implemented – a one off contract

Round two on hold waiting review of round one and NT intervention. Telephones are still being rolled out to 400 communities who do not have a pay phone.

Issues arising:

- Definition of discrete communities means that Queensland has perhaps missed out?
- Committee looking at Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as a critical driver for economic and social development is going forward.

Performance and Evaluation, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination

Whole-of-government coordination role – Indigenous Affairs and Office of Women

Focus on closing the gaps in the areas of:

- Life expectancy
- Child mortality
- Literacy and numeracy
- Employment
- 4-year-olds' access to education
- Year 12 retention

Annual reports on these targets linked to state performance on these issues.

They aim for consistency in COAG targets and achievements.

Northern Territory National Emergency Response (NTER) – emergency response in NT is being reviewed by an independent group.

Programs:

- Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination
- Housing – strategic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing (NT remote areas, engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in building and maintaining)
- NTER
- CDEP discussion paper released this week – consultation process
- Indigenous Leadership Programs
- Land rights
- All of government coordination – single budget statement
- Whole of government evaluation – Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRA) Review, NTER review, Petrol sniffing, COAG Trials, National Indigenous Information System (Sharepoint)
- Clearing house for information on Indigenous affairs (COAG Initiative)
- Additional resources e.g. policing, housing, education
- SPP performance process, Federal government moving from 'how to' to identifying outcomes required.

CDEP discussion paper – What is a sustainable future? Is CDEP an impediment to mainstream employment? There is a need to focus on established, mainstream and emerging economies.

Closing the gaps:

- Good quality information is critical - consistent, base line data, comparable.
- Focus on urban population (70%) just as critical as rural and remote
- 'Market force' evaluation balanced with culturally appropriate evaluation.
- Innovation, price, opportunity
- Mutual responsibility.

2. State Government Initiatives

2.1 Northern Territory

Central Australia, Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines

- Department focuses mainly on enabling others.
- Strong technical base – new models for facility use, management
- Facilities as community assets
- Training based on action learning
- Breaking down barriers across government.
- Support to DBERD
- Indigenous Horticulture and Pastoral management (year 4 of a 5-year project) – trainees and jobs, new partners coming on board. Outcomes = mainstream business activities
- Business and Industry Services – pilot people through barriers to establishing and growing enterprises.

www.primaryindustry.nt.gov.au

Crop Forestry and Horticulture, Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines

- Business Plan for Primary Industry Sector across NT – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and regional
- Technical expertise as well as communication of that information
- Identifies client bodies
- Success of Horticultural industry in NT testament of success
- Focus from traditional Agriculture to community development.

Key elements: culture + market + sustainability (social, environment, economic)

Bush Tomato Project, Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines

Plant-based industry linked to Bush Tucker Project

- Working through production and marketing issues before communities roll out
- Need for mechanisation (cost issue) – Later discussion around balancing benefits of wild harvest (social, environmental) with cost benefit of mechanised harvest and possible tension between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environmental management and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander production systems
- Need for guaranteed supply/quality
- Wild harvest approach is high end niche
- Simple logistic solutions
- Links to other similar projects e.g. Broome Kakadu Plum – highly organised, family run, share in co-op, workshops on tree care, harvest, legalities, post-harvest evaluation
- Interaction across projects - Green Corps, prison...
- Whole of value chain approach, price makers, not price takers

Key elements: knowledge is power; people and passion the key

Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development

1. Whole of Government (strategic) initiatives
2. Indigenous Business Industry Services (IBIS) – on the ground ongoing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business and industry as well as grant money.
3. Regional Development
 - 9 Economic Development Committees (3 in the centre) – advisory committees to government
 - Project links, e.g. Alice business profile analysis
 - Ti Tree action plan of how to get people to work and keep them there. Working and non working stories, identifying gaps in opportunity (report due in February).
 - Alice Training package for business on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
4. ‘Moving Alice Ahead’ – Aim is to have Alice Springs businesses as preferred suppliers to the following sectors:
 - Mining
 - Defence
 - Pastoral/Horticulture
 - Tourism

Business growth = more jobs

- Business and government working together
- Develop strong relationships around procurement e.g. meet-the-buyer fora, Mining Expo, etc.
- Identify supply gaps
- Identify skills shortages
- Workshops –‘Upskills’, Business Start up (about 12 per year)
- Territory Business Growth programs (grants)

www.nt.gov.au/dberd/

Department of Local Government, Housing and Sports

Local government reform from 63 to 9 shires in 4 major towns. Plans required for new shires by Christmas

Looking for new models of local government

McDonalds Shire – 14 communities, 150 outstations

New model aiming at:

- More accountability
- Improved services to communities – means new workforce requirements/profiles
- Regional agreements across shires and agencies
- Local input (4 wards per shire) + local community boards
- 12 councillors
- October 2008 elections
- On July 1, 2008 new shires will come into being.
- 14 sites to be maintained with headquarters in Alice Springs, shared with Central Desert and Barkly Shires – Human Resources and Finance functions shared

Structure:

1. Core services – Parks, waste, litter, animals, cemeteries...
2. Agency services (Commonwealth funded) - aged care, child services
3. Commercial services – e.g. arts, visitor accommodation, etc. (community businesses not private enterprise)

www.nt.dlghs.nt.gov.au

2.2 Queensland

Indigenous Business Development

Objectives – Increased employment, income generation, capacity, joint ventures.

Small unit of 5

Provides support to COAG

Original focus in the Cape York region, using research as the starting point and then business development.

IEDO's (5) - front end, economic focus, work well when they know when it's time to move on (i.e. foster independence)

Grant scheme \$2.5m per annum

Business Establishment and Expansion – Eligibility broad. JV's 50% equity. Large and small projects. Can be sole trader, local government and/or large bodies. Sound business case is critical. Look to federal funds for business planning. Provides capital and equipment funding once business case has been established.

Capacity building – 4 Business Hubs (Southeast Queensland, Torres Straight, Bundaberg, Central)

Outcomes

200+ jobs

- 63 successful businesses
- Centres of enterprise promoting ancillary skills and services beyond mining.
- Micro (paper products) to macro (earthmoving) – support people who want to do business

Down side:

- Time spent out and about versus time focused on internal 'work'
- Time taken to support, nurture
- IEDO's moving on after front end work to foster the next project.

Issues arising:

- Fostering enterprise related to mining that lasts beyond mining e.g. mine restoration
- Skills shortages – new solutions required, new process of negotiation needed
- Cultural mindsets – need to be open to new possibilities
- Issue of thanking/rewarding – profile, recognition, role models (e.g. Greening Australia)
- Profiling the good news stories
- It's the people! How do we account for this? Engagement, ownership.
- Long term knowledge experience – preserving and transferring
- Commercial imperatives of economic development versus social, community and cultural imperatives

- Business survival in the context of humbugging, providing family support
- ‘Profit’ – whose? conflicting demands, re-investing in business, family, community
- Moving from providing support to self-sustaining business
- Being clear up front – what is the business/enterprise to achieve for whom?
- To be in business, there must be some non-negotiable tenants in place for that business to succeed. These need to be overt and understood.
- Participating in the mainstream – economy, industry, community
- Getting the language right – be clear we are all talking about the same thing.
- What’s in it for me? Why do I want to be involved, engaged?
- Getting a critical mass of learners
- If given the choice, fund many small things than few bog one, and use ripple effect to multiply success.

www.dtrdi.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/

Strategic Directions, State-wide Planning, Queensland Main Roads

Director General of Main Roads also has responsibility for the Cape York region.

Underlying principle – people who have knowledge have choice. There’s an example of a former CDEP worker who got a Certificate III and is now a plant operator in the mining industry. He did not know he had this opportunity until presented to him.

1993 – Rural Communities Service Unit

Went into communities providing mobile training out of the back of a truck. Mentoring on the job has been embedded in supervisory role.

1999 - Main Road Alliance

Several partners have the sole aim of developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprise.

- Private civil construction contractor
- Main Roads Construction arm
- Small business

There must be a viable business at the end of the day. The key driver/leader must have identified skills/knowledge he needed to be a genuine partner and actively pursued acquisition of these.

The Board has 4 members. Initially, a small company got contract to supply gravel to a large project. Non-financial criteria were used to ensure eligibility for contract. The contract involved penalty clause about active involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people learned on the job what was required.

Long term multiplier effect – now many of these workers are employed outside main road and contractor gets work outside main roads contracts.

Additional skills required in running the camp involve catering and accommodation. It is now a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Working schedules have been set– 10 days on, 5 days off, with 3 hours training per week on the job. There should be no alcohol. There are clear roles and responsibilities having ‘mutual responsibility’ as a strong theme.

Initiative won Premier's Award and national and international awards. This is important in terms of acknowledgement and status – success breeding success.

Critical success factors:

- Leadership from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander side of partnership
- Demonstrate to partners how important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnership is – support and praise
- Transference of high level project management skills and criticality of job skills – real skills, real jobs, real outcomes
- Quality partnerships true equality – shared and mutual responsibility, all share pain and gain. Performance rewards.

Initiative grew into \$100m plus contract – The Split Rock Inc Alliance

- Myuma
- Main Roads
- Private civil contractors

Took two years to work through cultural heritage issues

KPIs

- 2010 target exceeded – 70% formal training. New pre vocational training developed (Training and Employment Consultative Committee formed)
- Expanded local business capacity
- 'Jobs for Our Mob' – e-learning software developed
- \$13m gross income to Myuma and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business.
- Increased asset base – equipment, human capacity
- Successful model for others to see and be motivated that success is possible
- Myuma now stand alone, but took considerable time and money.

Success required:

- Tenacity
- 1 participant, 5 beneficiaries
- new ways of measuring cost and benefit – it was difficult to change people's view, didn't want to 'lose' money from social programs
- 'Bitumen Dreaming'

Issues arising from presentation:

- Need for independent research – evidence needed to support program success and follow impact longitudinally.
- Public recognition of success brings more success

Next time:

- More management training at point of need
- More 'true believers', champions to guide the project through key decision points.

www.mainroads.qld.gov.au - Community and the Environment – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs

Economic Participation and Welfare Reform, Indigenous Government Coordination Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Prime Minister Rudd's Sorry speech sent some clear targets which have since been adopted by COAG, namely halving employment gaps:

- Participation in the labor force
- Hours worked
- Industry sectors
- Skills levels
- Income

Business development focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assets.

Sub group of COAG working on reform options to be presented by October 2008. Discussion to date has been focused on areas that produce the gaps:

- Step One: Addressing literacy and numeracy levels
- Step Two: Completion of schooling and post compulsory schooling – speed of action critical
- Step Three: Engagement in the labor market.
 - Addressing the welfare issue: income, motivations/incentives
 - New visions of what the possibilities are: knowledge of alternative options for life
- Step Four: Capacity to participate in work – overcoming such obstacles as skills in financial literacy, access to child care, alcohol abuse
- Step Five: Involvement in work and progress in work - involves career and professional development, achieving potential and having choice.
 - Flexible models for engagement – part time, seasonal, shared
 - Part time to full time pathways
 - Entry level and higher level options
- Step Six: Industry distribution. Current prominence of employment in public sector. Robust economy needs private sector participation. Distribution should reflect community population profile.

Issues:

- 25,000–30,000 people in employment required to reduce the gap
- Given current lack of success, something profoundly different needs to be done.
- Labor shortages present opportunities
- Currently some good examples, but:
 - Not well linked
 - Structural change required across state and federal initiatives
 - Recognise that we got it wrong and be committed to doing it differently – ongoing learning
 - Change what we measure (outcomes, not outputs)
 - Change funding models – longer time horizons
 - Training linked to real opportunities
 - Put solutions into an economic context
 - Create broader perspectives of career opportunities
 - Technological infrastructure critical
 - Transport infrastructure critical
 - Whole family solutions, e.g. using prison and school systems to create new opportunities
 - State/federal opportunities such as infrastructure scanning, forecasting need
 - Creating early alliances with education links
 - All requires long term planning – this is not currently done well
 - Develop one integrated way to think and focus on solutions, with many strategies to meet

- contextual need.
- Share information and experiences, build on the good things already in place – contextualise successful models.
- Develop tools so we don't have to re-invent the wheel and don't repeat mistakes.
- Give the issue (and solutions) visibility.

www.premiers.qld.gov.au

Queensland Department of Primary Industries

Background

- 4,000 employees
- Focus areas: Biosecurity, Livestock, Plan, Fisheries, Agrifood, Business Development (Biofuels, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander)
- Focus of work: Enhancing agribusiness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Broad outcomes involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in primary industries. Used to be only available for landholders, now has broader application.
- Works in liaison with Department of State Development (IEDOs).
- Provides technical advice on the ground but keen to be more strategic about long term viable projects where people are engaged for the long term.
- Whole systems approach, family-based with participatory planning (Property Management Planning) from the outset.
- Process takes incredible amount of time – took 12 years to sort out tenancy issues in one case.
- Indigenous Land Corporation buys land, must undertake Property Management Planning.

Property Management Planning Process:

- Step One – The land – What have you got? What can it do?
- Step Two – Value adding possibilities – feasibilities explored. Leadership/driver required if further support is to be given and shift to independence is to be achieved.
- Step Three – Determine responsibilities (aged care, art culture, economic development, education and training). Determine possibilities about the business model – profit sharing, who owns the resource? Business re-investment. Who is the best person/people to work here? What are the capacities needed?

Deed of Grant In Trust (DOGIT) Community Round Tables:

- Round Tables consist of local government, local communities and state government that determine community futures. Secretariat is supplied by government. There's mixed success, but getting better since Indigenous Partnership Agreements have been in place. These have put an emphasis on shared responsibility of government and community.
- Desert community – Birdsville, Bedouin – has key drivers and a whole of community approach.
- Premise: Poor food = poor nutrition, therefore need to grow own food. Participative Planning Model is used to determine most suitable way to achieve this. It isn't just growing the food; it is also education about good nutrition, etc.

Economic Development Pathway is critical for the way forward. Communities need to see others that are achieving success and learn from these initiatives.

Give them the decisions, ask them the questions, don't do it for them – end point must be independence.

Advice:

- Sit and listen
- Understand the environment of the community – physical and cultural
- Reflect, review
- Ensure responsibility is shared with local key driver.

Opportunities:

- Floriculture – wildflowers
- Gardens
- Wild game harvesting (pigs, goats, camels, kangaroos)
- Spinifex
- Bush foods (Queensland Bush food Cooperative)
- Skills supply (administrators, cotton pickers, labourers)

Issues arising:

- Cold chain logistics in remote areas

www.dpi.qld.gov.au

2.3 South Australia

Indigenous Coordination Centres (SA application of Federal Program)

Key programs

- Revival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language
- Indigenous Culture support
- Indigenous Broadcast Program
- Sport and Recreation

Art Industry Strategy

Stakeholders – work with Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICC) structure - whole of government approach, Adelaide Solutions Broker, Australia Council, AASSA, DesArt, CDEP

The art industry can deliver a good livelihood. There are some real success stories in numerous locations (some impacted by withdrawal of CDEP).

Challenges:

- Art as an industry for livelihood is different from art as a culture
- Infrastructure to support businesses – a place to work! Government departments are working together to provide resources needed.
- Humbugging; sharing dollars, understanding dollars in a cultural sense
- Changes to CDEP
- Young people need to be engaged
- Income/taxation issues

Opportunities

- Art centre as a focus point for further learning and education (e.g. money management)
- Possibilities re: SRAs
- Art centre as a safe place, food provider
- Schools also focal centre for communities. An idea is to link schools, art centres.
- Involving Aboriginal people in the solution
- Geographic areas (e.g. Flinders Ranges, Port Augusta)

Successes

- RPAs – Land Management initiatives – has passion and commitment from family group, provided mentor to support and thus huge progress made, i.e. consolidated investment of money, people, energy.
- Flinders Ranges – Northern Regional Development Board.
- Evidence-based data collection
- Optimising service delivery – from funding provider, adding value by encouraging focused programs and cross referencing with other initiatives.
- Flexibility – context specific solutions
- Learning from the past and each other – reflect, review and focus.

www.indigenous.gov.au

Department of Further Education and Employment (SA Government) Workforce Development

A statewide approach that has three key outcomes:

1. High skill economy
2. Quality employment and
3. Better workforce planning

Has links to SA Works (the delivery arm)

Three divisions:

1. Industry Workforce Development – Industry Skills Boards, as well as Mining and Defence industries. Focus on Learning to work, career information (talking up industry), Agrifood analysis.
2. Workforce Analysis and Planning
3. Workforce Participation – Modelling what works well in SA works in the regions (SACES 2008).

Workforce Development, Department of Primary Industries and Resources

Three divisions:

1. Minerals and Resources
2. Agriculture, Food and Wine
3. Local Government and Planning

Workforce Development in Agrifood. Each industry has plans for future growth, and how the workforce underpins this.

Aim is to get their house in order to be ahead of other industry sectors

Agrifood Workforce Action Plan has 3-year and 10-year horizons. Key outcome is to have a workforce that matches workforce needs (no workforce = no development)

Successes at enterprise level

- High quality employers – conditions, salary, career paths

Gaps

- Industry not necessarily good at it

Challenges

- Industry, state level problem action
- Scale of enterprises in remote areas – need to link initiatives to get scale.

Opportunities

- Linking mining to agriculture – forestry land management (e.g. Iluka) Match needs to skills.
- Native vegetation act

www.pir.sa.gov.au

Farmbis Networking

Presentation based on Farm Business (FarmBis) in arid zone of SA

- FarmBis subsidised fees for management training
- Covers a broad range of programs and topics mainly provided by private providers
- Connects those who want to learn to those who want to teach.
- 274 people in arid lands participated
- \$170 million contributed by Australian Government, SA Government and Indigenous Land Corporation.

Successes

The Virtual Classroom – a report is due out soon. Reliant on having Information Technology (IT) infrastructure.

Bits we learned that we hope will endure:

- On site, in situ training – out to clients
- Didn't have to be accredited
- Free for service at point of need
- Not always a course; could be a community planning process, as long as learning occurs.
- Community relevance
- E.g. horse training in (APY) Lands

www.pirsa.gov.au

2.4 Western Australia

Department of Industry and Resources (DoIR)

Lead agency in WA for Aboriginal Economic Development

\$ 5 million per annum, \$2m for project staff

Brokers deals with other agencies and calls on other DoIR staff and resources

Provides leadership and innovation in Aboriginal Economic Development

- Business development
- Investment and asset ownership
- Sustainable Development

State Indigenous Economic Development Framework (IEDF) – cross agency, Federal, state government interface, across industry sectors.

Key stakeholders – Industry and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community

www.doir.wa.gov.au

Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC)

Vision: A healthy diverse and well managed Western Australian Environment

Mission: Working with community, ensuring that WA's environment is valued, protected and conserved for its intrinsic value and for the appreciation and benefit of current and future generations.

MATES involved approximately 10 participants annually. They were mentored to manage national parks and other Department initiatives. Success of the program is evidenced by:

- High retention rates
- Strong family and work-based support
- Regionally based
- Enduring – been in place long term
- Across system support and commitment to program
- Individually designed to meet interests/needs and ability of each participant
- Holistic learning embedded in 'real' work
- Build on knowledge and experience Aboriginal people have with land management, rich in culture and stories and using intergenerational knowledge.

www.dec.wa.gov.au

Small Business Development Corporation

Background:

- Business information and licensing Centre
- Small business services – free information (one-on-one) and access to specialist
- Policy and planning
 - Support and advice to the Minister
 - Small business advocacy service
 - Liaise with small business sector
 - Small Business Network
 - Industry associations
 - Local Government

- Small Business Network
 - 26 small business centres provide local support
 - Remote businesses as a target group
 - Derby project focusing on three businesses to determine:
 - What are the barriers?
 - What's needed to overcome them?
 - What's there that can be used?
 - What else is needed?
 - Role of mentoring and support
 - Improve coordination of delivery of services

www.sbdc.com.au

WA Department of Agriculture and Food

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategy in the Pilbara, Kimberley, Southern Ag (SAILS) and Gascoyne

Principles:

- Equity in outcomes
- Development with rather than for

Outcomes:

- Improved capacity – extensive training
- Ecologically sustainable
- Effective management of biodiversity

Structure

- 22 high-level people with passion to make a difference working with people 'in situ' – real work, real business

Strategies

- Production management
- Marketing
- Business monitoring
- Capacity building

Demand for program is significant; participants chosen carefully

- Multi invitation entry – develop level of enterprise concept
- Stability of community is important
- Want to learn and succeed
- Shared responsibility

www.wadaf.gov.au

3. Community, Industry, Not for Profit Organisations

WA Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC)

Background:

- Council emerged as a result of Indigenous Tourism Forum in 2000, recognising the need for networking, support and advocacy.
- Board is composed of 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism operators
- Adelaide Electroplating Distributors (AED) has support and partnership with Tourism WA. This has increased understanding of the remote, rural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context.
- Since July 1st government strings have been cut.
- Now supported by 2 part timers.

Current role

- Focus – national and international promotion through booklets, websites and awards. High profile of industry sector has been achieved.
- Mentoring support for communities and individuals
- Advocacy e.g. with Tax office rules and their impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business, representation on various steering committees.
- One-stop shop to link businesses, itineraries
- Receive curriculum vitae (CVs) of young people and facilitate their education and employment opportunities
- Marketing export-ready Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander products – has grown from 16 to 55 operators
- Indigenous Accreditation Program – aim is to accredit 10 tourism enterprises annually
 - Developing a working tool kit to assist with licenses, employment issues, suppliers, support.
- Product Manuals – Australian Indigenous Experiences Data base.

www.naturebase.net

www.tourism.wa.gov.au

www.doir.wa.gov.au

Charles Darwin University, Alice Springs

Initiative arose from need for:

- Across sector coordination
- Better match of community need and strengths – determined by developing relationships and matching these with the right service provider
- Longer term plans arising from invitation from community

Actions:

- Skills and qualification audit (4 thousand done to date)
- Aspirations – pathways to aspirations developed
- Training network (30+ participants)

- ‘Cooperation’ – working together; shared provider

Desired outcome:

- People driving own community
- Open eyes to opportunity
- People from community involved in training development and delivery and being paid for it
- Learning hubs established and run by community – supported from within with floating lecturers providing external support
- Technology as a means of delivery

Kungkas Can Cook

- Both partners are from the community
- Partner is now involved in community development in Tennant Creek
- Need arose from skills they had both developed at Land Council – asked to cater for 100 people in the bush. Finally left job to establish home-based business
- Had mentor for 12 months to assist with development of a business plan
- Received \$70K loan to establish commercial kitchen
- Driven by need to support their people
- Used strengths of parents, grandparents
- Business grew and Gina wanted to pursue other paths
- Bush Tucker food focus – linking food, culture and community
- Community driven, with support developing over time.
- Focus from here – product development from local harvest

Women as assets

- Want to stay in country
- Focused on education of kids
- Multi task/roles, connecting across opportunities (but burnout)
- Support needed – mentoring at point of need
- Family support is strong
- Working alongside as opposed to external ‘experts’
- Communication skills are the foundation to build on – relate to others and engage
- Role models
- Financial literacy that is imbedded in real work
- Choose relevant reality

Key elements: passion, commitment, learning by doing

Indigenous Relations, South Australian Chamber of Minerals and Energy (SACM&E)

Risk = Hazard + Outrage. This drives the resources industry in relation to social license.

Aboriginal communities are not high profiled as employers and/or employees.

Industry dream – To have a one-stop shop for all programs and knowing who in the community is the right person to talk to.

Overview of SACM&E

- Represent and lobby
- Leadership
- Best practice
- High level social and corporate responsibility = good public image

Two structures used in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues

1. Mainstream employment
2. Create and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business enterprise through the Indigenous Business Enterprise Foundation

Stakeholders

- The resources industry
- The community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities – Land use Agreements, relationships
- 29 government departments – terrifying and discouraging

Ocxiana as a model company – Introduced themselves to the community with a blank A4 sheet of paper, asking people to put name and Expression of Interest (EOI) for employment. Got 153 responses, but no one was drug free and had sufficient literacy, numeracy, and license to enter certificate I course. Thus, a pre course focus was developed. It started with 8 and grew to 15. Employment is near 30.

Outcome: sustainable real jobs, employment after life of mine.

Need: vision, drive, literate/numerate disassociation, linking the personal with business.

Programs:

- Statewide – Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with state government, Aboriginal movement, Council – got lost in government maze, leading to anger and dissatisfaction.
- Mineral Council of Australia – 8 pilot programs between industry and community – move to statewide result
- Partnerships critical

Success:

- Too early to tell, but using industry seen as positive, creating conceptual change, habit of partnership. This requires different ways of working and thinking.
- Goal 100 (now goal 1000) Industry buy in, people link.
- Polly Farmer program in Port Augusta. Intensive tutoring. Five kids are now university-bound.

Positives:

- Resources industry prepared to work together
- Flexibility
- Learn as we go.

Gaps:

- Huge
- Large portfolios
- Issues are high level

- Misses micro on the ground impact
- Secondary school engagement. The Department of Education needs to be engaged/act

Filling the gaps

- Program in the pipeline – learning to partner – moving beyond the fiefdoms, growing good work places.
- Centre for Social Responsibility for mining – successful program identifying steps for implementing and evaluating programs
- All partners make long term commitment beyond 3 years
- Use CM&E to advocate for change
- Support for students at all levels of education – mentor funding, connecting students home

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA)

Statutory body emerging from demise of ATSIC with autonomous structure aimed to achieve self sufficiency and economic self management, advancing commercial and economic development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Vision: A nation in which the first Australians are economically self sufficient and an integral part of the economy.

Objective: To be a leader/facilitator focused on engagement resulting in enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's economic independence.

Background

- 200 staff in National Regional Offices
- Funding – reinvestment from Activities, Government funds
- Key stakeholders:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients – through government partnerships and financial support
 - Private sector – broker and/or capital partners
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients – through government partnerships and financial support
- Programs:
 - IBA Investments - \$1m +
 - IBA Homes -\$500m in loans
 - IBA Enterprises – fostering small to medium enterprises
 - IBA Partnerships – interface between government, research, corporates
 - CDEP transition program - as a result of intervention strategy. It aims to assist up to 50 NT

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

DEEWR funded CDEPs to transition their community to viable subsidiary activities into business (\$2.5 million allocation)

- Capital loans for business support
- Assessment process - assess 49 programs in 6 weeks to determine stand alone status.

Initiatives:

- Urban and rural focus – 75% loans are less than \$100k

- Business Loans - Viability (loans not grants) has very low default rate
- Business Support Program – ongoing support on finance and marketing through preferred providers. Learning activities. Taking CDEPs to commercial viability. Economic development in land, using action research and scoping (opportunities and markets).

Issues arising:

- Full-time employment versus livelihood – part time, seasonal, vocational, cultural, continuity, family engagement
- The need to look for different indicators of success, e.g. degree of entrepreneurial spark and the flow on. What is ‘business’, what is ‘success’?
- Gaps around financial literacy and numeracy
- Difficulty in overcoming the most basic hurdles re tax and employment law.
- Alignment across agencies is very poor – timing and nature of support, focus and criteria can be at odds.
- Loans versus grants culture

Pacific Entrepreneurs Network

NFP NGO assisting grass roots entrepreneurs, usually working at a micro level. Developed over last three years to create network of those working in a remote context.

Focus: Capacity building and empowerment through information and support for those fostering enterprise. Exchanging ideas with emphasis on cooperation not competition.

Initiatives include:

- Virtual conferences – Brisbane video/teleconference in October. Five sessions involving Global Development Learning Network and Cape York Digital Network. Technology critical. Aims to involve variety of participants - grassroots to policy makers.
- Newsletter – Each issue themed. Short Article and literature search, cross promotion of ideas.
- Award program – Excellence on the ground to inform people about what is happening. Criteria driven improvement. Links projects.
- Mentoring program – Developed through STEPPERS program by Australian Business Peoples Unit TAFE. Focus on mentoring the mentors. Met once a fortnight for 20 weeks. Learning by doing, with face-to-face opportunity to reflect and plan within learning circles. Builds confidence of mentors, with focus on process first (content secondary).
- Planned symposium – Leadership Entrepreneurship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

What has worked well:

- Delivery of skills development through mentoring
- Genuine partnerships built through trust and respect

Needs improvement:

- Ongoing support of mentors
- Attracting new students through these networks (grow the network through the network)
- Evaluation of evolution – ‘one off’ element of the program not useful.

Key barriers:

- Political/social segregation and status of the issues

www.penonline.info

DKCRC Partners

