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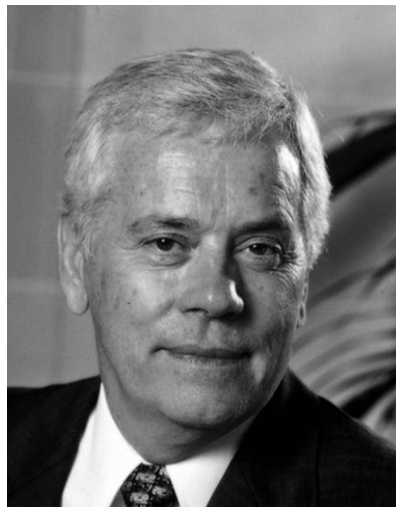
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President's Report

Transforming school education

Australia has been moving towards a national school curriculum since the Council of Education Ministers issued their Hobart Declaration in 1989, setting out what they called the *Common and Agreed National Goals of Schooling in Australia*. These were revised in 1999 in the Adelaide Declaration and in 2008 in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*.

Below the level of the goals, there were attempts to collaborate on more detailed statements of intended outcomes that, it was explicitly declared, did not constitute a curriculum. Responsibility for curriculum was left with the states and territories. That operational collaboration foundered as states and territories went their own way. The most recent effort, commenced in 2008, has moved further and faster than those that preceded it for a number of reasons.



One is that a national agency was set up to undertake the task rather than to leave it to collaborative work among state agencies with other, more important domestic agendas. The Rudd Opposition declared during the 2007 election campaign that, if elected, it would create a national curriculum in English, mathematics, science and history. In January 2008, the Government announced the establishment of an Interim National Curriculum Board, with me as Chair and Tony Mackay as Deputy Chair, and to which it invited state and territory governments and Catholic and independent school authorities to nominate candidates for membership.

A second is that the effort had the authority and support of the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers as well as their education ministers. The Interim Board, for example, was formally appointed on the authority of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

A third is that the work was established on a tight timeline. The Interim Board was appointed in April 2008 and asked to create a national K-12 curriculum in English, mathematics, science and history for implementation from 2011.

A fourth is that adoption of a national curriculum was negotiated into the national partnership agreements as a condition for federal education funding for states, territories, non-government education systems and independent schools.

A fifth, and perhaps the most important reason, is that there is an increasing tendency for Australia to think nationally about a range of policy areas and to pay more attention to international comparisons than interstate ones. The OECD's international comparative work on education has been influential in this respect.

The current effort to produce a national curriculum could falter as others have but there are further encouraging signs that it is on a more secure path than earlier efforts. The council of education ministers has requested the development of a national curriculum in geography, languages other than English and the arts, in a second phase that is now underway. As well, the council has requested a report on the feasibility of making the rest of the curriculum national, with the expectation that this work will be taken up in a third phase.

The National Curriculum Board was set up in 2008 as an interim body, so that it could get on with the work while the governments sorted out the governance arrangements for an ongoing body. The prime options were a not-for-profit company owned jointly by the ministers and a federal statutory authority or agency. In the end the ministers chose a statutory authority of the federal parliament but kept the state and territory ministers engaged by making the council of ministers the policy body for the authority.

During the negotiations the ministers decided to broaden the role of the authority by giving it responsibility for a range of related activities on which the federal, state and territory governments were also cooperating in a variety of ways. This broader role is reflected in the title of the new body, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). Legislation to establish ACARA was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate in late 2008, although the membership of the ACARA Board was not finalised until May 2009. In the meantime, the Interim National Curriculum Board continued with the curriculum development work. Work on assessment under the National Assessment Program (NAP) and the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) continued under the existing arrangements. Work on the proposed new public reporting on schools had begun through a number of working groups but was taken up in earnest when ACARA was established. The *My School* website (www.myschool.edu.au) was the first major product and it generated enormous interest. In the first twelve days, there were 1.64m visitors who made 1.96m visits and viewed 91.98m pages. There are five pages for each school so many visitors viewed the details on more than one school.

The information included in *My School* will be expanded in the coming years. The next release, in late 2010, will include information on funds available to schools from all sources: federal government, state/territory governments, fees and donations. The necessary data on non-government schools are already collected. For government schools, the major task will be to apportion to individual schools expenditure incurred centrally in departments of education on activities undertaken on behalf of all government schools.

In principle, it should also be possible in the next release to report on student improvement, since those assessed in years 3, 5 and 7 in 2008 will be assessed in years 5, 7 and 9 respectively in 2010. Many students will have moved schools, from primary to secondary in some cases, and between schools at the same level in others, so analysis and reporting of changes over the two years will require students to be tracked with some kind of unique identifier. Work to establish such an identifier is underway.

Public reporting on schools raises the stakes for student achievement data and is generating claims that school practices will be distorted by a narrowing of the curriculum to focus on what is tested and, even more deliberately, by teaching to the test. Teaching to the test is a relatively unproductive strategy where literacy and numeracy are the domains tested. Ensuring students are familiar with the test form is important but, beyond that, improvement will most readily be achieved through a full curriculum. Literacy is developed in English, but also in history, the arts, science and virtually all subjects since all depend to some extent on literacy. Numeracy will be developed in mathematics but also in science and in other studies that use quantitative methods. The best way to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of students is, therefore, to provide them with a full, rich curriculum.

Broadening the assessment can also reduce the risk of narrowing teaching. At present, all students at a year level take the same tests, so the total test materials are limited to what students can do in the testing time available. If more assessment materials were developed, different tests could be given to different students within schools with a better coverage of the domain overall. With modern psychometrics, it is still possible to report students' performances on common literacy and numeracy scales.

The main driver of reform will be the curriculum, not testing or reporting, however much attention might be given to the reporting on individual students to parents and the comparative reporting on schools provided by *My School*.

In developing the English, mathematics, science and history curricula, the Interim National Curriculum Board developed a novel approach that ACARA is now using with geography, languages other than English and the arts. It is to produce, first, a relatively brief document proposing aims, purposes and a broad scope and sequence of content over the thirteen years of K-12. For English, mathematics, science and history, relatively small teams of academics and teachers were established to produce drafts of these broad papers that were released in early October 2008 for review and comment over the following four months. The papers were revised and published in early 2009 when they became frameworks for the development of more detailed curriculum content. This initial discussion of broad scope and sequence before work began on the detail proved to be very helpful. It enabled a review the forest without becoming lost in the trees. It also opened the ground for public debate on the big issues surrounding these curriculum areas right at the beginning of the development phase.

The details have since been developed for K-10 English, mathematics, science and history and were published on 1 March 2010 for review and comment until 23 May 2010 (www.australiancurriculum.edu.au). The curricula for the senior years will be published for review and comment by late April or early May. The curricula give content descriptions to set down the knowledge, understanding and skills that students are to develop. These are the students 'entitlements'. Elaborations are provided for teachers and others who may need assistance to understand a content description better or to develop ways of teaching it.

The curricula also set out achievement standards that describe the quality of learning (the depth of understanding, extent of knowledge and sophistication of skill) expected of students at each year level. Students who achieve the standard will be well able to progress to the next level. To make these standards clearer for teachers, annotated samples of student work are being developed for each year level. Some are provided in the draft documents provided for the consultation and more are being developed.

When writing a curriculum, taking account of the extraordinary variation in student achievement is an interesting task. We know from many empirical studies just how wide the range of performance is. Many students in year 3 are above the average of year 5 students. Many students in year 7 are below the average of year 5 students. Streaming students can reduce the diversity, but certainly not remove it or the need for teachers to deal with individual students where they are.

It makes no sense to try to describe a curriculum for each year level that accommodates that diversity. The result would be extensive duplication across year levels. The approach taken in the draft Australian curriculum is to set out a progression of study by year level that teachers can use to foster the development of individual students from where they are. In some subjects there is a fairly good empirical base for creating a 'developmental progression'. For others, the selections will be somewhat arbitrary until evidence from professional practice accumulates to refine the sequence. Where possible, international comparisons have also been used in establishing the timing in the sequences. In mathematics, for example, those developing the draft Australian curriculum have examined the curricula in Singapore and Finland to ensure that we are not expecting less of our students than they do of theirs.

The curriculum is unashamedly built around disciplines as a well- and long-established way of representing knowledge. It also pays significant attention to general capabilities (creativity, ethical behaviour, ICT, intercultural understanding, literacy, numeracy, self-management, social competence, teamwork, and thinking skills) and cross-curriculum dimensions (Indigenous

perspectives, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and commitment to sustainable living) but intends that these be developed within the subject domains and not be seen as independent and additional domains of learning. Developmental progressions on these capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions are also being developed to ensure that they are dealt with coherently in the curriculum. The search facilities in the electronic form in which the draft curriculum is published make it easy to see where these have been built into the English, mathematics, science and history curricula.

The draft curriculum, and the final version no doubt, will be described in various ways. It has been described as 'back to basics' but that fails to capture the attempt in the curriculum to set expectations as high as those in the best performing countries. The curriculum explicitly seeks to establish the basics but also to build on them. The mathematics and science curricula, in particular, offer a reduction in content to provide space for students to work in more depth. 'Less is more' is the dictum that underpins these developments.

It would be very helpful if Fellows of the Academy were to review and comment on the drafts, bringing their expertise to bear while recognising that K-10 curricula have to provide for everybody, including those for whom year 10 will provide their last experience in some subjects and those for whom it represents a step along the way to becoming an expert.

Barry McGaw

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Australian of the Year 2010 is **Professor Patrick McGorry** FASSA, Youth Mental Health, ORYGEN Research Centre, University of Melbourne.

In the Australia Day Honours list, **Professor Max Coltheart** FASSA, Scientific Director and Federation Fellow, Macquarie Centre for Cognitive Science at Macquarie University, was awarded an AM 'for services to cognitive psychology as a researcher and academic, and to people with learning difficulties.'

Vale Fellows

Leonard Broom, AM (Panel A, Sociology, 1972) passed away in Santa Barbara, California, USA on 19 November 2009.

Kevin William Ryan, CBE (Panel C, Law, 1978) passed away in Queensland in November 2009.

Former Fellow (1972 - 2003) **Enid Mona Campbell**, AC, OBE (Panel C, Law) passed away in Melbourne on 20 January, 2010.

Obituaries will appear in the *Annual Report*.

The Heartland: Voices from Central Australia

Part 2

From Beast of Burden to Symbol of the Desert/Feral Animal: The metamorphoses of the camel in central Australia¹

Petronella Vaarzon-Morel and Glenn Edwards

Introduction

In recent months, national and international awareness of the existence of a feral camel population in central Australia has grown dramatically. In part, this is due to the circulation in the mass media of images showing hundreds of camels converging on Kaltukatjara, an Aboriginal settlement in the Northern Territory (NT), and the accompanying criticism of proposals to reduce the population by aerial culling. Although apparently in jest, CNBC America finance news anchor Erin Burnett labelled Prime Minister Kevin Rudd a 'serial killer' for condoning the culling. In response, sections of the animal welfare lobby took up Burnett as a poster girl for her stance against camel killing. Ironically, Burnett was not against killing camels for consumption, but was opposed to their being slaughtered and not used for meat.

Perhaps the most strident opposition to camel culls emanates from England, where, in recent times, images of camels on Cable Beach and in the Red Centre have been used to promote Australian tourism. Lara Bingle's opening lines in the 'Where the bloody hell are you?' Tourism Australia campaign illustrates how emblematic of Australia the camel has become: 'We've poured you a beer and we've had the camels shampooed, we've saved you a spot on the beach. We've even got the sharks out of the pool...'² Images of camel strings silhouetted against the sun as it sets on Australian beaches serve to bring the outback experience to the coast in a fun way. On the other hand, advertisements for camel treks conjure images of spiritual journeys to the interior and the exploration of remote and pristine landscapes accessible only by camel - an animal that is said to leave but a light footprint on the earth. With feral camels invisible in these scenarios, is it any wonder that proposals to cull camels have been met with offers to save thirsty camels from entering communities in search of water by building fences and carting water to them?

The emergence of the Australian camel onto the world stage is a recent phenomenon, as McKnight's analysis of the place of the camel in Australian consciousness during the 1960s indicates. In what is regarded as the classic text on the camel in Australia, McKnight wrote that:

The Australian camel is a vague element in Australian consciousness today. For most people a dromedary is as exotic as a minaret...Most people are aware that camels had some role in the country's history, but only a small proportion realizes that feral camels exist today in large numbers.³

Surveying camels in the collective imagination, McKnight observed that despite being 'an intriguing subject', the camel had been virtually ignored in Australian fiction, with only cameo appearances in the reminiscence genre of literature. In relation to public exhibits of feral camels, he found that some featured in country wildlife parks and a few were displayed in zoos around the country, although rarely identified as camels caught in the wild. He also noted that exhibitions concerning the use of camels in settler Australia were

rare. On the attitude of the general public toward camels, McKnight concluded that it was difficult to generalise, due to the general lack of awareness about 'their presence in large numbers in a feral state'. In contrast, he found that in central Australia the attitude of pastoralists toward feral camels was 'significant'. While he suspected that those who had least contact with feral camels showed greater tolerance toward them, he found that where feral camels damaged cattle station property, pastoralists shot them whenever the opportunity arose. Interestingly, among Aborigines in the western border region of South Australia and the Northern Territory, the situation was radically different. In this region Aborigines utilised pack camels for transport and sometimes for tourism.⁴

The past few decades have witnessed a growing interest in camel-related material. The publication of non-fiction books,⁵ Yoram Gross's 1983 animated feature *The Camel Boy*, and a major museum exhibit⁶ have led to renewed interest in the role of Muslim cameleers and their camels in settler society and its economy. Robyn Davidson's camel journey through central Australia during the mid 1970s - which she recounted in her book *Tracks* and a book and CD of the trip⁷ - presaged a new form of eco-camel adventure and tourism.

Yet, until recently, feral camels were a sleeper for much of Australia's coastal-dwelling population. Events such as the dust storm which descended on Sydney in late 2009⁸ and the release of a recent report⁹ on feral camels have served to raise awareness about their increasing population and the harms they can cause to Australian environments. However, as some of the varied and often vehement reactions by the public to proposals to manage feral camel impacts reveal, there is a continuing lack of understanding of the issues camels pose in central Australia. Feral camels provide a unique vantage point to explore not only these issues but also the complex relationships Australians have with exotic species and the outback, and the place of the camel in tourist imaginaries. This is a large topic but the aims of this present paper are more modest. We seek to explore the changing role of camels in central Australia, and the way people perceive them, in order to reveal some of the issues that feral camels raise for central Australians today. We begin with an overview of the history of camels in central Australia, before considering aspects of the camel in the contemporary tourist imaginary. We then discuss key findings from a recent research project on feral camels in central Australia, which was conducted for the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre and in which we were involved. We then briefly outline camel management options.

A brief history of camels in central Australia: 1860s-2008

The camel was introduced to Australia from the Canary Islands in 1840, but most camels were imported between 1880 and 1907. During this period between 10,000 to 20,000 dromedary camels entered ports such as Fremantle and Port Augusta from Rajasthan, Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and the area of British India now known as west Pakistan. A few camels were of the two-humped variety (*Camelus bactrianus*), however the overwhelming majority were the one-humped *Camelus dromedarius*. The imported domestic camel population increased over time in part through breeding at Government and privately owned breeding depots.¹⁰

Camels became a common mode of desert travel during the period from the 1870s to the late 1920s. Able to survive in arid country where horses and donkeys perish, camels are suited to the central Australian environment and were critical to non Aboriginal development of the region. Not only can camels eat up to 80 per cent of the native vegetation, they can go for longer periods without water and carry heavier loads than horses and donkeys.¹¹ Camels were used as draught, riding and pack animals. In the late 19th century explorers and surveyors such as Warburton, Gosse, Giles and Lindsay used

camels in their expeditions to the interior.¹² Additionally, camels were employed in construction projects including the Overland Telegraph Line (1870-72) and the Canning Stock Route, as well as in mining and pastoral (mostly sheep) ventures. Muslim cameleers (commonly referred to as 'Afghans'), who were brought to Australia specifically to handle camels, played a vital role in many of these projects. The cameleers also operated hauling businesses, in which they used strings of camels to cart goods to outback settlements.

From the 1920s, the widespread use of camels for transport gradually decreased, as camels were replaced by motor vehicles, road networks were improved and the railway was extended from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs. With the bottom falling out of what was a well-developed camel transport industry, camels were no longer in demand: their sale price fell and, while many were destroyed, a significant number were released to range free in the outback. Descendants of these animals constitute the 'feral' camel population of central Australia today.

Yet, it would be a mistake to conclude that use of domestic camels ceased at this point. Although work for Muslim cameleers disappeared in the 1930s, camels continued to be employed in a variety of ways by people on the settler frontier. For example, by police, at remote mines such as Harts Range, by missionaries, patrol officers, anthropologists, by doggers seeking dingo scalps for which they collected a Government bounty, and by sheep pastoralists. Often Aboriginal people who had learnt camel handling skills from Afghans acted as cameleers and guides, and used camels in a range of ways that contributed to both the Aboriginal domestic and frontier economies. Not only did Western Desert people hunt camels for meat, but, for a period of forty years or more after the second World War many Aboriginal people in northern South Australia (SA) and the southern NT used camels for their own transport.¹³ Over the past thirty years some Aboriginal people have participated in small scale commercial activities associated with camels; for example, the mustering, live removal and sale of camels, pet meat processing operations, camel tourism, and the capturing and butchering of camels on a limited scale for local consumption. In general, however, any income derived from such activities has been limited.¹⁴ Similarly, pastoralists have derived some income from camel activities but it is a fraction of that derived from cattle operations.

The camel in tourism

Despite the fact that only 150 to 200 camels are employed in the tourist industry, 'camel tourism may strongly influence people's perspectives on feral camels and their management'.¹⁵ The camel is achieving 'iconic status as a symbol of the remote desert regions of Australia'.¹⁶ A search of the Tourism Australia website¹⁷ reveals over 118 links to destinations, accommodation, events, activities and attractions associated with camels - or experiences for which the camel is emblematic. While the number is considerably less than that for the kangaroo - which at 624 confirms its status as a 'symbol of Australia',¹⁸ - it is far more than those associated with the native wombat (65), echidna (37) and dingo (34). The number of tourism links associated with camels is also high compared to those associated with horses and donkeys (with 242 and 24 links respectively), which like camels are introduced species, are kept as pets (widely, in the case of horses) and exist as feral populations. There are about 28 camel 'farms' providing camel experiences to tourists.¹⁹ It is clear that the camel is now far more significant in the tourist imagination than was the case in the 1960s. The camel is now an object of tourist consumption.

Camel rides, races and other 'hands on' camel events are but part of a trend toward the increasing commodification of the camel. For example, it is now difficult to walk down Todd Mall in Alice Springs without seeing the image of a camel on books, travel posters and in art galleries. Leather camels imported from India proliferate in shops and beaded, sewn and other types of camel 'tourist art' can be bought at stalls in the Sunday market. Camel meat is increasingly available in restaurants and is becoming part of the outback taste experience.

Most camel tourism involves domestic camels and 'tame' wilderness experiences, which can serve to romanticise the camel. However, it would be misleading to imply that camel tourism necessarily promotes opposition to calls for feral camel management. Consider, for instance, camel walking treks. They provide the tourist with a significantly different mode of engagement with the desert landscape to that provided by air-conditioned four-wheel-drive vehicles and can lead to trekkers gaining a first hand appreciation of the harms that feral camels cause. Encounters with large herds of camels or bull camels intent on attacking the trekking party can provide impressive experience of the risks feral camels can pose to desert inhabitants. Tellingly, many camel safari operators voice the need to manage feral camel populations.²⁰ What then is the feral camel situation?

Early population surveys and research

The first broad-scale quantitative assessment of the number and distribution of feral camels in Australia was undertaken in 1988.²¹ However, it was not until 2001 that it became apparent that Australia had an emerging pest animal problem with the feral camel. Survey work then undertaken in the Northern Territory indicated that there were possibly as many as 300,000 feral camels in Australia spread across Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland, and that the population was doubling about every eight years.²² For the best part of 75 years, the significant damage that feral camels were doing to the fragile ecosystems, cultural sites, isolated communities, and pastoral enterprises of desert Australia was largely out of sight, and out of mind, for most Australians, because it occurred in sparsely populated areas a long way from the coast.

Camels, when not constrained, have the ability to move over areas of thousands to tens of thousands of square kilometres.²³ There is a strong correlation between long-term annual rainfall and the size of areas used by female camels related to habitat productivity, with camels choosing to move over greater areas to obtain preferred or sufficient forage as aridity increases. It is unclear whether patterns of movement are nomadic, migratory, or movement within a home range. Camels have a very broad diet and consume both browse as well as the herbaceous layer.²⁴ Camels can survive for considerable periods without access to free/surface water. This is the result of morphological and physiological adaptations that maximise water conservation and facilitate the animal's ability to obtain sufficient water from ingested food, at those times when food is plentiful and/or high in moisture content.

Social organisation of camels is characterised by non-territoriality and group formation, with formation of cow groups that are temporarily herded by a bull during rut and bachelor groups comprised of younger bulls.²⁵ Older bulls tend to live solitarily. Adult bulls compete for access to the cows when in rut. In central Australia, rut is highly seasonal with nearly all adult bulls capable of coming into rut at the start of winter. Bulls in rut take over a core group and herd it for three to five months. Female cows reach sexual maturity at three to four years of age. Gestation is variable but within the range of 336-405 days, and the reproductive lifespan for female camels is around twenty five years. The calving interval is slightly less than two years. While births take place throughout the year there is a distinct

increase in the six month period from June to November and particularly during late August early September. Camels in Australia are relatively disease free and adults have no natural predators.

Recent research on feral camels

In 2005 the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC) obtained funding from the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust Fund for the research project 'Cross-jurisdictional management of feral camels to protect NRM and cultural values'. The aim of the research was to develop a national management framework that would lead to a reduction in camel numbers, to a level that reversed their population growth trajectory and reduced their impacts on natural resource management (NRM), economic, and social-cultural values. In developing the management framework, the DKCRC project team clarified the distribution, abundance and population dynamics of feral camels, evaluated stakeholder perceptions of feral camels, assessed feral camel impacts and reviewed the options available for managing these impacts. The DKCRC report 'Managing the impacts of feral camels in Australia: a new way of doing business' was released in December 2008. The key findings of this research are summarised below.

Population distribution, abundance and dynamics

Feral camels were found to occur in Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland over an area 3.3 million square km.²⁶ Forty three per cent were on Aboriginal land, 22 per cent on pastoral land, 10 per cent on conservation land, and 25 per cent on crown land. Existing aerial surveys were used to generate a density distribution for feral camels and as aerial surveys contain two known biases which lead to undercounting of animals, the population estimate of 953,000 camels is believed to be conservative.²⁷

Detailed modelling of the Northern Territory camel population data spanning 36 years showed that the population is doubling about every nine years.²⁸ Adult survival has the greatest influence on population growth, which suggests that management to reduce impacts through population reduction should focus on reducing adult survival. Camels were found to use all available habitats.²⁹ It was not possible to determine carrying capacity from population modelling but recent incursions of large numbers of camels into Aboriginal communities suggest that camels are stressed by hot dry summers in central Australia.

Pastoral and conservation manager perceptions

A survey of the perceptions of pastoral and conservation landholders of feral camels in 2007 indicated views on feral camels that were relatively homogeneous. Both groups recognised the impacts that camels have on the natural environment and pastoral production, and that efforts were needed to manage these impacts. Where differences in views existed they could be attributed to differing land management goals. Pastoralists claimed that feral camels damaged production-related infrastructure such as fences and yards and competed with livestock for resources. In comparison, conservation managers emphasised the harm camels caused to the environment and social values. Environmental harm includes degradation of wetlands, elimination of preferred forage species through selective browsing, and competition with native animals for food, water and shelter.³⁰ These sorts of impacts are also recognised by Aboriginal people for whom there is often an associated cultural value (see below). Significantly, both landholder groups favoured culling and commercial use to manage camel impacts.³¹

On the positive side, some landholders currently slaughter feral camels for local consumption and some muster feral camels for commercial purposes. Camels are being used in Queensland for controlling woody weeds like Parkinsonia (*Parkinsonia aculeata*) on pastoral lands.

Aboriginal perceptions³²

Aboriginal views on feral camels today are not homogeneous: there is a diversity of perspectives emerging in response to transformations brought about by feral camels on Aboriginal land. Camels are an increasing presence near Aboriginal settlements and there is a general appreciation that camels can damage natural and cultural resources and affect Aboriginal customary use of country. In particular, people in areas of high camel density expressed concern about the harms camels can cause to their environment. However, they interpret and express these concerns in different ways from conservationists. In the communities surveyed most people do not conceptualise the environment in terms of a separation between nature and culture; rather, they view their world in a more holistic way.³³ Thus, for example, rockholes and stands of trees are not simply natural resources but may also have sacred significance. In areas of high camel density many people are concerned about camels 'killing all the country' by polluting and depleting waterholes, dying in them, and degrading surrounding areas. At the same time, there was concern that people could no longer use or camp near such waterholes and that the traditional owners of sacred sites could fall ill because of their desecration by camels. People who spent time hunting, gathering and visiting country and older people who have a deep and long-term knowledge of country were particularly conscious of changes in country due to the impact of camels. Additionally, camels were said to be 'finishing off' particular bush foods and trees such as quandongs³⁴ (*Santalum acuminatum*) and bean trees (*Erythrina vespertilio*), bush medicine plants, and native tobacco (*Nicotiana spp.*).

Concern about the risk camels posed to people's safety ranked second to people's concerns about negative impacts on culturally significant resources. Fear or wariness of camels - especially bull camels in the mating season - is beginning to impact on people's ability to occupy, use and care for country. For example, women will avoid hunting and camping in areas where large numbers of camels are known to be present. Concern was also expressed about camels damaging fences and infrastructure at homelands/outstations and settlements in addition to roads and airstrips.

However, not all Aboriginal people shared these perceptions. Some people were of the view that camels were just passing through and that the damage was relatively insignificant. Most people who were concerned about camel impacts indicated that the problems were associated with large numbers of camels and were greater during dry periods. Camels were also said to have positive benefits and most people viewed them as a potential resource. For instance, camel meat is gaining a reputation as a cheap and healthy alternative to beef, although some people are reluctant to eat it because of their identification of camels with the Three Wise Men and/or because of past historical associations with camels. Some also kept camels as pets.

The management of feral camels raises complex issues for Aboriginal people. Whereas even fifteen years ago most people were of the view that they belonged to country,³⁵ increased concern over the harms they are causing to country has resulted in a shift in attitude. Many people now hold a position that feral camels are strangers: some point out that because camels have no totemic link to people and country they therefore are no one's responsibility and are like orphans, walking around lost. Others, who had kept or worked closely with camels, tend to regard them 'like family' and they expressed a sense

of responsibility toward them. On the other hand, they recognised that the current feral camels situation is dramatically different to the past, when camels were fewer in number and used for domestic purposes.

Despite a widely held view among most Aboriginal people that camels need to be controlled, the majority were only prepared to consider limited management options. Only a minority was prepared to accept culling as a control measure because of a perception that culling is wasteful. There was also a perception that such killing could result in socio-environmental harms. The preferred management options involve live removal of camels for sale, harvesting for pet meat and human consumption, and ranger activities designed to protect culturally significant places, trees, bush tucker and other valued plants from camel damage.³⁶ It was clear from discussions that feral camel management should be approached within the wider cultural-economic contexts of looking after country and livelihoods. People require resources, the support of the state and organisations such as land councils, and financial recognition of the value of their work, if they are to manage the impacts of feral camels.³⁷

Overview of impacts

In 2008, the annual net impact cost of feral camels was estimated to be \$10.67 million for those elements that could be evaluated according to market values.³⁸ There is a positive density/damage relationship for camels - the higher the density, the greater the level of overall damage. Therefore, irrespective of climate change, the magnitude of the negative impacts of feral camels will increase if the population continues to increase. Furthermore, the likelihood that camels would be epidemiologically involved in the spread of exotic diseases like bluetongue and surra (were there to be outbreaks of these diseases in Australia) is also very likely to increase with population density. Camels also produce methane which is a potent greenhouse gas.³⁹

Management options

To reduce camel impacts, either camel numbers need to be reduced or camels need to be excluded from vulnerable assets. Camel numbers can be reduced through humane destruction (culling) or through commercial harvest.⁴⁰ Aerial culling is the most cost effective and humane way of reducing the number of camels over the large expanses that need to be managed. Ground-based culling has application mainly at the local scale and in particular situations. Codes of Practice and Standard Operating Procedures are currently being developed for both aerial and ground culling of camels. Camels may be commercially harvested over relatively large areas for meat, and the establishment of domestic herds or for live export. However, not all camels are accessible enough to allow commercial harvest. *The Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals - The Camel* has been adopted under state legislation and contains information, guidelines and standards to assist people to meet their duty of care in respect of the capture, handling and transport of camels. Fencing to protect vulnerable assets from camels is expensive and has application only at the local scale. Animal welfare must be considered when fencing is used, especially where this denies the animals access to water.

A review by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre of chemical, biological and fertility control methods identified a number of chemical agents, which could potentially be used to reduce the number of feral camels.⁴¹ However, these are unregistered for camel control and would require research into efficacy and humaneness as a precursor to registration. The review identified camel pox as a potential biological control agent for camels as it causes high mortality and is camel-specific. However, animal welfare considerations and issues surrounding the release of live pathogens into

Australia would probably result in prohibition of camel pox importations. Because camels are a long-lived species with a low reproductive rate and occur in remote areas, fertility control is likely to be a highly inefficient form of population control. Adult survival has the greatest influence on population growth in feral camels⁴² The implication of this is that management to reduce impacts at landscape scales through population reduction should focus on reducing adult survival and this cannot be achieved with fertility control.

Management framework

The DKCRC project recommends that feral camels be managed to a long-term target density of 0.1–0.2 camels/km² at property to regional scales (areas in the order of 10 000–100 000 km²) in order to mitigate broad-scale negative impacts on the environmental, social/cultural and production assets of the Australian rangelands. The DKCRC project also recommended a zoned approach to management, on the basis of camel density and land tenure considerations.

Challenges of managing feral camel impacts today

There are many challenges in managing the impacts of feral camels:

- There is an urgent need to address the current overabundance of feral camels and the damage they cause. The degree of damage is highly significant in many situations and it will only get worse if the camel population increases unchecked.
- As feral camels will never be eradicated, there is a need to foster landowner capacity to manage the impacts of feral camel in the longer term.
- Feral camels and the impacts they have occur over a very large area of mainland Australia.
- Many of the areas where camels occur are remote which makes access for the purpose of management difficult.
- Camels are highly mobile animals and can move quickly in response to changing seasonal conditions and rainfall events. This can make it difficult to locate camels when undertaking management activities.
- There are varying perceptions on feral camels and the damage they cause. Some see them as a pest while others see them as a resource for economic gain.
- There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to managing the impacts of feral camels. Pastoral land managers tend to favour culling over other methods of control while some Aboriginal people are opposed to culling as they perceive it as wasteful.

To meet these challenges, a coordinated and well-resourced integrated management approach is needed. The approach must be responsive to landholder needs and sensitivities and be flexible enough to accommodate rapid localised changes in the distribution of feral camels.

Managing the feral camel problem now and into the future

In June 2009, the Australian Government announced that it would provide \$19 million over four years to manage the impacts of feral camels across Australia, under the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program. The project will be administered through Ninti One which is the management company of DKCRC. The project has 20 partners including Aboriginal organisations, state government agencies, industry peak bodies and NRM Boards. The Australian Government has stipulated that its contribution is conditional on a similar amount of contributing funding being provided by the state and territory governments and other partners in the project. Animal welfare issues will be central to the

development of operational plans to reduce the impacts of feral camels over the life of this project.

Also in 2009 the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC) called for development of a National Feral Camel Action Plan to guide the management of feral camels and their impacts now and into the future. The Vertebrate Pests Committee accepted responsibility to develop the Action Plan and a draft plan was completed in August 2009. NRMMC stipulated that the Plan must be in full alignment with principles under the Australian Pest Animal Strategy. The Draft Action Plan aims to deliver four key outcomes:

1. Development of understanding of the need for and support for the management of feral camels and their impacts.
2. A reduction in the negative impacts of the current overabundance of feral camels through immediate population reduction.
3. Adoption of a platform for the long-term management of feral camel impacts.
4. Development of partnerships and social capacities that will facilitate long-term management of feral camel impacts.

The development team for the Draft Action Plan was fully aware of the Ninti One project and recognised that it would play a major role in delivery of these outcomes. The Plan does not deal explicitly with development of a camel industry, but does recognise that the commercial harvest of feral camels is a legitimate activity, which can contribute to camel impact reduction. However, the Draft Action Plan does not recommend establishment of a camel industry based solely on the sustainable harvest of wild camels. Released for public comment in December 2009, the Draft Action Plan is now being revised in light of the comments received.

Opportunities for commercial harvest of camels and establishment of a camel industry

Feral camels have been commercially harvested for meat and other purposes for more than 20 years in Australia, but the industry remains very small.⁴³ In 2008 it was estimated that the camel industry harvested around 5,000 to 6,000 feral camels each year: 3600-4000 for pet meat, fewer than 400 for live export and 1000 annually for human consumption. There are several reasons why the camel industry has struggled to gain momentum. First, there is no dedicated export accredited processing facility for camels. The two existing abattoirs which are capable of processing camels for export are not specifically designed to handle camels, which limits their capacity. Second, the industry has been based on *ad hoc* harvest of a feral herd that is located in very remote areas, which has resulted in supply chain issues. An inability to guarantee supply has thwarted investment in a dedicated processing plant. Third, the industry has targeted price sensitive international markets, which have not proved reliable from year to year. Fourth, the costs of capturing and transporting camels are high in comparison to beef cattle. Lastly, the industry has lacked integration and a clear vision of its future.

There are certainly opportunities for dramatically increasing the number of feral camels that are harvested commercially. Substantial areas where camel densities are high enough and where there is suitable infrastructure to support the commercial harvest of feral camels have been identified,⁴⁴ but until the issues identified above have been addressed, the industry will continue to struggle. In a move in the right direction, the Australian Camel Industry Association (ACIA) was endorsed as the industry body, to provide support, information and advocacy for a commercial camel industry. But establishment of a long-term sustainable camel industry will need to be based primarily on

farmed camels, not the opportunistic harvest of a free-ranging feral herd, to allow for herd improvement, ensure continuity of supply of a consistently high quality product, and reduce costs.

Conclusion

At current numbers, feral camels cause significant damage to parts of the central Australian environment and to people who live, work and travel there. Given that increases in the population will lead to increasing impacts, the camel situation needs immediate attention. However, there are many challenges associated with managing feral camels and their impacts. As discussed in this paper there are varying perceptions on feral camels, their impacts and options for their management. For example, while some people regard them as a pest, others see them as a potentially valuable economic resource. In addition, feral camels are very mobile animals and largely occur in remote areas. Although the issues posed by feral camels are complex, they are not intractable. Clearly, however, there is no 'one size fits all' solution. The approach adopted will need to be sensitive to landholder needs, flexible enough to accommodate changes in distribution of feral camels, and be well integrated, well co-ordinated and sustainable.



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- ¹ The title owes an obvious debt to Nietzsche's 'On the Three Metamorphoses' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which he uses the image of the camel as a beast of burden to discuss stages in human development. See Taylor, CS (2004). 'A Sketch (Riß) of the Camel in *Zarathustra*', in Acampora, CD and Acampora, RR (eds) *A Nietzschean Bestiary: Becoming Animal Beyond Docile and Brutal*. Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield: 32-41.
- ² See AAP August 5, 2009, 'US anchor labels Rudd 'serial killer' over camels', Downloaded 30 March 2010 at: www.theage.com.au > BusinessDay; AAP August 06, 2009 8:04AM, Erin Burnett says camel cull call a 'deadpan joke'. Downloaded 30 March 2010 at: www.news.com.au/...burnett...camel...a.../story-e6frfmyi-1225758461539; Australian Tourism: camels/Ads of the World Downloaded 30 March 2010 at: adsoftheworld.com/media/print/australia_tourism_camels.
- ³ McKnight, T (1969). *The Camel in Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press: 122. The following comments rely heavily on McKnight: 122-124.
- ⁴ *Ibid*: 99; See also Rose, FGG (1965). *The Wind of Change in Central Australia: The Aborigines at Angas Downs, 1962*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag; and Sandall, R (Director) (1969). 'Camels and the Pitjantjara.' Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies: Canberra. Film. Duration: 45 minutes.
- ⁵ Such as those by Stevens, C (1989). *Tin Mosques and Ghantowns: A history of Afghan cameldrivers in Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press; and Rajkowski, P (1987). *In the Tracks of the Camelmen: Outback Australia's most exotic pioneers*. North Ryde: Angus & Robertson.
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- ⁷ The book was the first to combine photos, narration and audio using what was, at the time, revolutionary new technology (Eastman Kodak PhotoCD and Apple computer): Smolan, R and Davidson, R (1992) *From Alice to Ocean: Alone across the Outback. Photographed by Rick Smolan*. Viking in association with Against All Odds Productions, Ringwood, Vic: 223. While reflecting the fact that Smolan photographed Davidson's journey for *National Geographic*, it is also significant that the camel, Davidson and the red desert - all charismatic images - were chosen to illustrate this new technology.
- ⁸ Telegraph.Co.UK 'The Camels that Broke the Desert's Back', by Ava Hubble. Published: 9:02PM GMT 24 Dec 2009. Downloaded 21 March, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/.../The-camels-that-broke-the-deserts-back.html>.
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- ¹⁰ McKnight (1969) *op cit*: 17, 23, 24, 25, 34.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*; Edwards *et al* (2008) *op cit*; Kennedy, MJ (2005). *Hauling the Loads: A History of Australia's Working Horses and Bullocks*. Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press. (First published by Melbourne University Press 1992).
- ¹² See Jones and Kenny (2007) *op cit*: 48; McKnight (1969): 27-30.
- ¹³ This section draws extensively on the paper (2009) 'Camels and the transformation of Indigenous economic landscapes' prepared by Vaarzon-Morel for the conference 'Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies: Perspectives from Anthropology, History and Material Culture Studies' held at the National Museum of Australia, in association with the School of Archaeology and Anthropology, Australian National University. 9-10 November. Also see Rose

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- ²⁰ See, for example, Ellis, R (1998). *Outback by Camel*, Kangaroo Press: East Roseville, NSW: 16, 36, 50.
- ²¹ By Short, J, Caughley, G, Grice, D and Brown, B (1988). The distribution and relative abundance of camels in Australia. *Journal of Arid Environments* 15: 91-97.
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- ⁴¹ Lapidge SJ, Eason CT and Humphreys ST (2008). *A review of chemical, biological and fertility control options for the camel in Australia*, DKCRC Research Report 51. Desert Knowledge CRC, Alice Springs. Available at: <http://desertknowledgecrc.com.au/publications/>.
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Living to Work, or Working to Live: Intercultural understandings of livelihoods

Jocelyn Davies and Yiheyis Maru

One of us (Davies) recently found herself striking up a conversation with a stranger in the checkout queue at the supermarket. It's something you can do easily in Alice Springs. It happens all the time. Is it the sense of trust and community that comes from being in a town so far away from dense and fast city life? Maybe. Alice Springs has pockets of this, in spite of such diversity amongst its residents and the masses of other people who pass through. Or is it just because the queues are long, and everyone is trying to stay in a good humour? There's not much you can do about it except wait. And it doesn't take too many minutes of waiting to wonder why there are only three or four of twelve checkouts open on a Saturday morning. Supermarket penny-pinching? Maybe, but it's also likely that the supermarket is having trouble getting staff, like so many other businesses in the town.

The local paper is full of jobs; well over a hundred jobs each week in early 2010. Alice Springs employers surveyed in 2007 had much more trouble recruiting staff than is typical for Australia and 20 per cent had unfilled vacancies.¹ The situation has undoubtedly worsened since that time given that, by late 2009, unemployment in Alice Springs had decreased, against national trends, to less than half the national rate.² By then, a critical shortage of housing was also impacting on the prospects of attracting staff from outside the town. Efforts to bring Aboriginal people, who experience unemployment rates of up to 20 per cent in nearby bush townships, into jobs, had generally not kept pace with the growth in Aboriginal populations.³

The impact of unfilled jobs is that many people in Alice are as caught up as other Australians with working long hours, doing loads of unpaid overtime⁴ or sacrificing their family life to keep their business afloat: living to work. Recent research indicates how unhealthy this is, linking long working hours to stress, high risk of depression, a decline in mental capacity and possibly dementia.⁵

At least some new arrivals to Alice Springs in recent years have come for a 'sandhill change'. No doubt they have been somewhat inspired by a 'positive vision of a remote and natural hinterland and its traditional people', as Peter Sutton discussed.⁶ But the lived reality for many in Alice Springs is that the stress of a too-busy working life is too-readily compounded by unvoiced opinions that those traditional people are indolent and inactive. Mix in some other everyday ingredients – such as housing stress amongst those who are not part of the target group for hundreds of millions in current government expenditure; rubbished parks, riverbanks, suburbs and shopping centres; ready availability and high consumption of alcohol; heavy loads on emergency services responding to violent assaults,⁷ not to forget resistant remnants of frontier racism - and the result is a heady cocktail for the self-righteous. It hardly needs to be ignited by outsider voices referring to the 'recreational lifestyles' of Aboriginal people living in remote communities, 'long-held fear of problems caused by Aborigines coming to town',⁸ 'bureaucratic insensibilities' or 'slush funds for politically smart operators'.⁹

Now a new mantra is starting to be voiced amongst practitioners and researchers, perhaps aiming to soothe these intercultural tensions. It says 'other people have jobs, but remote Aboriginal people have livelihoods'. Here 'livelihoods' is meant to convey something different from its everyday usage in the Australian lexicon 'income supporting a way of life' or a 'means of living'. It is being used to convey a particularly Aboriginal set of

meanings and aspirations: an interplay of identity, sense of place and reciprocal sustenance between people and country that is portrayed as distinctively Aboriginal. We think this usage is a mistake.

We agree on the need for analysts to better understand that people's way of life or means of living encompasses much more than income or employment. But we maintain that this is important for human development, not just for Aboriginal development. We are finding that 'livelihoods' approaches, which have been widely used in developing countries,¹⁰ can illuminate contrasts and commonalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal approaches to work and life in desert Australia. Such inclusive intercultural understandings of livelihoods are important to sustainability in remote regions.

Our aims in this paper are firstly, to introduce 'livelihoods' as a concept that has value to understanding the circumstances, aspirations and well-being of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; and secondly to illustrate how livelihoods analysis can contribute to stronger intercultural understandings of human well-being and regional sustainability. We first introduce and explain the concept of a livelihood as encompassing, but not limited to, a job, contrasting this with recent tendencies to accord a distinctively Aboriginal meaning to 'livelihoods'. We summarise recent Australian research on how livelihood approaches have been applied in Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal and regional contexts. We then draw on recent research in Anmatjere region of central Australia to illustrate how a livelihoods approach can aid analysis of opportunities and constraints for regional well-being and sustainability.

Jobs and livelihoods

One reason why 'livelihoods' concepts and approaches evolved internationally¹¹ was that practitioners working in rural settings of developing countries recognised that most people engage in diverse unpaid and paid activities, often by necessity rather than by choice. This 'pluri-activity' does not fit the usual conception of a 'job' that applies in developed economies. Nevertheless, the notion that poor people have 'livelihoods', whereas other people have 'jobs' or 'businesses', should be resisted.¹² Where a person happens to have a job, that job can be considered as one of their livelihood activities or strategies. Equally, claiming social security citizenship entitlements can be considered as a livelihood strategy, even though livelihoods approaches in rural areas of developing countries rarely encounter the widespread dependence on 'welfare' for cash income that characterises remote Aboriginal Australia.

Livelihoods approaches are, however, concerned with much more than what people 'do' in their lives or how they get an income. They also pay attention to other factors that are crucial to people's economic behaviour. These elements, and the interaction and feedback loops amongst them, determine life outcomes for individuals and families. In developed economies different terminology such as 'lifestyle' tends to be used instead of 'livelihood' for the same concepts.¹³ The broader considerations that underpin 'livelihood' approaches to human development are what also concern those Australians who seek to re-adjust their 'work-life balance', perhaps making a 'sea change' or 'tree change' from urbanised 'living to work' to pursue broader interests - 'working to live' when necessary.

Livelihoods approaches are valuable for understanding sustainability because of their insights into the ways in which 'people, places and environments are related and mutually constituted',¹⁴ how such interrelationships manifest locally in the lives of individuals and families, and how they are impacted by broader scale structures and processes. We consider that more attention to livelihoods approaches across Australian society could help broaden the focus of governments from economic development to the well-being of

people, as various recent commentators have argued is necessary for social and ecological sustainability.¹⁵ Such considerations are particularly important in central Australia where, as Mark Stafford Smith has argued,¹⁶ climate, landscape, sense of place and local knowledge continue to exert a more powerful influence on human agency than is the case in more densely populated areas, while human agency is also inevitably much impacted by decisions made in distant centres of power that take little account of local circumstances.

A distinctly Aboriginal meaning for 'livelihoods'?

The claim for 'livelihoods' as a term with a distinctive meaning in remote Aboriginal domains comes through most clearly in academic writing, indeed eloquently, in Ben Scambary's¹⁷ recent contribution to understanding the extent to which, in the context of mining, 'transformations in prosperity [can] co-exist with at least some traditional ways of living'.¹⁸ Scambary first uses 'livelihoods' to refer to 'the diverse activities in which Indigenous people engage in order to sustain themselves' encompassing 'tangible economic activities associated with the cash economy including paid employment, welfare and commercial enterprise; and resources from the customary sector derived from activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering'.¹⁹ However he refines his discussion to describe 'livelihoods' as a particularly Aboriginal concept: 'generally as a range of activities associated with the customary sector, including fishing, hunting, gathering, the production of art and craft, the conduct of ritual, and the maintenance of family and kin relations'.²⁰

Reflecting earlier ethnographic accounts of desert Aboriginal societies,²¹ Scambary's discussion of Aboriginal livelihoods encapsulates how remote Aboriginal people's relationships with each other and with country generate spirituality and identity that is sustained and reproduced through a customary economy. We agree that this was a livelihood system and we recognise that it continues to be foundational to the worldview of some desert Aboriginal people, albeit with much interchange and trade-off of goods, services, knowledge and meaning with 'the broader world'. What we find problematic is the tacit appropriation of the term 'livelihoods' to mean only these kinds of lives. We agree that what might be called 'livelihoods on country' are central to the aspirations of some Aboriginal people for a good life. But it is important to guard against the paternalistic assumption that such livelihoods might fit the circumstances and aspirations of all or even most remote Aboriginal people. It is also important to recognise the interdependence of livelihoods of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in remote areas.

Intercultural understandings of livelihoods are important to the overall health of central Australia. We see a risk that if 'livelihoods' comes to be used exclusively to describe distinctive aspects of Aboriginal societies in remote Australia, it will have less utility or currency amongst other Australians. This will limit the value of livelihoods approaches as tools for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to work together to restore balance, such as Tamara Mackean has noted is needed for 'healing' and 'closing the gap'.²²

Livelihoods approaches in remote Australia

Key influences that have led researchers and practitioners in central Australia to pay attention to livelihoods approaches over the last decade came through the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) and CSIRO research with Tropical Savannas CRC (TS CRC). Around 2001 CAT began to consider how it could apply sustainable livelihoods concepts in its work with remote Aboriginal communities. This reflected practitioner experience in international development brought to the organisation by Steve Fisher.²³

CAT came to define sustainable livelihoods as 'the range of activities that support improved well-being through work, enterprise and trading and that can be maintained into the future'.²⁴ This is quite a different conception of 'livelihoods' to that of Scambary. Customary activities on country have no particular emphasis. Indeed, everyday interpretations of 'work, enterprise and trading' would tend to exclude customary activities from CAT's definition of 'livelihoods'.

Also at this time CSIRO rangeland systems analysts and ecologists scoped an agenda for research on the dynamics of Australia's tropical and arid regions. They identified 'health' as a metaphor for desired state of socio-economic systems in these remote regions.²⁵ Maru, who had used sustainable livelihoods approaches in his research in Ethiopia,²⁶ identified the value of using the 'five capital assets model' that features in the sustainable livelihoods framework (see below) to assess regional health.²⁷

These innovations led, by 2003, to Desert Knowledge CRC (DKCRC) adopting 'sustainable livelihoods for desert people' as one of its key outcome areas. In addition to our research in Anmatjere region, discussed below, qualitative research in DKCRC projects by CAT, CSIRO and others has used a livelihoods lens to explore improved intercultural communication in community based planning,²⁸ aid analysis of Aboriginal engagement in the bush foods industry,²⁹ examine Aboriginal aspirations for land management employment³⁰ and propose principles for 'livelihoods on country' that promote health and well-being outcomes.³¹ Further, Maru and Chewings³² investigated quantitatively (and somewhat inconclusively due to data limitations for sparsely settled areas) how desert regions could be better defined around a coherence of livelihood opportunities and constraints. In allied initiatives through TS CRC, Alexandridis and Measham's³³ qualitative research and modelling applied a livelihoods approach to issues faced by non-Aboriginal landowners and townsfolk in relation to cattle grazing and regional viability. ABARE research has also applied livelihoods concepts: Nelson *et al*³⁴ assessed spatial heterogeneity in the adaptive capacity of Australian farms to structural adjustment policies using quantitative measures from national data sets for assets and vulnerability.

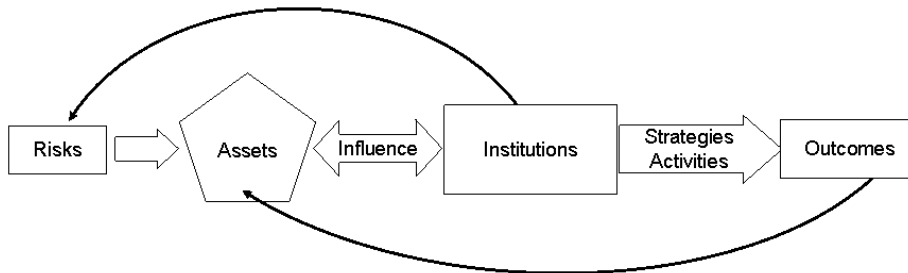
While much of this livelihoods research has focused on Aboriginal development, it has also addressed issues for non-Aboriginal people and for regional populations. It illustrates that the concept of livelihoods is not only applicable in remote Aboriginal domains. Rather it offers a generic and dynamic model of human development, as outlined below.

Sustainable livelihoods framework

The sustainable livelihoods framework, portrayed generically in Figure 1, highlights the interrelationships amongst many factors that impact positively or negatively on an individual or a group of people (typically a family or household, rather than a 'community') developing, maintaining or changing their way of life. We find that when interpreted flexibly, with an emphasis on dynamic interrelationships, the framework provides a sound mental model to aid understanding of the opportunities that people have in their lives and the choices they make. It promotes a 'people-centred approach', encouraging attention to human diversity, ingenuity and agency rather than to 'deficits' in capacity. It also highlights the impact of factors beyond the control of local people on their aspirations and opportunities suggesting how cross-scale linkages are critical to local outcomes.

Figure 1: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

This diagram incorporates key elements that are common to many different versions of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework that have been developed and used by NGOs and aid agencies, notably UK Department for International Development. See text for explanation of terms and interactions.



At a broad level, the framework identifies that people use assets to generate livelihood outcomes by applying various strategies (the main left to right flow between the 'boxes'). Practitioners often categorise assets according to five capitals (human, social, physical, natural, financial). Some of these are increasingly used in sustainability planning and national accounts (eg, financial, natural, human) while others are very hard to measure (eg, social capital). Cultural and political capitals are sometimes suggested as additional categories.

People engage in livelihood strategies that may involve converting assets from one category to another (such as using financial capital assets to pay for education or health care, and thereby safeguarding or increasing human capital assets). However use of the term 'strategies' often puts too strong an emphasis on planned action. Everyone faces constraints on what they can do in their lives, as a result of limitations on assets and also limitations, encapsulated by 'institutions' in Figure 1, on how they can access and use assets. Where people lack assets or influence, they generally can't put their plans in place. There is also a path dependency: what people do generally depends on what they are accustomed to doing. Hence 'activities' is often a more apt term than 'strategies'; this term encapsulates the things that people do in their lives, those that generate the livelihood outcomes they experience.³⁵

'Institutions' have a central role. They include the rules and norms established by government or by people within their community organisations, often called 'formal institutions', and those norms or 'ways of doing things' that are embedded in the culture of communities or families or organisations, often called 'informal institutions'. Institutions determine what livelihood strategies/activities are available to people (the main left to right flow indicated in Figure 1). They also impact on the risks or vulnerability context that people encounter in their lives (the feedback arrow from right to left at the top of Figure 1). Effective institutions ameliorate the uncertainty that people encounter in their lives as a result of risks from the ecological, social or political environment they live in. Indeed, this is why societies craft institutions.³⁶ Drawing from dialectical understandings of structure and agency, the framework indicates that people have varying degrees of influence on institutions (as indicated by the right hand direction of the 'influence' arrow in Figure 1). People may exercise agency to change formal institutions or engage in independent action that contributes to diffuse processes of cultural change. Conversely, institutions

also determine which of the assets held by people are accorded value and hence how much influence those people have (as indicated by the left hand direction of the 'influence' arrow in Figure 1).

Livelihood outcomes can be conceived of in material terms, such as income, food, and shelter³⁷ but also include higher order conceptions of what is important for a 'good life'. This dimension of the sustainable livelihoods framework interfaces with many other efforts to define the dimensions of human well-being or happiness. Amartya Sen's work has been influential. Sen³⁸ developed the concept of 'capability' which he defined as 'the ability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have'.³⁹ 'Capability' is a social goal, applicable to all Australians. For example it provides a conceptual underpinning to the Australian Treasury's well-being framework,⁴⁰ a descriptive tool designed to improve Treasury's policy advice to governments by helping to make trade-offs explicit.⁴¹

Higher-order livelihood outcomes such as capability, well-being or sustainability are very difficult to measure. However we have gained some insight into their nature through our recent research in the Anmatjere region,⁴² centred on the small town of Ti Tree which is 200 km north of Alice Springs on the Stuart Highway.

Livelihoods in Anmatjere region

Many stakeholders see lack of engagement by local Aboriginal people in the many jobs that exist in the Anmatjere region, notably in horticulture, as a key problem for regional development. Aboriginal people, mostly Anmatyerr⁴³ language speakers, comprise 86 per cent of the region's population. Wealth in the region (measured by income, land ownership or physical capital assets) is distributed quite inequitably between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The local economy is relatively diverse for a remote region, encompassing government and community service industries, services for highway travellers and tourists, horticulture (grapes, mangoes, melons), and cattle pastoralism, the most widespread land use. Mining exploration is active and construction of the new Nolans Bore rare earth mine is scheduled to start in 2010, with a thirty year planned life for the mine and a \$600m start up investment by industry.⁴⁴

Methods

We researched the problem of 'lots of jobs, lots of unemployed people' using the sustainable livelihoods framework to structure data collection and analyse factors impacting on local employment and on regional development. We interviewed Aboriginal (n=50) and non-Aboriginal (n=22) people who live, in or close to, four small settlements (total population c 600) adjacent to the Stuart Highway, held two local focus groups, and had other discussions and workshops with key stakeholders and local leaders. We engaged local Aboriginal people as research support workers to help plan and undertake interviews within their communities using purposive sampling based on age and gender to match the interview sample, as far as possible, to the demographic profile of the region's adult population.

A livelihoods approach encouraged us to explore the same questions with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, in contrast to much research in remote Australia that is targeted at only one or other of these populations. It also situated our research outside the standard policy paradigm of increasing Aboriginal employment and engagement in education and training. We expect this helped to ensure that the Aboriginal people who participated in the research interviews did not 'second guess' us: by talking about job and training

aspirations because they thought that this is what 'government people'⁴⁵ would want to hear. However we have no way of assessing this objectively.

Findings

Among the people we interviewed, we found that almost all Aboriginal people call the region 'home' and that more than 85 per cent do not plan to leave. A majority (80%) said they had responsibilities to care for country in the region. In contrast only half the non-Aboriginal people planned to stay in the region for the long term. Nevertheless the commitment to living in the region by the other half of the non-Aboriginal interviewees suggests it is critical that agencies engage interculturally on questions of regional development and sustainability.

About half the Aboriginal people we interviewed had income from a full-time or regular job and about 20 per cent had income from part-time or seasonal work. Social security was the main or a supplementary income source for 60 per cent of the Aboriginal people interviewed. Other income supplements were from art, sale of bush-harvested plant foods, interpreting fees, sitting fees for committees, transfers from other family members and through card games. In contrast, almost all non-Aboriginal people had full time work as employees or in their own businesses, though several also had supplementary income sources. Remittance transfers flow out of the region, rather than into it, particularly due to non-Aboriginal people based temporarily in the region whose incomes support families and mortgages elsewhere.

Aboriginal people had a much broader portfolio of livelihood activities than non-Aboriginal people. Many such activities were concerned with care for family and for country. Cooking, cleaning, gardening, art, vehicle/mechanical maintenance and working with trees/plants (horticulture) were the activities most commonly mentioned by both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people also commonly mentioned looking after kids, bush tucker, participation in ceremony, sport, looking after old people and music. Computer work and tourism were activities mentioned much more by non-Aboriginal than Aboriginal people.

Work-life balance?

Non-Aboriginal interviewees were far more likely than Aboriginal interviewees to self-assess their job or business as their 'most important' activity. They were less likely than Aboriginal people to rate their main job or activity (that which takes most of their time) as 'enjoyable'. Nevertheless a majority of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interviewees said they gained enjoyment, rather than stress, from their main job or activity.

Relationships and social life associated with the main activity, and the inherent characteristics of the main activity were common reasons put forward by all interviewees as accounting for that enjoyment. The lifestyle that their main job or activity affords and the outcome of caring for others were other reasons commonly put forward by non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal interviewees respectively.

Aboriginal people associated stress from their main job or activity with family demands ('humberging') or with alcohol abuse in the community, while non-Aboriginal people associated it with heavy demands of paid work on their time and energy. 'Income' didn't figure much in people's comments about what they enjoy or find stressful, though many people recognised it as the most immediate outcome from their main job or activity. The responses paint a picture, similar to the situation familiar to us in Alice Springs, of a high level of stress amongst those in full time employment or in business, crowding out

enjoyment of other things that have an important place in people's lives – family, place and community.

Aspirations

We noted that more Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal people found it hard to talk about aspirations. For some Aboriginal people, opportunity seemed to be something that might come along if they waited, but there was little else they might do to influence it. In terms of Figure 1, this indicates that such people have very low influence on the institutions that determine their livelihood strategies or activities. In contrast, other people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, were actively making their futures.

There was a strong overlap in the aspirations that were articulated by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Commonly these included training/education and new job roles or continuing in or developing in their current job or business. Non-Aboriginal people also commonly talked of 'retiring, travelling and enjoying life', while a sense of enjoyment was more integrated into the activities of daily life amongst the region's Aboriginal people.

For their children and grandchildren, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interviewees commonly aspired to decent jobs and wages, with Aboriginal people wanting these 'in their own country/home area' and being equally concerned for their children to have 'practical and relevant education'. The biggest difference in aspirations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people was in relation to local places and the region with non-Aboriginal people seeking more development of land, infrastructure and industries, and Aboriginal people being more cautious about this approach.

Social networks and cultural bridges

Two cultures – customary Aboriginal culture and what we term 'workplace culture' - encounter each other day by day in Anmatjere region. Here we focus on exploring interactions between these cultures that are important to the livelihood aspirations of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

'Workplace culture' includes the norms ('institutions', in terms of Figure 1) for how one should behave in a workplace, where interactions amongst people are based on roles rather than social relationships. Such assumptions are also built into government policy, given that it is established to facilitate transactions among strangers. Some people are able to negotiate both cultures, but for many the process is daunting. Most of the rules are unspoken. They are 'common sense' to those who do understand them, but for others there is a risk of making unwitting errors with unknown consequences.

Bridges between Aboriginal culture and workplace cultures are provided by social capital (relationships, social networks), human capital (knowledge, understanding and skills) ('assets' in terms of Figure 1) and by a variety of institutions that offer 'two-way' accountabilities, as outlined below. Investment in building these bridges offers the best way forward for wealth generation to build social equity in the region.

Relationships, rather than government-sponsored labour market programs, are providing the entrée for Aboriginal people into workplace culture. Aboriginal people spoke of being 'picked' for jobs by family members, and of working through family members to learn skills or meet employers. Cleaning up rubbish was a strategy some Aboriginal people used to be noticed by bosses as prospective for work or for leadership roles in the community. We also saw Aboriginal people taking the initiative to improve their own and each other's literacy (a human capital asset in terms of Figure 1). They were using some of the research tools we had developed to communicate about livelihood activities in the absence, in their households, of other accessible texts. Further, training courses that paid

attention to Aboriginal social networks and the home circumstances of participants and that targeted land activities, such as those of Centrefarm Aboriginal Horticulture Ltd in 2007-08 and of Central Desert Training in 2008-09, had good enrolments and retention. We conclude from such behaviours that some Aboriginal people were exercising considerable initiative in pursuing their aspirations through institutions that were familiar to them and socially accessible.

A relatively small number of individuals, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, were helping Aboriginal people navigate the uncertainties of engaging with workplace culture. This 'broker' role (a social capital asset in terms of Figure 1) is readily overlooked. Often the help that people in broker roles were giving to others was driven by Aboriginal norms of demand sharing. It involved 'brokers' assisting with phone calls, documentation, introductions or knowledge that other people required to access welfare or work. Demand sharing also acts more obviously in the region to redistribute physical and financial assets amongst Aboriginal kinship groups, trading them for the social capital inherent in a promise of future reciprocity.⁴⁶ This kind of 'claiming' behaviour is one of the generic strategies that people all over the world use to cope with livelihood shocks and stresses. However over-reliance on 'claiming' in Anmatjere region, and relatively less use by Aboriginal people of other livelihood strategies such as diversification and saving, indicates a failure in adaptive capacity – people are unable to do things differently even where they recognise that change is important if they are to take advantage of emerging opportunities. Alcohol abuse (reducing human and social capital assets, Figure 1) and the low level of understanding and influence that Aboriginal people of the region have in decisions about how investments in the region's future are made (low influence on institutions, Figure 1) are certainly factors that contribute to this failure. They no doubt influenced the view expressed by many local Aboriginal people that there were actually very few jobs in the region. Overcoming this failure will involve cultural change (ie, change to institutions, in terms of Figure 1). Doing so while maintaining the strong sense of place and community that is apparent in the region requires that change occurs in workplaces and agencies as well as in Aboriginal communities.

Some industries, such as community services and pastoralism, had a stronger track record than others, notably horticulture, in bridging between Aboriginal and workplace cultures and providing for local employment. The characteristics of the industries help explain this, particularly the extent of flexibility in production requirements. Compared to the community services sector and even to pastoralism, horticultural producers have limited scope to vary when and how work tasks are done to suit the norms of Aboriginal culture, such as that certain people do not work together, or that people need time off for funerals or community events. Horticultural work is also physically demanding, which means it is not well suited to the poor health and fitness of middle aged and older Aboriginal people. However Peter Yates' experience with the ready engagement of Aboriginal women in bush harvest of native plant foods compared to their lack of interest in picking planted crops⁴⁷ points to a more fundamental reason. Compared to bush harvest, horticulture production requirements give little scope for Aboriginal people to combine earning an income with other livelihood activities that are important to them, such as caring for old people, teaching children bush skills, and visiting country for which they have cultural caring responsibility. These are important to maintaining the coherence between Aboriginal ontology and agency that continues to be an important determinant of capability and well-being for many Aboriginal people in Anmatjere region. In short, questions of when, where, how and with whom work is done are important to what Aboriginal people see as an acceptable work-life balance and how they might achieve it.

We found a high level of confidence amongst the region's people in the efforts that local and regional organisations had been taking to bridge between workplace and Aboriginal cultures. This was in spite of social issues that research participants indicated, generally indirectly, as being linked to alcohol abuse. Local skills, accountabilities and recognition of diversity, highlighted by Stafford Smith and Huigen in the last issue of *Dialogue*⁴⁸ as indicating capacity to live with and take advantage of 'desert differences', were clearly important in how these organisations were managing.⁴⁹ Such organisations often depended for their efforts on the knowledge and relationships fostered by non-Aboriginal staff, but lack of recognition of their key role, as well as underinvestment in housing and other service infrastructure, works against such people making long term commitments to the region. In addition, the institutional environment was changing markedly during our research as a result of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, reform to CDEP and regionalisation of local government structures. Rather than buffering uncertainty for local people, which is the role of institutions, these changes seemed to be exacerbating it. Many research participants recognised that change is important. But the impact of these changes (in terms of Figure 1) was to further reduce the influence of local people on key formal institutions that impact on the accessibility of livelihood strategies and on the outcomes to which they aspired.

The future

Three interrelated action arenas that people involved in the research identified as important for the future are:

- (a) increased knowledge and understanding, encompassing much more than training, but addressing structural features and political processes that determine 'how the world works';
- (b) greater recognition of, and support for, 'role models' - people in broker roles who span two cultures - and their families, to help them address the stresses involved in translating between two sets of norms that are often in tension or overt conflict with each other; and
- (c) increased effort to generate 'one set of rules for working together' out of the two cultures that operate in the region.

A livelihoods lens also generated insights to broader questions of sustainability for the region. For example, it indicated that the accounting of environmental and social costs to the region from primary production is inadequate. Aboriginal people's perception of these costs is no doubt a factor in their generally cautious approach to expansion of primary production opportunities, compared with that of non-Aboriginal people. It is apparent that primary production sectors of the regional economy have been, and continue to be, developed by trading off the region's natural capital for financial capital that is mostly exported outside the region. In the long run the natural assets of the region are being depleted, notwithstanding significant effort to protect the long-term sustainable yield from one key asset: groundwater.⁵⁰ Even the public investment that is made into maintaining the region's natural assets through environmental management mostly translates to work for non-local people, and hence its value is also largely exported out of the region.⁵¹

Employment of local Aboriginal people in primary production is a key strategy to reduce financial flows out of the region. It also generates increases in the region's human capital (more skilled, knowledgeable people) and social capital (stronger intercultural relationships and social networks). While there have been some great successes, local Aboriginal employment in primary production continues to be very limited in the region, as it is more generally in remote Australia.⁵² The mining industry has relatively high capacity

to make substantial investments in Aboriginal employment, as well as being subject to contractual requirements and other incentives to train, mentor and grow local Aboriginal employment. However, technological change means that mines of the future, no doubt including that proposed in the region at Nolans Bore, will be increasingly automated. Higher skills requirements for fewer jobs will make gains for local Aboriginal employment even harder to achieve.

Investments that increase Aboriginal involvement in environmental management, through employment and intercultural governance structures, are important to engage local Aboriginal people's aspirations and motivations to pursue a style of work that integrates responsibilities to family and country. A key example from Anmatjere region comes from research, and subsequent community based action, on how Aboriginal cultural values associated with water can be incorporated into formal government processes for management of groundwater. It found that culturally mentored jobs in water resource management are a key pathway.⁵³ Further opportunities for Aboriginal engagement in environmental management in the region are offered through the mining industry, which already needs to factor environmental monitoring and remedial works into its costs. On pastoral lands, involvement of Aboriginal people in approaches to fire management could involve burning fire breaks in anticipation of high fire danger seasons that pose risks to beef cattle production.⁵⁴ This would simultaneously help to ensure that periodic rains promote the productivity of desert raisins for commercial and subsistence harvests.⁵⁵ However effective substitution for depletion of the region's natural capital by primary production is likely to require explicit inter-sectoral strategies that even out the timing of scarce large capital investments into the region, such as for new mine development, to build up other assets over the long term through education and improved regional infrastructure as well as environmental management.⁵⁶ Australia needs to get much better at 'going slow' and making steady investment that rebuilds a regional asset base, if development is to offer a work-life balance to the people of Anmatjere and other remote regions.

We consider that Aboriginal involvement in environmental management is a good pathway for bridging between workplace and Aboriginal cultures. We also recognise that this conclusion somewhat echoes the distinctly Aboriginal conception of livelihoods that Scambary⁵⁷ discusses. Indeed one reason that environmental management can engage remote Aboriginal people in work, better than standard jobs in horticulture or mining, is that it is meaningful in terms of what Scambary describes as Aboriginal 'networks of relatedness of people to kin and country' and motivations that arise from a 'complex of obligations defined by a corpus of Indigenous law and custom'.⁵⁸

However, our interpretations differ from Scambary's in at least two important ways. Firstly, we would not suggest that Aboriginal involvement in environmental management is a livelihood strategy that all remote Aboriginal people need or want. For example, some Aboriginal people in Anmatjere region, particularly women, are impressively engaged in livelihoods that combine family care with mainstream job roles that have little or no interface with country. Further, less than half of the Aboriginal people we surveyed in the region mentioned 'caring for country' amongst their aspirations for the future. Secondly, we argue that developing sustainable Aboriginal livelihoods in environmental management requires as much attention to the assets, aspirations and motivations of non-Aboriginal people as to those of Aboriginal people. Better understandings of how work-life balance is pursued by both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people, and of non-monetary outcomes

from work for both groups, will contribute more effectively to sustainable livelihoods and regions than separatist analyses.

Conclusion

Economic development in central Australia is often said to be hampered by local labour shortages, the unwillingness of Aboriginal people to move to where jobs exist or the low levels of job-related skill and motivation amongst Aboriginal people who do make the move. Applying livelihoods concepts in Anmatjere region has led us to somewhat different conclusions. Work and life are out of balance for many people in that region, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. The former commonly aspire to better integrate work into their lives, but are precluded from doing so by dysfunction in both formal and informal institutions. The latter tend to be 'living to work', much like the many residents of Alice Springs who are coping in spite of staff shortages.

In 'a town like Alice', the livelihoods of many non-Aboriginal people, their activities, values and aspirations as well as their incomes, are supported directly by the presence of a large minority of Aboriginal people in the town and a majority Aboriginal population in surrounding regions such as Anmatjere.⁵⁹ Yet there is often little recognition that achieving a better and more equitable work life balance, with strong bridges between workplace and Aboriginal cultures, depends as much on the knowledge, skills and commitment of non-Aboriginal individuals and families as it does on Aboriginal people - or governments. This lack of recognition undoubtedly contributes to stress, burnout and to a lack of incentive for non-Aboriginal people to incorporate the sustainability of the community and environment of central Australia into their own livelihood aspirations.

Some advocates for the concept of 'livelihoods' are suggesting that it has a distinctive meaning for remote Aboriginal people, such that remote Aboriginal people have livelihoods whereas other people have jobs. We consider this a false dichotomy: livelihoods concepts are applicable to the circumstances of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. We recognise there is much yet to learn about how a livelihoods lens can identify and promote effective pathways and indicators for health and sustainability across Australian regions and their cultures, social groups and modes of economic participation. But approaches to development of remote regions could profitably pay greater attention to using the sustainable livelihoods framework as a common frame of reference for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

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A day out bush

Meg Mooney

I wake up early in my little cell in the GBM accommodation, one of the more noticeable, for whitefellas, legacies of the Intervention, most communities now have these places for visitors to stay, two large demountables, I prefer the more basic one, without stainless steel ensuites, because each of the tiny bedrooms has a window that opens. Other features are a large plywood-floored space with a small window, ceiling fans, a table and chairs, no air-conditioning, between the line of rooms and communal bathroom, on one side, a kitchen/lounge and the the office of the GBM – Government Business Manager – on the other, the most astounding feature of this accommodation is a free satellite phone with only a caution about limiting international phone calls. Before the GBMs, as they've become known, I stayed in grimy council dongas, spare school houses – usually better, schools themselves, camped if I had company.

I load my swag, esky, camping box into the troopie, head over to the old ladies' camp on a quiet edge of the community, near the police station and the ruins of the little tin 'pension houses' wrecked by petrol sniffers a few years ago, despite the police being so close. The ladies are still lying or sitting among piles of blankets on their beds, foam mattresses on old bedframes next to their well-made humpies – sheet of iron, canvas, leafy branches for verandahs, if you didn't know, you might think this camp was primitive. I give the women cheques for the bush trips we took the schoolkids on, the old ladies are keen to teach the children, know many of them don't learn as much at home as they used to. One lady I don't know is sitting next to a smouldering fire, tells me I should take her to a community west of here, maybe she thinks I'm from Land Council, I find out later her country is that way, as it happens I'm going to the school there later this morning, arrange to pick her up.

Then I drive south, along the road to the airstrip – bitumen now! – towards the line of pink hills lying, shimmering across the plain. I turn off along a little track, follow a line of telegraph poles – a recent addition, at appalling cost – to a cluster of tin sheds and houses

surrounded by old mattresses and tyres, bits of machinery, clothing, other rubbish, there are a couple of wild horses and a bull too – attracted by water.

Martha, a tall, graceful woman with white hair, sees me, leaves a group of adults and kids having breakfast on the ground around a fire, I tell her I'm sorry I don't have any second-hand clothes, give her some money. I've known Martha for two decades now, since I worked at the local school where she was a cleaner, I was a young woman wearing colourful skirts who'd finally moved to the desert, but hadn't thought much about Aboriginal people, she was about the same age as me, wore bright bandanas, was already carrying around her grandchildren.

At the school I find the young Aboriginal assistant teacher who was going to do a lesson about local plants with me – follow-up to the bush trip with the old ladies – has to look after his toddler son while his wife goes to town, I write out a lesson plan for him, leave it in his pigeonhole, he taught a class really well yesterday, just needs some encouragement, knows a lot about the plants, where they grow, what they're used for, I'm shocked how little of this the children seem to know now.

So I pick up Elsie from the old ladies camp and head west, we don't have much language in common, she's quiet but easy company, points out her country, beautiful ranges, the outstation where she used to live, the camels I didn't see, how dry the country is, 80 kilometres pass quickly.

At the community, a smaller one, a few dozen houses, store, council office, clinic, aged care, GBM – locked up since the last manager left a few weeks ago (she lasted a couple of months), I drop off more cheques to old ladies, talk to the school's Aboriginal assistant teachers about the local language and culture lessons they've been doing most afternoons, they're keen, the students know the names and uses of a lot more plants now, I show the teachers photos from the bush trip, we pore over plants we're not sure of. The head teacher's supported the language and culture lessons, they're a kind of elective, didn't happen at this school for years, over lunch – coffee and cigarette for him – he tells me the few language and culture resource staff at the department in town may be relocated next year, it's not certain language and culture will be on the agenda at all, ironically this school has just won an annual Education Department award for 'its excellent mix of English literacy and numeracy with a local Indigenous language and culture program'.

After lunch, one of the assistant teachers goes through the plant photo-cards again with the younger kids, the other uses the syllable chart he's made for the older class, then the little ones stick the plant specimens we collected on paper, write their names, draw the plants and what they are known for:

fruits, grubs that live in roots, small coconut-like galls made by another grub, bush tomatoes, flowers with honey, medicinal leaves or bark, the bigger kids copy phrases on to photo pages from the bush trip, 'witjirrki pulingka ngaranyi' – 'wild figs grow in the hills'.

Elsie is sitting with her tjamu (grandson) and his little son under a shady tree, she tells me she has lots of tjamus, lists the communities where they live, we drive back, see more camels, clouds – 'kapi ngalyanyi?' 'rain coming?' I drop her off at the ladies' camp, she wants me to fill up some wattle bottles, maybe find some containers first – there's no working tap nearby, except at the police station but the ladies wouldn't be allowed to use that, must have to walk at least a few hundred metres to get water, I look doubtful, say I won't be home til very late, still have hours to drive, she pats my hand, 'leave it, that's OK', she says.



The Viability of 'Hub' Settlements

Mark Moran

The viability of small remote family-based settlements, known as outstations or homelands, has been under review in policy circles since the late 1990s. The public debate began in 2005 when the Indigenous Affairs Minister Amanda Vanstone described remote Aboriginal communities as 'cultural museums'.¹ A neoliberal commentary ensued, largely championed by the Bennelong Society,² including the 'Leaving Remote Communities' conference in Sydney in September 2006. From both more and less sympathetic views, this commentary has supported a range of policy proposals, from investing more but differently, through to total withdrawal of support for the remoter settlements altogether. Contrary views have been slow to mobilise, partly because the questions raised - why are health, education, employment and law and order outcomes so 'bad'? - are valid, even if the proposed causes and solutions are contestable.³

The neoliberal commentary tends to promote a policy of population concentration, whether to regional centres or hub community settlements. Its policy influence appears to have been substantial, including a recent policy of concentrating services into select 'growth towns', operating through a proposed 'hub and spokes' model. This policy has developed with little regard to the history of Indigenous settlement, since it was the failure of resettlement to missions and regional centres that led to migration to smaller settlements and outstations in the first place. The distances and road conditions across remote Australia also limit the feasibility of commuting to larger settlements to access services or employment. Significantly, unless the underlying issues associated with training and job-readiness, capacity building and governance are addressed, including incentives and entry points into the economy, the migration of people to different places in the system will not simplistically equate to improvements in their employment or material living conditions. The current paper will analyse this argument for population concentration and associated migration implications, and draw out its persistent influence on the policy of successive Coalition and Labor Federal Governments.

The conflation of small settlements with outstations

The neoliberal commentary generalises all remote discrete communities as the same, conflating outstations with larger community settlements, when they in fact vary enormously from single family-based outstations to large towns of several thousand people. Helen Hughes' book *Lands of Shame* gave a scathing critique of 'homeland communities', advocating instead for a 'population concentration policy' into a small number of 'core centres'.⁴ According to the 2006 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS),⁵ there were 1187 Indigenous settlements nationally, of which over half (641) are in the Northern Territory (NT). Hughes describes all of these settlements as 'homeland communities', but the total number of community settlements is actually a quarter of this: 332 nationally and 132 in the Northern Territory (NT).

A study of Indigenous settlements in Australia identified three different types:⁶

1. outlying settlements dependent on a larger centre for infrastructure or services (aka outstations or homelands, and pastoral properties);
2. discrete settlements geographically separate from other centres (aka remote communities), and;
3. urban settlements within or on the outskirts of an urban or rural centre (aka town camps).

Drawing on data from the 2006 CHINS survey, the first two types of discrete settlements can be classified four ways, according to their population: outstations (<50 people), small (50-200), intermediate (200-500) and large (>500). On this basis, of the 1187 discrete settlements recorded nationally, 73 per cent are outstations, 18 per cent small, 6 per cent intermediate and 3 per cent are large settlements. For the Northern Territory (NT), there is a slightly higher distribution of smaller settlements (80%, 12%, 5% and 3% respectively).

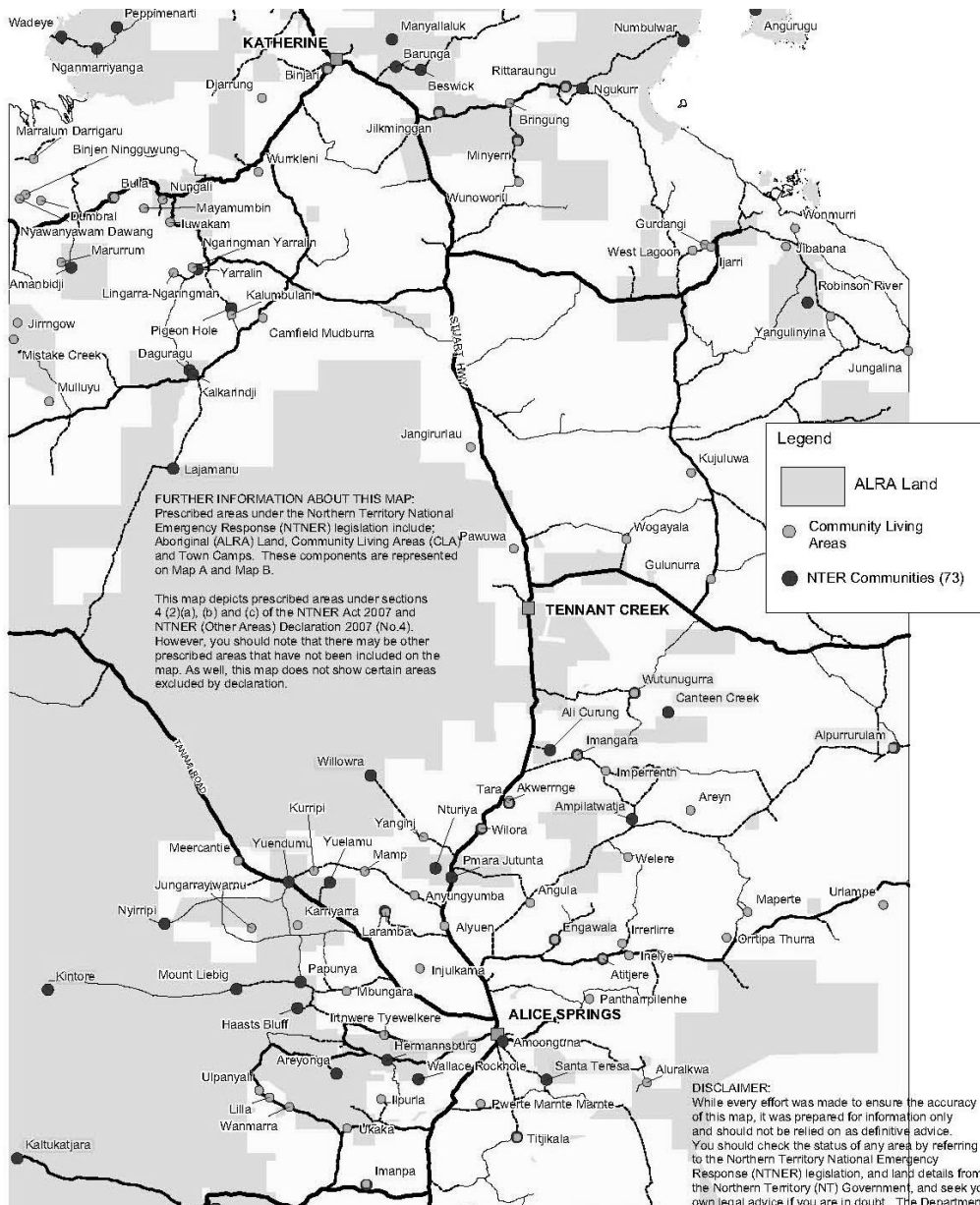
In terms of the total population of almost 93,000 people living in these 1200 discrete settlements, an inverse relationship emerges, with 12 per cent living in outstations, 22 per cent in small, 23 per cent in intermediate and 43 per cent in large settlements. For the NT, there is a slightly higher proportion living in outstations (16%, 18%, 23% and 43% respectively), but the numbers of larger settlements are the same. So the number of outstations belies the small population living in them. Despite their sheer number, outstations account for only a fraction of the Indigenous population living in discrete community settlements. In fact, two thirds of the remote community population (both nationally and in the NT) live in settlements with greater than 200 people.

Hubs and spokes

Funding for outstation infrastructure and operations has always been patchy, cobbled together from a number of sources including one-off capital grants, mining royalties and Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) funds. Government support was almost entirely from the Commonwealth, but this began to reduce from the late 1990s with a moratorium on funding for new outstations by the now disbanded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. The Commonwealth then passed its responsibility for outstations to the NT Government, through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in September 2007. The NT Government clarified its policy position (2009), saying it would maintain funding at current levels provided they are occupied for at least 8 months of the year. Ongoing support will be contingent on outstations owners showing 'increasing self-sufficiency', including 'reasonable levels of contribution towards services', and 'will in most cases involve a form of remote delivery, based from the closest or most accessible hub town'.⁷

The reduction of support to larger remote community settlements has been more by attrition than stated policy. Under the Howard Government, the resourcing of community-based organisations was sharply curtailed. From late 2006, the Northern Territory Government implemented a policy of regionalising local government into large mega Shires, leading to the closure of local community councils, replacing them with advisory boards. Nationally, the number of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations in remote and very remote areas decreased by 20 per cent from 2001 to 2006.⁸ Then in August 2007, the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER, or the Intervention) was legislated, which gave the Federal Government unprecedented powers to intervene in the interests of child protection. Although this led to an increase in services delivery, expenditure was largely confined to government departments, including employment of Government Business Managers (GBMs), Community Employment Brokers (CEBs), Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers (RAFCWs), and increased police officers, child protection, teaching and health workers. There was little corresponding funding for local organisations.⁹ As noted in the 2008 Review of the NTER, 'unfortunately, the way that the NTER has been implemented may have further undermined the already weakened and stressed systems of traditional Aboriginal authority, decision making, leadership, community engagement and self-governance'.¹⁰

NTER Prescribed Areas¹¹ (with northern NT removed from map)



There were no programs in the NTER that explicitly supported migration or mobility to hub settlements, but as noted by the demographer John Taylor,¹² an underlying assumption was that 'life chances would be improved by the resettlement of people into fewer larger locations that have more services and job opportunities'. 'A common signal to Aboriginal people that became crystallised in the NTER was to embrace the institutions of mainstream Australian life with potential migration inducing implications.'

Hub settlements were first mooted towards the end of the Howard Government, when Minister Mal Brough announced 'innovative child care service hubs in regional and remote communities with high Indigenous populations'.¹³ Details of the locations of these hubs gradually trickled through in 2008. The headline COAG National Indigenous Reform (Closing the Gap) Agreement in 2008 set out a priority for enhanced infrastructure support and service provision to 'larger and more economically sustainable communities' which allow for 'services outreach to and access by smaller surrounding communities', including the 'voluntary mobility by individuals and families to areas where better education and job opportunities exist, with higher standards of services'.¹⁴ Then in the May 2009 Budget, Labor Minister Jenny Macklin announced a policy of concentrating investment into 26 (eventually 29) communities nationally, 15 of which were in the Northern Territory (NT).¹⁵ The fifteen were the same communities to receive funding for new housing under the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP). The then Opposition spokesperson for Indigenous Affairs Tony Abbot calling for voluntary relocation from remote settlements, 'to empower them to leave if that's their choice'.¹⁶ A policy of voluntary mobility and associated population concentration can thus be seen to have enjoyed bipartisan support at Federal level of Government.¹⁷

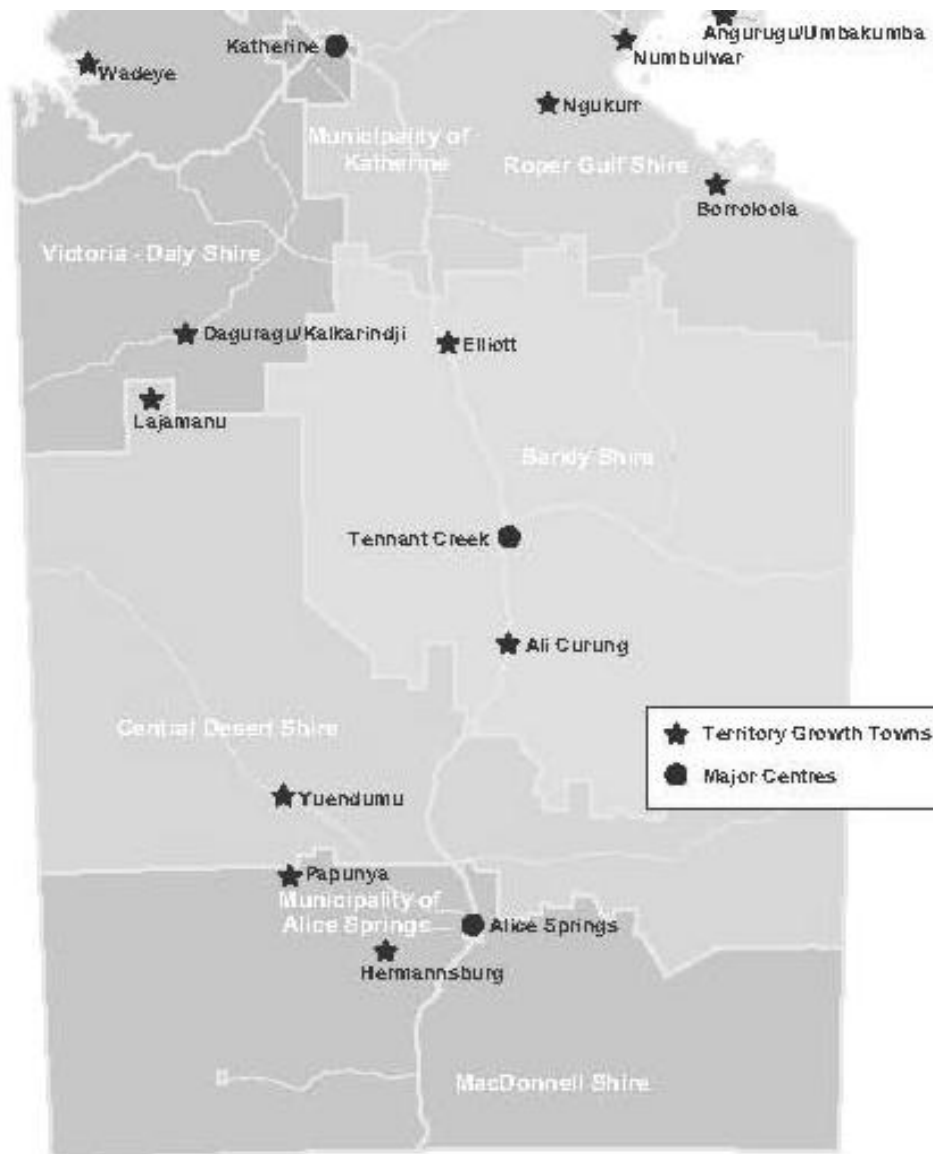
Shortly after the May 2009 Budget announcement, the NT Labor Government came into line with the Commonwealth, with the release of its 'Working Future' policy.¹⁸ The NT Government added another five settlements to the Commonwealth's 15, bringing the total to 20, calling them 'growth towns'. The proposed changes to these 20 hubs include secure leasehold and tax incentives for private sector investment, proper town planning and targeted infrastructure investment, and employment and economic development opportunities. The benchmark was the provision of the same facilities and services you would expect in any Australian town of a similar size, including schools, police stations, courts, health services, aged care and disability facilities, the Internet, good transport options and recreational facilities. The reforms were a positive step towards improved opportunity in these locations. What is questionable, however, is the ability of these towns to adequately service other settlements, through any notion of a 'hub and spokes' model.

Of particular concern are the 110 community settlements in the Northern Territory that are too large to be outstations and not fortunate to be declared as 'hubs'. This applies in particular to Central Australia, including the sizeable and long established settlements of Mutitjulu, Kintore, Ampilatwatja, Alpururulam, Finke, Willowra and Santa Teresa. An estimated combined population of 15,000 people live in these settlements in the NT (or 50,000 nationally). The Commonwealth's 2009 Budget Statement indicates that the settlements that are 'not initially covered by this [hub] strategy will continue to receive government support and services'.¹⁹ It seems to suggest that other settlements must wait their turn, but fails to lay down any future timetable.

In terms of maintaining support and services, it is questionable whether prior levels of funding will be maintained, given that the previous trend was of increasing funding to address historical under-investment. Over the first two years of the NTER to late 2009, Willowra (population 272) and Wutunugurra (Epenarra, population 197) in the Northern Territory received little capital funding for infrastructure other than Outback Stores,²⁰ accommodation for government staff engaged with the NTER, buildings for night patrols, playground equipment, and limited refurbishments of houses. Given the level of public investment involved in the NTER, this investment is surprisingly low and potentially equal or less than what would have been expected in any two year period prior to the NTER. In early 2010 there were signs that funding was improving, with both communities awaiting

the outcomes of grant applications. It remains to be seen how funding levels will be sustained in places like Wutunugurra and Willowra with implementation of the new hub strategy.

Growth Towns²¹ (with northern NT removed from map)



Under the NT Working Futures policy, the hubs will be complemented with a remote transport strategy. While transport for services may be feasible for outstations in the locale of one of the towns, it will not be feasible for many of these 110 community settlements, especially those located in Central Australia. The settlement of Alpururulam is more than 480 km from the nearest growth town of Ali Curung, and about 600 km from

Tennant Creek. The settlement of Kaltukatjara (Dockers River), similarly, is more than 600 km from Alice Springs, and more than 700 km from the nearest proposed growth town of Hermannsburg. Yuendumu is the closest 'growth town' to Willowra, but at a distance of 150 km it is still a two hour drive, and beyond reasonable commuting distance. In the top end, the distances between settlements and their nearest growth towns are more reasonable, but roads can be cut for months during the wet season. Whatever the benefits that will accrue to the 20 growth towns, the flow on to the remaining 110 community settlements in the Northern Territory will be limited. There are serious questions about the feasibility of a policy of population concentration through hubs, whether through either short term mobility or long term migration.

Migration is not a solution to human development

The historical record does not bode well for resettlement of Aboriginal people to regional centres. In the 1960s and 1970s, the old system of Aboriginal station hands working for food and household goods was brought down by the introduction of equal pay in the pastoral industry. The Aboriginal station hands and their families lost their jobs and moved into regional towns where there was no work and no housing. Men were only trained for station work and there was none to be had, which led to a range of social problems and ill health.²²

Nor does history bode well for resettlement of Aboriginal people to large 'hub' settlements. Through the mission period, large settlements formed due to the voluntary migration or involuntary relocation of people across the immediate region, or sometimes further afield. These settlements then faced a range of social problems due to the collocation of different clan groups. For example, Ali Curung (formerly Warrabri) was established in the late 1950s with people from four different language groups: Warlpiri, Warumungu, Kaytetye and Alyawarr. In the 1970s, the settlement plan was divided into four distinctive zones accordingly.²³ When controls were relaxed and funds became available for other locations, people indeed 'voted with their feet' dispersing to settlements closer to their country, including Imangara (Murray Downs), Jarra Jarra, Mungkarta, Wutunugurra (Epenarra), and the regional centre of Tennant Creek. After 1980, the population of Ali Curung effectively halved.²⁴ It is somewhat surprising then that the NT Government recently nominated Ali Curung as the only hub from Tennant Creek to Alice Springs, east of the Stuart Highway, an area of over 150,000 square kilometres. In addition to those settlements listed above, other settlements in the area with their own independent history include Canteen Creek, Alpurrurulam, Ampilatwatja and Utopia. It is unrealistic to nominate Ali Curung as the only hub in this vast area, whether people have a past historical attachment to it or otherwise.

The hub policy is underpinned by the notion that the living conditions of people in remote settlements will be improved in larger hub settlements and regional towns, compared to smaller community settlements. It is therefore important to carefully analyse this assumption. In early 2009, the President of the Bennelong Society Gary Johns, through his paper titled 'No Job, No House',²⁵ brought the neoliberal case to its zenith. He provocatively argued that people need to adjust to the notion that if there are no jobs in their town, they have to move to where there are opportunities in regional centres, otherwise they will be trapped in poverty: 'anything less than a 'no job, no house' mindset will harm Aborigines'. According to Johns, 'the decline of these communities both in a social and population sense raises serious doubts about the level of government assistance that should continue to be provided to them'.

Remote Australia is paradoxically both a region of mass unemployment (in settlements) and mass labour shortages (reflected in high wages paid to mining and construction workers). There are employment opportunities in the settlements themselves, where skilled employment positions are predominantly held by outsiders. Given the quantum of services and funds that enter community settlements, there is considerable potential for short and long term employment in building, infrastructure maintenance, retailing, tourism, natural resource management, education, governance and other services.²⁶ Outside the community settlements, there are proven employment opportunities in mining, natural resource management, and pastoralism. Significant challenges are involved in building skills, overcoming costs and other difficulties in travelling from the settlements to jobs, and in job-readiness and employment practices. Overcoming these barriers may not be feasible in the short term, but it should be the long term goal.

There is a long history of attempts to realise this potential, and whatever the progress, the potential remains. In 2009, the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) in the Northern Territory set ambitious goals to achieve local employment outcomes through building construction. Yet this contributed to delays in the Program and in face of a political backlash to hasten housing construction, this aspect of the Program came under considerable pressure. Yet as long as the not insubstantial amount of funding continues to be exported to the benefit of external suppliers, the economic 'viability' of remote settlements will continue to be seriously limited.²⁷

Significantly, the migration of people from remote settlements to hub settlements and regional towns, to where the jobs supposedly are, will not improve their job-readiness. If the economic circumstances of people remain unchanged, such relocation may actually worsen their health and well-being. If people relocate to hubs and regional centres to gain jobs, then governments will need to invest in the same type of training and job-readiness programs that are needed in community settlements. As described above, there is a distinct type of discrete Indigenous settlement that is located in urban areas, popularly known as town camps. Sanders has shown that there is no significant difference in the incomes and employment rates for people living in the Alice Springs town camps with those in the remote settlements.²⁸

Hughes singles out settlements in close proximity to mines and tourism as sites of potential 'economic viability'.²⁹ The Granites Gold Mine is located between Lajamanu (population 672) and Yuendumu (population 693) settlements and despite considerable gains by Newmont in increasing Indigenous employment, local employment remains low, reaching an 'all-time high' of 12 people in 2009.³⁰ A similarly low opportunity for employment exists in Mutitjulu (population 481), despite its proximity to Uluru (Ayers Rock), one of the premier tourist destinations of Australia.³¹ Proximity to jobs does not mean that people are qualified for them or that employers will employ them.

The neoliberal commentary holds that people are already 'voting with their feet', and migrating to regional centres with improved education and employment options.³² Taylor and Biddle's detailed analysis of the 2006 Census did indeed reveal a decrease in the population of outstations (-4.5%),³³ but the population of remote community settlements, in comparison, increased (+7.5%).³⁴ There was small net migration to urban centres from remote communities between the 2001 and 2006 Census,³⁵ but the NTER Review noted that this was countered by an even higher migration to remote communities from out of State. The Review could not find any evidence to support claims that the NTER had led to increased migration to urban centres, despite the number of submissions it received suggesting otherwise. It did however note an increase in short term mobility.³⁶

Census figures are highly subject to the extent of mobility between Aboriginal settlements.³⁷ As John Taylor and Martin Bell have argued, people move between a limited number of settlements across a reasonably stable 'mobility region', and that intra-regional moves between settlements tend to cancel each other out.³⁸ In these regions, Indigenous mobility patterns approximate circulation rather than migration, with the development of localised, as opposed to national, networks of movement.

Declines in outstation population are real,³⁹ but these have been as much a function of reduced government support, especially transport, undermining the feasibility of outstation living.⁴⁰ Some migration from outstations has occurred, with some now abandoned, but the remaining outstation population has actually proved to be quite resilient, suggesting that these people are reluctant to move, whether supported or otherwise. Like outstations, if funding for remote communities stagnates or decreases, the population of these towns may decline, but the effect will not be total. Many people will stay put, and those that leave will be replaced by others moving back, irrespective of the decline in services and living conditions that would ensue.

Johns wrote that country towns, regional centres and major cities should be equipped for an influx of Aboriginal settlers, 'including refugee resources and facilities', to help Aborigines transition into mainstream economic life.⁴¹ He argued that by providing increased servicing to 'help people to adapt', 'the long-held fear of Aborigines coming to town can be allayed'. Residents of these towns have good reason to express their concern at the location of refugee resources and services within their locale, especially if the underlying issues of job-readiness and availability are not addressed. Demographic modelling by Taylor exposed the implications of mass migration to regional centres, and the deterioration of living conditions that would ensue for their predominantly non-Indigenous residents.⁴²

Johns also evoked the need to 'protect those who want to escape bad behaviour' by encouraging 'secure housing in large Aboriginal communities, country towns and regional centres to allow Aboriginal inhabitants to escape humbugging'.⁴³ Johns reveals his lack of history here as this was largely the impetus for the homeland or return to country movement in the first place. In 2010, there were media reports of residents of Ampilatwatja relocating to an outstation to escape failing community infrastructure and controls imposed in the NTER.⁴⁴

Beyond escaping the pressure of 'community' life, outstations hold meaning well beyond employment and residence. Community control, maintenance of language, culture and country, and associated activities of Indigenous art, eco-tourism and natural resource management, are enterprises with benefits that accrue not just to the Indigenous population of remote Australia.⁴⁵ The co-location of remote Aboriginal settlements and vast parts of the Australian natural estate provide considerable employment opportunities.⁴⁶ The synergies between cultural practices and natural resource management have long been exploited through a network of land (and sea, to the north) management centres, which are being increasingly recognised and supported by the Commonwealth under the banner of its 'Working on Country' and 'Caring for Country' initiatives. In addition, biomedical and ethnographic research demonstrates that people resident on homelands and 'working on country' enjoy a higher standard of physical and mental health.⁴⁷ Outstations have been, and will continue to be, an important coping mechanism for people seeking to escape the social pressures and lack of economic opportunities in larger community settlements, equally or more so than the foreign environments of regional centres or hub settlements.

Agency and structure

Employment is a critical means of economic activity, but it is a blunt instrument to measure economic activity alone. There is a range of important productive activities engaged in by those who are unemployed in a conventional sense. Behind every piece of art that sells for a profit, there is a whole field of other activities including the passing of traditional knowledge, art tuition, governance activities in art centres, and the many paintings that never sell as emerging artists hone their skills. Volunteering in the many organisations and forums of governance required for the transmission of services and funding is also a major field of productive activity, and an important proving ground for Indigenous leadership. Parenting for many is a full time occupation.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is a model of practice developed for international development settings. It is a more sophisticated lens to view the socio-economic potential of a place, through consideration of five different types of community assets: human, financial, physical, natural and social. Application of this Framework to one settlement in Central Australia helps to illustrate the unique economic context of remote settlements and the economic rationale behind the choices that their residents make.⁴⁸ Engawala (population 135) is located within an Aboriginal-owned pastoral property of marginal profitability; at the time of the study, there were very few other economic opportunities in a financial sense. Government allocations dominated income through project grants and welfare payments. The only private enterprise was through Indigenous art. Almost all fully paid positions in the settlement (and its related regional centre) were held by outsiders. Welfare payment aside, little of this external funding flowed to household incomes due to the lack of local employment and enterprises. A close alignment between the store turnover and the weekly payroll (after compulsory deductions) suggest that almost all income was spent at the local store on basic essentials. There was little internal financial capital or savings to leverage economic development.

The political economy of the settlement led to an unusual asset base and resource use, in which internal asset transformations were more important than inputs and outputs. Physical assets (such as housing and infrastructure) were largely provided by the state, and communal ownership ensured that these assets had no market value (except for second-hand vehicles). Despite their limited economic value, these physical assets provided the backbone of life in the settlement and their use was adjusted to suit different livelihood strategies (eg, setting up a child care facility in an underused room of the Council Office). Human capital (education and skills) was relatively low, both in terms of skills and the extent to which people were empowered to act independently, and generally insufficient to fill the few jobs available locally. Opportunities for economic development and job creation were limited, which led to limited motivation for training. Despite the availability of natural capital (eg, bush foods, firewood), the logistics of collection and distribution to markets meant that their economic potential was limited to subsistence purposes, important as this 'customary economy' can be.⁴⁹ Social capital (relationships and networks) thus proved more important than conventional physical assets, natural resources or money in terms of its transferability in an economic sense, particularly in overcoming short-term vulnerability. By investing time and resources into family and kin, people effectively made deposits into social capital that they could later draw down in terms of accommodation, food, money and other resources. Notably, in terms of economic utility, it was the type of capital which was most reliably under their control. There was a high level of community mobility evidenced during the above study, as is typical for most remote Aboriginal settlements. At one time, all but two people were

absent for a large sporting carnival. At another, the population of the settlement doubled for sorry business after the death of a senior elder. The point is that, to the extent that mobility built and sustained social capital, it was an economically rational strategy. There were high costs associated with this mobility, given distances between centres, fuel costs and poor road conditions, yet people prioritised travel over other livelihood options, pooling limited cash and displaying innovative bush mechanic techniques, including a network of wrecks for spare parts. Mobility is usually explained solely in cultural terms, but the sharing and exchange that occurs is also a form of economic activity: people are exercising a discretionary socio-economic response to the unique political economy of their home settlements.

Some of the mobility in Engawala was related to employment in Alice Springs, and remittances were an important form of income for some families. This is consistent with Noel Pearson's notion of 'orbiting' which is distinct from permanent migration.⁵⁰ While raising serious questions about the economic viability of remote settlements, Pearson falls short of advocating for relocation to urban centres. Rather, he draws out the connection between viability and mobility, whereby, 'economic viability in remote communities is predicated on mobility, and viability is fundamentally a question of choice for remote communities.'⁵¹ Thus Pearson predicts that on achieving economic reform, the mobility of individuals will increase, including to an extent, voluntary long-term migration. But Pearson has emphasised his opposition to those 'prescribing relocation policies for Aboriginal Australians: enough damage has been done over two centuries in pursuit of such arbitrary policies.'⁵²

As the Engawala case studies demonstrates, Indigenous agency is not economically irrational, but largely influenced by the constraints and opportunities provided by a dysfunctional mismatch of government services. In considering agency it is important to not overlook the profound structural and psychological constraints which restrict the socio-economic status of Indigenous people. If people are compelled to relocate to different places in the system, and they come to face the same range of structural constraints, then they are unlikely to behave differently. Beyond questioning (or moralising over) people's behaviour, it is important to question the dysfunctional system of Indigenous affairs, as it has developed in Australia, which operates more or less equally between different sized and located Indigenous settlements.

The problems with simplistic solutions

Indigenous people living in remote settlements deal with a dysfunctional service-delivery system, where there is a clear disconnect between external services and the intended end-users. There is an apparent mismatch between demand and supply of services, evident in the lack of local employment in service delivery, the low levels of attendance in fully staffed schools, and the lack of private ownership of assets. This raises questions about the manner in which services are provided, the process involved, and the participation of consumers in the process. Seen through an economic lens, there is no necessary connection between supply and demand for services. On the contrary, there is empirical evidence to suggest that service providers proliferate in the absence of effective demand.⁵³ Policies and programs expand and undergo reform, based largely on new supply driven solutions that are seldom informed by consumer perspectives or even internal evaluations against policy goals. The rate of launching new programs exceeds the closure of old, resulting in an annual increase in the quantity of administration to be processed. Supply driven solutions in the absence of effective demand has led to a highly fragmented and dysfunctional Indigenous sector with increasing compliance regulation

and escalating costs, driven by standards and economic benchmarks originating in urban centres.

Internationally, in development assistance projects, the common ground between development agencies and end-users is pathways to improved safety, education, income, health and well-being. It is quite different to apply these practices to remote Aboriginal settlements, where there is little agreement between governments and Aboriginal people on what constitutes 'development'. For a developed country like Australia, it is in the national interest to have a safety net for the significant minority of the Australian public who find themselves unemployed, disabled, elderly, single parents or otherwise disadvantaged. This safety net, however, becomes something else in remote Aboriginal settlements, where the vast majority of the adult population are often recipients. Providing cash or other material inputs, in the absence of a development assistance framework, can lead to passivity and dependence. When earnings are guaranteed, there is little incentive for people to explore other employment options. This kind of assistance is quite different from development practice which builds on *local* strengths, initiatives and innovations. Welfare reform processes that are place-based and working towards local employment pathways have merit, including those being trialled under the Cape York Welfare Reform Program.⁵⁴

The neoliberal commentary tries to evoke a threshold of economic viability below which government assistance should cease. Thereafter their inhabitants would be left to fend for themselves, or to relocate elsewhere. It is sensible to raise questions about the level of government assistance that should be provided to remote settlements, especially outstations, but it is problematic to evoke a mental model of threshold of viability. In keeping with a recent analysis,⁵⁵ there are small settlements in remote locations where it is impossible by any model to provide services which satisfy an Australian social minimum standard. But this does not preclude assistance to a lower standard. The truth is that people can choose to make almost any scale of settlement and remoteness work if they are prepared to adjust their aspirations and take on an appropriate service delivery model (probably involving a great deal of self-reliance). The question then becomes what standards of service are appropriate, rather than a simplistic on-off funding threshold of economic viability. Thus viability has to be regarded as a more complex trade-off between the aspirations for, and benefits of, services (the demand-driven desire for certain levels of affluence and services) and the costs of providing these services, and the form of this trade-off is different in different places. Rather than evoking a simplistic cut-off of viability or population concentration, Government should determine a more sophisticated gradient of different standards of service delivery for different scales of settlements.

With the current policy push for growth towns operating as centres of a 'hub and spokes' model, the Commonwealth Government needs to clarify what their policy intent is for the multitude of Indigenous settlements that are neither outstations nor hubs. In the Northern Territory, if the intent is to fix up the first 20 communities and then to move on to the remaining 110, then this should be stated and a timetable for implementation given. Since the limited pool of funds will be prioritised for the 20 hubs, the remaining settlements can at best expect a continuation of the status quo. Yet they face the same range of social and economic problems as the proposed hubs. If they too are to receive increased and concentrated investment in the long term in the next tranche of priority communities, how long will that be, and what will be the unintended consequences of this policy lag?

The argument that a policy of population concentration will lead to improved socio economic conditions is not compelling, yet the policy influence of this argument has been

substantial. Any suggestion that disadvantaged peoples in remote settlements should be excluded from funding assistance will only exacerbate the situation. There is *no evidence* to support the concentration of services and populations through a 'hub and spokes' model. Certainly in the southern half of the Northern Territory, the distances and settlement history mitigate against mobility or migration to growth towns. It is a 'hub and spokes' model without the 'spokes'.



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The views expressed herein are those of the author and should not be taken as representing the views of World Vision Australia or the University of Queensland.

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The Future of Homelands/Outstations

Seán Kerins

Introduction

In October 2009 the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia (ASSA) and the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) convened a workshop at the Australian National University in Canberra on Homelands/Outstations.¹ Invited to the workshop were homeland/outstation residents, their resource agencies, peak Aboriginal organisations, social and physical scientists, educationalists, medical practitioners and bureaucrats. This report seeks to record the broad commentary from the workshop, over which there was consensus demonstrated in the unanimous endorsement of the communiqué (attached Appendix 1).

The aim of the workshop was to give voice to homeland/outstation residents in relation to their growing concerns about being excluded from policy development about their futures. Two significant policy developments occurred in 2008 and 2009 which instigated the need for such a workshop. The first was release of Northern Territory Government's *Working Future*² policy framework, which outlined, amongst other things, its first-ever homeland/outstation policy. The second was the overarching Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) *National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap)* (NIRA).³ The NIRA was established to frame the task of 'closing the gap' in Indigenous disadvantage, especially the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

At the national level for 2005-2007, life expectancy at birth for Indigenous males is estimated to be 67.2 years, 11.5 years less than life expectancy at birth for non-Indigenous males (78.7 years). Life expectancy at birth for Indigenous females is estimated to be 72.9 years, 9.7 years less than life expectancy at birth for non-Indigenous females (82.6 years). Indigenous life expectancy at birth differs across the states and territories and the lowest for both males and females is found in the Northern Territory (NT), estimated to be 61.5 years for males and 69.2 years for females.⁴

Prior to, and throughout his term as Prime Minister to date, Kevin Rudd has consistently stressed his government's commitment to evidence-based policy development. This commitment along with governments' willingness to commit extraordinary funding targeted at Indigenous disadvantage held out great optimism for Indigenous Australians living in homelands/outstations.

During the past 30 years, a growing body of research has indicated that life at homelands/outstations might be better - in health outcomes, livelihood options, social cohesion, and housing conditions - than at larger townships, despite government neglect and under-funding. This research suggests that 'closing the gap' might be more likely at homelands/outstations than elsewhere.

The diversity of small Indigenous communities

The homeland/outstation movement is a recent Aboriginal post-colonial initiative beginning in the early 1970s. There are over 1000 small Indigenous communities located across Australia primarily in the NT, South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA) and Queensland. The majority of these are located on Aboriginal-owned lands but many are located on excisions within pastoral leases or in national parks.

There is enormous diversity in homelands/outstations that statistical averages can mask. Most are populated by small family groups, but some number more than a hundred

people. Some are occupied year-round, others seasonally or rarely; in almost all there is considerable population movement between homelands/outstations and larger centres. Some have robust local economies built on arts production, employment as land and sea managers (rangers), and wildlife harvesting; others are highly dependent on welfare income.

The key commonality is that their residents have made a determined choice to actively engage with their land. This choice might be based on a desire to protect sacred sites, to retain connections to ancestral lands and ancestors, to live off the land, or to escape social problems that might be prevalent in larger townships.

Despite the lack of adequate needs-based government support throughout the past 40 years for homelands/outstations they have continued to grow in number across remote Australia.

Governance - homeland/outstation resource agencies

Good governance has been an essential ingredient to the success of many homelands/outstations and regional economic development. Many homeland/outstation resource agencies are long standing and grew alongside the homeland/outstation movement. Their primary aim is to support people living on country through the provision of services. Many now play a fundamental role as quasi government/development agencies/representative bodies and are essential intermediaries between homeland/outstation residents and the outside world. Two examples of resource agencies which exhibit good governance are Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) and Laynhapuy Homelands Association (Laynha) – both at the workshop.

BAC, based in Maningrida in the NT was established in 1974 to support people moving back to their clan estates from the government settlement of Maningrida. Initially, it operated as a resource agency and Aboriginal arts centre before developing into a major Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) organisation in the late 1980s and then into a regional development agency, establishing its first Maningrida-based business in the mid 1990s. In addition to supporting homelands/outstations, BAC operates 20 businesses and employs 500 people through CDEP. BAC's turn-over exceeds \$33 million per year.⁵

Laynha, based in Yirrkala in the NT, grew out of the Dhanbul Association, it was established in the early 1970s by Yolngu people to assist those leaving the mission and returning to country. It serves as a resource agency for 26 homelands with an estimated population of 1,000 to 1,200 people across a region of 10,500 square kilometres. Grant funding supports Laynha's core service delivery functions of housing (building and maintenance), infrastructure maintenance, enterprise development, training and health services, as well as the CDEP and Yirrkala Ranger programs. Additional income is derived from civil works contracts such as road grading with a small proportion of royalty equivalents from the bauxite mine (Rio Tinto) in Nhulunbuy.

The reform of CDEP along with the potential loss of block funding that comes to resource agencies for managing CDEP, which is used for operational costs, threatens the future of both homelands/outstations and their resource agencies.

Community Development Employment Program

CDEP was introduced on a pilot basis in remote areas in 1977. It began as an innovative program that converted the notional equivalents of unemployment benefit entitlements of Aboriginal people in remote areas into grants to Aboriginal organisations from the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs. These grants were then used by

Aboriginal organisations to employ potential unemployment benefit recipients in part-time work. It was developed as an alternative to welfare and ensured participants were employed in community development projects. It is, along with resource agencies, the most significant public sector support mechanism available to homeland/outstation residents.

Currently CDEP reform is underway across Australia. It is having far reaching consequences for both homelands/outstations and the larger Aboriginal townships. Underpinning CDEP reform is the notion, contrary to the evidence-based research, that there are greater opportunities available in the larger Aboriginal townships. This aligns with the neoliberal paradigm, that appears to be influencing policy, to eliminate non-state spaces and meet the labour and resource needs of mature capitalism. Moving homelands/outstation residents from areas where they are difficult to govern into the larger townships where they can be watched and reported on assists the state meet its labour and resource needs. This mirrors the investment principles expressed in the NIRA that, if implemented, will entrench further neglect of homelands/outstations, or force 'voluntary' mobility. NIRA articulates goals to incorporate those in remote locations into mainstream education and training and the market economy; and to promote personal responsibility and 'engagement and behaviours consistent with positive social norms'.⁶ The aim is to encourage residents of homelands/outstations to migrate up the settlement hierarchy, where to-be-delivered education and job opportunities exist for an imagined gaps-free future.

Most CDEP participants are being 'transitioned' from CDEP jobs where they are paid wages and have the ability to work additional hours on community-managed projects and get paid 'top-up', to unemployment benefits or 'sit down money'. This means that 'sit down money' is appearing in communities where it has never existed before. When a person is 'transitioned', or signs-up to, the new CDEP, paid by Centrelink, they are no longer required to fill out timesheets or be supervised, and Centrelink and Job Services Australia (JSA) pay them regardless. In communities this has created two classes of people. The first are those on old CDEP, involved in community-based development projects supervised by their CDEP organisation (usually a homeland/outstation resource agency), and are required to fill out time-sheets and not paid if no work is undertaken. The second are those on new CDEP who get paid by Centrelink whether they work or not – 'passive welfare'.

Under old CDEP participants were signed-up and managed solely by their own community-managed CDEP organisation to undertake work. With this came certain community-managed services such as training, liaison with banks and state agencies, or income management to assist with the payment of school fees, rent, funerals and the like.

Under new CDEP, participants are required to be signed-up by three organisations; their CDEP organisation, Centrelink and JSA, or its representative. This means triplicate paperwork and the requirement that participants attend monthly appointments with Centrelink or JSA, often some distance away from their home communities in regions with no or minimal transport networks. Those on new CDEP also have half of their income 'quarantined' as part of the NT Emergency Response introduced in 2007. The requirement to attend monthly meetings in towns along with the ability to access the new CDEP payment via ATM cards rather than through CDEP organisations in home communities has greatly increased the movement of people off their land. With this, some communities are reporting increases in drug and alcohol abuse, and the increased use of these substances as currency. CDEP reform, in marginalising long-established

community-run income management schemes, has allowed for the emergence of loan sharks who, in some places, are lending money at interest rates as high as 30 per cent and driving people further in to debt. There is no evidence that CDEP reform is bringing any benefits to homelands/outstations but is rather removing the incentive to work, undermining years of community-based development and employment projects and increasing the abuse of drugs and alcohol. All of this is working to widen rather than close gaps in Indigenous disadvantage.

Private investment

Private investment, underpinned with community-based governance organisations, is beginning to play a greater role in the development of homelands/outstations. Aboriginal communities across central Australia for example, are using their own discretionary resources, such as payments arising from the use of Aboriginal land, for homeland/outstation infrastructure, development and service delivery.

The traditional landowners of Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park recently contributed approximately \$620,000 to various projects on homelands/outstations, including an upgrade of the power supply at Ukaka and various road grading, fencing and water supply rectifications at Umbeara. In 2007-08, the Granite Mines Affected Area Committee spent over \$170,000 on homelands/outstations within the Lajamanu region, for water supply and road grading projects. It has also invested substantial resources into Wulain Resource Centre over the years. Additionally, much of the income derived from the NT railway development has been spent on basic infrastructure across the homelands/outstations in the Central Land Council region.

The large contribution made by traditional landowners to homeland/outstation infrastructure is driven by a lack of support by governments over the years, and because they remain critical to Aboriginal well-being.

Cultural and natural resource management

Over the past three decades over 20 per cent of the Australian land mass has been returned to Indigenous Australians as a result of successful land rights and native title claims and land acquisition programs.⁷ Many of the most intact and nationally important wetlands, riparian zones, forests, and rivers and waterways are located on these Indigenous lands.

Over the past two decades many Indigenous organisations in remote Australia, through CDEP employment, have been active in mitigating many of the adverse effects of biodiversity change and ecosystem degradation through the development of highly successful Caring for Country programs. Many areas on the Indigenous estate are threatened by invasive species (feral animals and exotic weeds). Invasive species, along with wildfires, have the capacity to degrade entire ecosystems and impact on climate change. This is especially so, in areas where Indigenous Australians have been removed from their lands or are unable to effectively manage them, due to a lack of resources.

The economic costs of adverse patterns of environmental change, such as the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem degradation, are potentially enormous. It is estimated that the agricultural cost of weeds to Australia is in the vicinity of \$4 billion in lost production per annum. The cost to nature conservation and landscape amenity is thought to be of similar magnitude.⁸ There is the potential of substantial costs to the tourism and agricultural industries through decreased production, biodiversity loss and degraded landscapes and waterways. Avoidance of environmental degradation is much less expensive than

environmental repair, something that is very clear from scientific research and recent experience in the Murray-Darling Basin in south-east Australia.

The Australian Government's Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) and Working on Country (WoC) programs, which built on already established Indigenous Caring for Country programs, provide some resources to Indigenous Australians living in remote areas to manage these lands in the national interest. Indigenous Caring for Country programs are a clear example of development that, when properly remunerated and supported, can support Indigenous livelihoods and people living in homelands/outstations through small-scale, community-managed projects.

Health and wellbeing

One of the principal indicators in the NIRA against which progress is to be measured in Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage is the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Over the last two decades homeland/outstation residents have participated in various health research projects. These have resulted in a growing body of evidence pointing to superior health outcomes for adults residing on homelands/outstations compared to those living in large Aboriginal townships.⁹ Reasons for these improved health outcomes may be attributed to various factors, including: a more favourable social environment;¹⁰ better family support and increased physical activity;¹¹ a healthier diet;¹² and lower rates of substance abuse.¹³

If these health benefits of living on homelands/outstations are to be optimised, effective, local-level health services are required. This means targeted investment in comprehensive primary health care for homeland/outstation residents. The health benefits of Aboriginal people living in homelands/outstations could be augmented with innovative approaches to health service delivery, at a reasonable cost, given the need and potential benefit. There are examples of health services which have developed a tailored approach to service delivery, to support people to live on their homelands/outstations, for example Urapuntja Health Service at Utopia in central Australia. Funding for such arrangements is feasible, considering the COAG health investment of \$1.57 billion.

One of the greatest obstacles to the delivery of a comprehensive primary health care system to people on country in homelands/outstations is the political will to support decentralisation, along with resistance from providers to support such a move. Currently, neither government policies on remote areas generally, nor Aboriginal health services specifically, are conducive to such innovative approaches. The uncertainty surrounding ongoing Commonwealth government support for remote communities has stalled State and Territory governments from providing the investment required to sustain these communities. In this way, despite the health risks, the drift from smaller communities becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

A study recently released in November 2009 by the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT), *Health and Homelands: Good Value for Money?*, authored by workshop participant Gavin Mooney, called for an immediate moratorium of funding cuts to homelands/outstations. The research found robust evidence on the positive benefits of homeland/outstation life on Aboriginal health. But moves by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments to shift money from homelands/outstations to central townships threaten to throw such health gains away. AMSANT found that both the NT and Commonwealth appear to be ignoring the positive evidence from homelands/outstations.¹⁴

Education

There is little longitudinal research to guide the development of evidence-based policy for homeland/outstation education. The data that do exist in State and Territory systems is extremely patchy, often not disaggregated from 'hub-school' data, and fails to account for disparities in the levels of funding and service provision to homeland/outstation schools.

Homeland/outstation residents report three main reasons why education outcomes in their communities have been relatively poor: inadequate funding; the education is not relevant to the lived reality of homeland/outstation communities; and low teacher retention rates.

Despite this, individual homeland/outstation communities continue to develop innovative mechanisms for learning on country. While this takes a variety of forms across remote Australia they share the common theme of community-controlled education. In some homelands/outstations residents have turned to independent schools to deliver community controlled education to their young people with reports of an increase in funding of over 320 times when this route is chosen.¹⁵ In others, homeland/outstation communities have focused on library knowledge centres/media centres or land and sea management programs as vehicles for providing education. In some places these centres have seen substantial engagement from young people.

Housing and infrastructure

Historically, the Commonwealth has taken primary responsibility for homeland/outstation infrastructure and support. But in 2007 the Commonwealth Government began to withdraw, handing-back responsibility for homelands/outstations to the NT Government under a *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Indigenous Housing, Accommodation and Related Services*.¹⁶ The MOU maintains the moratorium that had existed under previous Commonwealth funding for housing on homelands/outstations. The MOU states that: 'No Australian Government funding will be provided to construct housing on outstations/homelands'.¹⁷ There are no criteria of relative need or viability, just a blanket ban. This means that homelands/outstations are unable to build new houses to meet the needs of their growing populations. Under this policy, homelands/outstations will stagnate and cannot develop. Homelands/outstations that have historically played a significant role in reducing overcrowding, and in relieving the social tensions that are a feature of life in larger townships, are now themselves becoming overcrowded. This is adding to increased maintenance costs and social tensions which have rarely been a feature of homeland/outstation life in the past.

The freeze on investment in new housing at homelands/outstations and their growing populations along with the new government investment in housing in Aboriginal townships ('hub-communities', Territory Growth Towns) and CDEP reform will see a migration of people away from homelands/outstations to the townships. Government investment in townships at the expense of homelands/outstations ignores the body of evidence that points to better health outcomes, livelihood options, social cohesion and (until now) housing conditions found in homelands/outstations.

Conclusion

The Prime Minister's rhetorical commitment to evidence-based policy development does not appear to extend to the most isolated and powerless section of Australian society – residents of homelands/outstations. Indeed Government appears to be acting counter to available evidence - scant as it may be - and so both jeopardises opportunities to Close the Gap and increases the risk that gaps will actually increase. This is because the growing body of research that life at homelands/outstations is better, in health outcomes,

livelihood options, social cohesion, and housing conditions, than at larger townships, is being ignored. The state's march to move Aboriginal people up the settlement hierarchy to an imagined future of full participation in the mainstream market economy is very likely to lead to a widening rather than a closing of the gaps in Indigenous disadvantage.

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Appendix 1

Communiqué to the Prime Minister on Homelands/Outstations

Over the last two days the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (ASSA) and the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) have hosted a forum on homelands/outstations and similar small remote Aboriginal communities across Australia. This national forum brought together experts from peak Aboriginal organisations and homeland resource agencies, along with leading social scientists, education and medical researchers.

ASSA and CAEPR undertook this task in response to policy currently being implemented by government which:

- Is not informed by available evidence from research
- Is not based on the aspirations of residents of homelands/outstations
- Will not deliver substantive equality
- Has the potential to widen the gap in life expectancy
- Is not consistent with Australia's international obligations.

The forum calls on you to:

- Recognise the cultural, environmental and strategic importance of nearly 1,000 homelands/outstations located on the Aboriginal estate including along the northern coastline
- Recognise the unique significance of homelands/outstations for Aboriginal livelihoods, health, education and well-being and in the provision of environmental services
- Recognise the importance of homelands/outstations for linguistic diversity and Indigenous Knowledge
- Call a moratorium on COAG and other government processes, like the reform of CDEP, that are undermining the positive contributions made by homelands/outstations to Closing the Gap
- Assess the compatibility of current policy on homelands/outstations with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which your government endorsed earlier this year
- Refer the issue of homelands/outstations to a parliamentary inquiry such as the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities.

- ¹ While the term outstation has widespread currency, many Indigenous groups prefer the term homeland. This is because of the view amongst many Aboriginal groups that they moved back to their lands, or as close as possible to places, where they hold primary spiritual responsibility. They have returned home. The term 'outstation' can suggest a population or group physically and socially on the periphery.
- ² Available at <http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au>
- ³ Available at http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/IGA_FFR_ScheduleF_National_Indigenous_Reform_Agreement.pdf
- ⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2009). *Experimental Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2005–2007*. Available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3302.0.55.003Main%20Features12005%E2%80%93932007?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3302.0.55.003&issue=2005%E2%80%93932007&num=&view=>
- ⁵ Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (2009). *Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation Annual Report 2008/09*.
- ⁶ Schedule E (c) (i-ii) of the NIRA, *National Investment Principles in Remote Locations*. Available at http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/IGA_FFR_ScheduleF_National_Indigenous_Reform_Agreement.pdf
- ⁷ Altman, JC, Buchanan, G and Larsen, L (2007). *The Environmental Significance of the Indigenous Estate: Natural Resource Management as Economic Development in Remote Australia*, CAEPR Discussion Paper 286, available online at http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2007_DP286.pdf.
- ⁸ Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC) (2004). *National Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan 2004–2007*, Department of the Environment and Heritage, Canberra.
- ⁹ Andreasyan, K and Hoy, WE (2009). Patterns of mortality in Indigenous adults in the Northern Territory, 1998–2003: are people living in more remote areas worse off? *Medical Journal of Australia*, 190, 6: 307–311.
Bailey, J, Rowley, K, Daniel, M *et al* (2003). History, Land and Health: Insulin resistance and adiposity among Aboriginal people varies across communities, in *6th WONCA Rural Health Conference: Rural Health in a changing world*. Santiago de Compostela, Spain. 24–27 September; McDermott, R, O'Dea, K and Rowley, K, *et al* (1998). Beneficial impact of the Homelands Movement on health outcomes in central Australian Aborigines. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 22, 6: 653–658; Morice, R (1976). Woman Dancing Dreaming: Psychosocial benefits of the Aboriginal outstation movement. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 2: 939–942; Rowley, K, O'Dea, K, Anderson, I *et al* (2008). Lower than expected morbidity and mortality for an Australian Aboriginal population: 10-year follow-up in a decentralised community. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 188, 5: 283–287; Scrimgeour, D (2007). Town or country: which is best for Australia's Indigenous peoples? *Medical Journal of Australia*, 186, 10: 532–533.
- ¹⁰ McDermott, R, O'Dea, K and Rowley, K *et al* (1998). Beneficial impact of the Homelands Movement on health outcomes in central Australian Aborigines. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 22, 6: 653–658.
- ¹¹ O'Dea, K, White, NG and Sinclair, AJ (1988). An investigation of nutrition-related risk factors in an isolated Aboriginal community in northern Australia: advantages of a traditionally-orientated life-style. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 148, 4: 177–180; O'Dea, K (1984). Marked improvement in carbohydrate and lipid metabolism in diabetic Australian Aborigines after temporary reversion to traditional lifestyle. *Diabetes* 1984, 33: 596–603.
- ¹² Naughton, JM, O'Dea K and Sinclair AJ (1986). Animal foods in traditional Australian Aboriginal diets: polyunsaturated and low in fat. *Lipids* 1986, 21: 684–690.

- ¹³ Burgess, CP, Johnston, FH, Bowman, DM and Whitehead, PJ (2005). Healthy country: healthy people? Exploring the health benefits of indigenous natural resource management. *Australia New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 29: 117-122.
- ¹⁴ Mooney, G (2009). *Health and Homelands: Good Value for Money?* A Report for Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory.
- ¹⁵ Greatorex, John (2009). A model for Homeland Learning Centres envelopment that supports long-term sustainability. Presentation at the ASSA/CAEPR Homelands/Outstation Workshop.
- ¹⁶ Available at
http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/indig_ctte/submissions/sub28_attachment_8.pdf
- ¹⁷ See Paragraph 17 of the *Understanding (MOU) for Indigenous Housing, Accommodation and Related Services*
http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/indig_ctte/submissions/sub28_attachment_8.pdf

Note: Since this Academy Workshop, in association with the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, was pertinent to the theme, it has been included here rather than in 'Academy News'.



Support and Advocacy for Indigenous Young People on a Regional Basis: The CAYLUS model

Gillian Shaw

Introduction

The Central Australian Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS) provides a service which links young people aged 5 – 25 years to diversionary activities and drug and alcohol treatment programs; and links remote communities with assistance in offering their young people an enhanced quality of life. It receives funding from a wide range of sources, with core funding of \$425,580 provided by the National Drug Strategy and Combating Petrol Sniffing from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, a further \$165,000 from the Department of the Attorney General, and \$88,000 from the Juvenile Diversion program. CAYLUS is located in Alice Springs, and is part of Tangentyere Council, an organisation which primarily provides services to the town camps located around Alice Springs.

The region served by CAYLUS is covered by four local government Shires – the Barkly, the Central Desert, the MacDonnell and the Alice Springs Shires. Together these Shires cover 873,821 sq kms with over 30 main communities.¹ Most of these communities have amenities consisting of a single shop, a school (to early secondary level), a health clinic and varying levels of sport and recreational infrastructure. The region has a population aged 5 – 25 years of approximately 4450 Indigenous young people living in remote communities.² These young people have an average median income of approximately \$215 per week,³ which is less than half the national median weekly income. The average life expectancy for the Northern Territory is 57.6 years for men, and 65.2 years for women; substantially less than the national figures.⁴

The region is populated by people of the Pintubi, Luritja, Warlpiri, Pitjantjatjara, Anmatjere, Allyawara and Arrernte groups. English is spoken as a second language through much of the region. Many of the people living in the region follow a traditionally oriented life in which hunting, gathering and ceremonial activity play important everyday roles. The region is also characterised by high levels of alcohol use, with the Northern Territory as a whole consuming 13.82 litres per capita (national average 9.32 litres per capita); consumption rates in Central Australia are even higher (15.5L per capita).⁵ There are also high levels of marijuana use: 24.4 per cent of people over the age of 14 years reported using marijuana in the last 12 months (national average 12.9%).⁶ Petrol sniffing has also been an issue in the region, with 244 young people documented as sniffing petrol and other solvents on a regular basis between 2005 and 2007.⁷

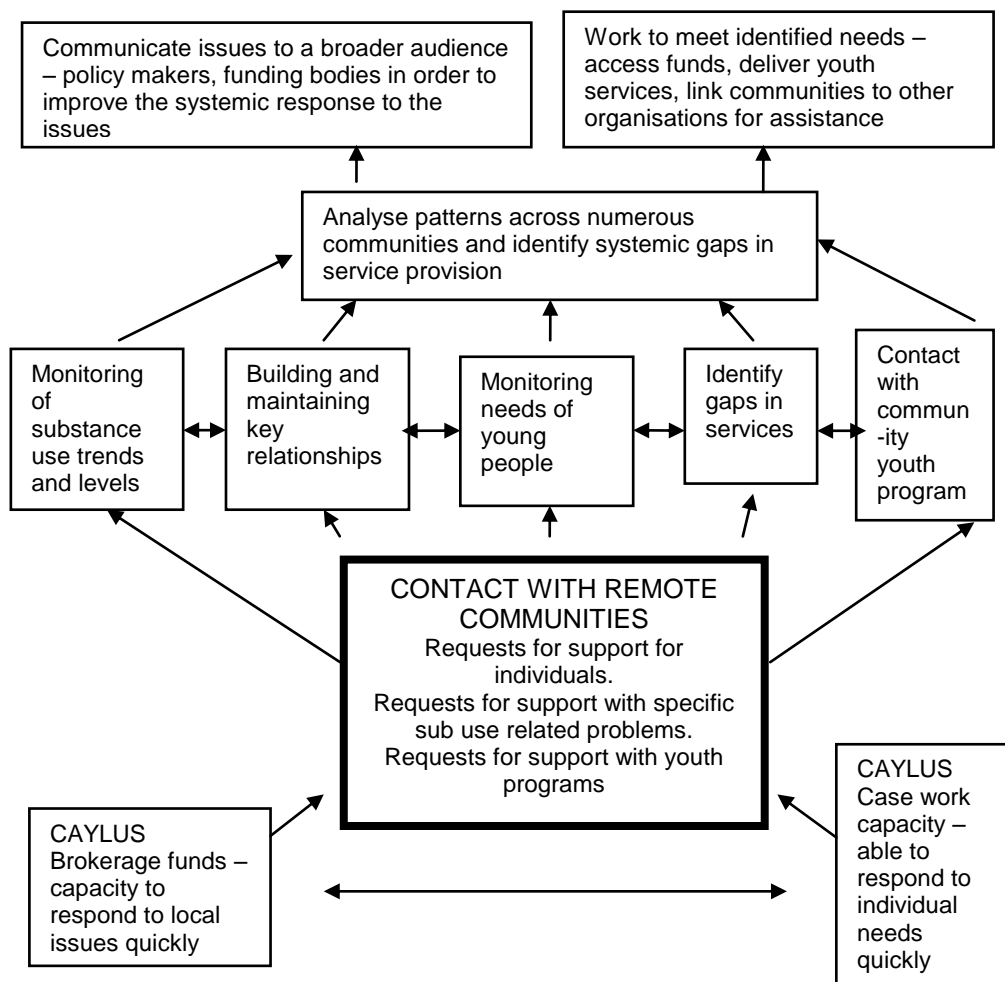
The region is therefore characterised by vast distances, considerable levels of poverty, poor infrastructure, low levels of educational attainment, poor health, and high levels of substance use. The data available does not allow for an accurate picture of the lifestyle of young people in the region to be drawn. However it is safe to assume that the younger targeted by CAYLUS (5 – 12 years) are negatively impacted by the conditions of life described above, and the older (12 – 25 years) are participating fully in the pattern of life prevalent in the region.

The CAYLUS model

CAYLUS's primary role is to work towards the improvement in the quality of life for young people living in remote communities in Central Australia. They achieve this through implementing two key strategies. The first of these is to assess gaps in service provision to young people in the region, and to fill those gaps through a mixture of direct service

provision, supporting other service providers, and advocating with policy makers to address the needs in the sector. CAYLUS hold a pool of money known as 'brokerage funds', which it is able to deploy quickly in order to cover immediate and vital gaps in service provision on communities. The second key strategy is to identify problem areas, and implement strategies to address them. Examples are working towards reducing the supply of drugs and alcohol, and particularly of unleaded petrol; and working to improve the capacity of the network of appropriate drug and alcohol treatment services.

The CAYLUS Model



CAYLUS currently has a staff of six, which is a small team with which to address such entrenched and difficult issues over a large area. The model through which CAYLUS implements its two key strategies is to gather information, respond to requests for assistance, and to function as a point which links stakeholders so that they can work more effectively to address specific issues. For example, in supply reduction of volatile substances they have formed linkages between suppliers, retailers, police, service

agencies and consumers in order to reduce easy access to sprays and glues which are on sale in Alice Springs. This has resulted in a substantial drop in levels of volatile substance misuse in Alice Springs. In the area of demand reduction they link youth programs with support structures, funding bodies and the wider political environment in order to increase the number, coverage and quality of youth services in the region.

Underpinning the implementation of strategies is the base level work in the field of individual harm reduction – casework. CAYLUS employ a full time caseworker, and actively manage approximately 20 cases at any one time. This work on the individual level functions to inform CAYLUS of current trends in sniffing and other substance use, the needs of individuals, and the barriers to meeting those needs – that is, an intimate picture of what is ‘on the ground’. The individuals and their families also provide linkages between CAYLUS and their home communities in remote areas. Through these linkages CAYLUS derive further information on the lives of young people on remote communities. Their staff become known as contacts for youth issues and this leads to both advocacy and potential service provision roles.

CAYLUS has now been operating for nearly eight years, and wherever possible, employs staff who are already well known in the communities before their tenure with CAYLUS. The result of this is that they have personal relationships with the senior Indigenous and non Indigenous decision makers in most communities in Central Australia. In conjunction with contacts made through casework, this network of relationships enables regular contact with these communities. CAYLUS therefore receive requests from communities and individuals for support in specific circumstances, and are able to access senior Indigenous and non Indigenous people to quickly establish the parameters of any situation and negotiate solutions. Such requests lead to the direct service provision undertaken by CAYLUS, and to the provision of support to other agencies. An example of this is that communities regularly contact CAYLUS when they have a group of young people sniffing solvents. CAYLUS then visit the community, talk through the options for action with senior Indigenous and non Indigenous community members, and then arrange immediate action. The action in this case is often to facilitate the placement of leading sniffers with an outstation rehabilitation program, which generally leads to a halt in sniffing activity.

These processes have given CAYLUS considerable expertise in the provision of services to young people in remote communities. This is primarily in the form of ‘youth programs’, which typically provide diversionary activities in the form of arts, crafts, sport and multimedia. These youth programs are provided in both ongoing, and school holiday contexts. CAYLUS’s role is both direct provision of youth services and a range of activities that improve the quality of services run by other agencies. Examples of this are assistance with recruitment, provision of job descriptions, de-briefing workers, assistance with particular events and provision of equipment and logistical support.

Through their involvement over a number of years CAYLUS has developed an awareness of the structural barriers to the provision of quality youth programs in remote areas, and expanded their operations to overcome some of these barriers. They are currently sourcing funds and developing infrastructure such as recreation halls and accommodation for youth workers in remote communities; undertaking a workforce expansion program through liaising with the tertiary education sector to promote the sector to students; and arranging systems of work experience for students studying relevant disciplines.

Their knowledge of the needs of substance-abusing young people in Central Australia has also led CAYLUS to recognise the lack of access to appropriate rehabilitation services. They have therefore become involved in providing support to remote outstation

rehabilitation centres; the services that best suit the needs of young people from remote areas. They support the two major services of this type in Central Australia with logistical issues, financial support and advocacy.

Major achievements of CAYLUS

CAYLUS started in late 2002 with a single staff member, a small budget and no vehicle. In the intervening years it has grown to six full time positions, seven vehicles (many of which are on long term loan to youth programs in remote areas) and a total annual operational budget of approximately \$678,580. During the eight years of operation CAYLUS has had major achievements in the following fields.

Petrol sniffing and other volatile substance misuse

The number of people sniffing petrol in remote communities of Central Australia dropped from 244 in 2005-07, to 9 in 2008.⁸ This decrease has been attributed to the almost universal use of Opal fuel, which is specifically designed and produced because it has no hydrocarbons, and therefore does not produce intoxication when sniffed.⁹

CAYLUS played a key role in advocating for the need for a complete regional roll-out of the fuel. In 2005 they formed the Opal Alliance which commissioned a cost benefit analysis of a widespread roll-out of the fuel from Access Economics. This study clearly showed the economic cost of sniffing, and the economic gain of putting in place a measure that would drastically reduce the levels of sniffing in the region. In 2006 the Department of Health and Ageing agreed to the widespread roll-out advocated by the Opal Alliance.

CAYLUS have also worked on supply reduction for volatiles in Alice Springs. This has been necessary because volatile substance users came to Alice Springs to access volatiles when ULP was no longer available in their communities. CAYLUS employed a full time staff member to work with retailers, police, suppliers and consumers to monitor volatile substance use levels and trends in Alice Springs, and to design and implement effective supply reduction measures.

Building the capacity of youth services in Central Australia

In 2002 the provision of youth services in the remote communities of Central Australia was sporadic, with only five communities having a youth service, and in two of these five, the service delivered was only occasional. Most communities had some funding from sport and recreation grants, however typically they struggled to recruit and supervise workers to the positions available. Some communities obtained specific funds, however these programs tended to run for short periods and then collapse.

CAYLUS has addressed this situation by working with Community Councils, and more recently the new Shires, to assist with recruitment, resourcing and funding programs. They utilise four main strategies to achieve this:

- Employment of a full time staff member to support youth workers in remote communities to improve the quality of their programs. This is done through community visits to provide assistance with specific events, de-briefing, mental health first aid training, and coordination of logistical support from Alice Springs.
- Direct provision of youth programs (as distinct to holiday programs) to 11 of the communities in the region for various periods; direct provision of school holiday programs to 20 communities in the region over a number of years;
- Access funding for youth initiatives across the region:

- \$1m disbursed in brokerage fund for fast and flexible support to individuals and youth programs since 2002;
- \$1.458m sourced and administered through CAYLUS for youth programs since 2002; and
- \$2.961m provided to other youth services providers where CAYLUS supported the application and assisted with implementation of the program through provision of expertise and logistical support.
- Total of \$5.419m disbursed to support young people in rehabilitation and to provide youth programs across the region.
- Access funding for the construction of infrastructure for youth programs:
 - \$3.34m accessed and administered for the construction of youth related infrastructure (recreation halls and staff housing) for 12 communities in the region;
 - assisted access to \$2m for the refurbishment of an outstation rehabilitation centre;
 - Total of \$5.5m accessed for improvement of infrastructure for program delivery to young people in the region

CAYLUS has also played a pivotal role in increasing the total funding for young people's programs to the region. As part of their advocacy work for the regional implementation of Opal fuel to reduce supply, CAYLUS also strenuously and successfully advocated for increased funding for youth programs for diversionary activities.¹⁰ When the Commonwealth Government made the decision to fund the regional roll-out of Opal fuel in 2006, they also allocated \$3m to the provision of diversionary activities in the Northern Territory. This funding was augmented in 2007 by the additional of \$12m to fund diversionary activities for the four communities in the southern region of Central Australia.¹¹ Finally in 2008 a further \$5.4m was made available through the Department of Families and Communities, Housing and Indigenous Affairs for youth projects (through the Northern Territory Emergency Response).¹² That brought a total of \$19.6m into the Northern Territory for the provision of additional youth services.

Improving the capacity of remote rehabilitation treatment services in Central Australia

The Central Australian region has two remote residential rehabilitation services – Ilpurla and Mt Theo (see article this volume). Both these services offer culturally based residential rehabilitation for young people from throughout Central Australia. They are a vital element of the response to young people's substance use in the region because they offer a place where young people can receive assistance in an environment controlled by senior people from within their own culture.

Both of these services face the challenges of running a service in an extremely remote environment, and trying to incorporate traditional Aboriginal values and practices into their program; while still meeting the financial and accountability requirements required by funding bodies.

CAYLUS has worked in several ways to improve the capacity of these two services through implementing the following strategies:

- Accessing funding from the Department of the Attorney General to pay the food, transport and equipment costs for individual clients;

- Coordinating referrals to the services from the Justice system, Indigenous families, the Alcohol and Other Drugs services in Alice Springs and the Department of Family and Community Services;
- Assisting with sourcing funds for wages and equipment for both services; and
- Advocating both the need for, and the benefits of remote rehabilitation services.

Conclusion

CAYLUS have delivered a holistic substance use service to the remote communities of Central Australia for seven years. They have developed a model that has its roots in delivering a flexible, speedy and responsive service based around satisfying requests for assistance from its constituents; and then synthesising the knowledge built up through this process to advocate for a strengthening of the government response to the issues faced by young people living in remote communities in Central Australia. They have been very successful in delivering supply, demand and harm reduction services to the region.

It is important to examine the basis for their success, to identify the key factors that have delivered such benefit to the region, to see if they can be replicated in other areas. A recent evaluation which obtained feedback from numerous people involved identified the main success factors as:

- the experience and longevity of the CAYLUS staff;
- their ability to disburse funds in a fast and flexible fashion to meet immediate needs; and
- the network of personal relationships that CAYLUS staff have developed with key stakeholders throughout the region.¹³

These three factors can all be replicated in other regions. The first can be achieved by careful recruitment of people with existing experience of youth services within the target region, the second through negotiation with funding bodies, and the third by allowing a project time to mature within a region.

Gillian Shaw has worked in Central Australia on health and substance use issues since the late 1980s. She is now based in Canberra, and continues to conduct research and evaluation projects on health and substance use issues as a consultant.

¹ Northern Territory Local Government Regional Management Plan (2008). Available at: http://www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/57073/Final_CENTRAL_AUSTRALIAN_REGION_RMP_09.pdf

² ABS Census (2006). This is likely to be an underestimate due to the difficulty in gaining accurate assessments as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The population of young people in Alice Springs has been excluded from this total, because CAYLUS principally provides services to young people from remote communities, who are in Alice Springs for the purposes of substance use.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Northern Territory Treasury (2004a), in HMA and Associates (2005). Alcohol and Other Drugs Program Profile of Services and Intervention Report.

⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2002).

- ⁷ D'Abbs P and Shaw, G (2007). Data collection for the petrol sniffing prevention program. Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra.
- ⁸ D'Abbs P and Shaw, G (2008). *Evaluation of the Impact of Opal Fuel*. Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Urbis Keys Young (2008). 'Review of the first phase of the petrol sniffing prevention program'.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² FaCSHIA. Monitoring Report – Measuring the progress of NTER activities. Available at: http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/Documents/monitoring_report_2/part3.htm
- ¹³ Shaw, G (2009). 'An evaluation of CAYLUS – 2007-2009'. Unpublished.



The Petrol Sniffing Strategy: A case study

Tristan Ray and Blair McFarland

Howard Bath's confidential 2007 report to the Northern Territory Government into the state of the child welfare system in the NT examined the failings of the child welfare system, and the availability of social services generally to children and families in the NT. Bath found that the lack of adequate services and supports from the NGO and government sectors to children and families significantly contributed to a situation where the child welfare system was dangerously overburdened and struggling to cope.¹ The fieldwork for Bath's report was conducted prior to the advent of the Federal Government's Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), an unprecedented set of policies implemented in these communities in the name of child welfare. Recently, many are asking why, two years later, and after an investment of millions of dollars in the name of child welfare, is the current situation in the NT service system much the same as the one described in 2007. The attempt to 'fix' the NT through the NTER is yet another example of government policies that appear to be falling well short of the mark. It's important to acknowledge when this happens, and learn from the experience.

In this spirit, here we examine two aspects of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy, also known as the 8 Point Plan: a \$55 million policy and program initiative implemented in 2006 between the Attorney General's Department, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA, then FaCSIA), the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA), the Department of Employment Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and in cooperation with state Governments in SA, WA and the NT. The Opal fuel² initiative, extended as a part of the strategy, has resulted in a sustained 94 per cent reduction in the prevalence of petrol sniffing in Central Australia.³ The Strategy has had significant successes, but in some areas not met the objectives stated in the original 8 Point Plan. It has been locally coordinated by the Central Australian Petrol Sniffing Strategy Unit (CAPSSU) a FaHCSIA agency that had responsibility to co-ordinate other departments and accomplish the 8 Point Plan.

The Petrol Sniffing Strategy was developed as a result of *community pressure* to provide Opal fuel to remote communities in Central Australia. The Opal Alliance, comprising the Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (the agency we manage), Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjara (NPY) Women's Council and General Properties Trust (GPT - the owners of Yulara and, at that time, Kings Canyon Resort and the petrol outlets at these locations) played a major role. Other agencies, including the Mt Theo Program, Oxfam, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and a range of individuals and concerned family members also played roles in advocating for this measure.



It was argued by all parties that the provision of Opal fuel should not be a stand-alone initiative. Services to support young people and families in communities affected by petrol sniffing would also be needed in order to divert and support sniffers toward more positive activities and prevent a shift to use of alternative substances. As the community campaign gathered momentum and just prior to the completion of the 2005 Senate Inquiry into Petrol Sniffing in Remote Aboriginal Communities, the 8 Point Plan to address Petrol Sniffing was announced by the Federal Government. The range of measures this encompassed became known as the Petrol Sniffing Strategy, originally targeting communities in the cross border Central desert region, and zones in the Kimberley and in Queensland. Alarming, these areas initially excluded a number of key communities in the southern half of the NT, including Papunya, which had around 100 active sniffers, making it the town with the biggest sniffing problem in Australia. The 8 points of the plan were:

- roll-out of unleaded Opal fuel to affected communities, roadhouses and pastoral properties across the region;
- a uniform legal framework across the region dealing with petrol sniffing and mental health;
- appropriate levels of policing;
- alternative or diversionary activities for young people;
- activities to strengthen and support communities;
- rehabilitation and treatment facilities;
- a communication strategy; and
- evaluation.

These 8 points were strongly influenced by our experience at CAYLUS, along with the work of the Opal Alliance and the Mt Theo Program at Yuendumu;⁴ however none of us were directly consulted or involved in the development of this plan.

Four years on, the initial \$55 million allocation is now nearly expended. The key successes of the program have been around the roll-out of Opal fuel, along with some inroads on rehabilitation services, and more generally, on acceptance of the need for youth services in the region.

Roll-out of Opal fuel

By the time the 8 point plan was instigated, Opal fuel had already replaced standard unleaded or Av Gas (which had previously been used as a low aromatic alternative to deter sniffing in some sites) in most of the key communities in the central region. This hadn't come easily. Initially, Opal had only been promised to a select set of communities; however, with some coordination and support from CAYLUS and NPY Women's council, sniffing-affected communities across the region had successfully lobbied to be added to the scheme. Sniffing persisted (albeit at a reduced level) as standard unleaded was the only fuel option in nearby roadhouses and Alice Springs. Some key retail outlets, including the service station at Yulara, BP Stuart Highway and Caltex in Alice Springs also saw the value of the scheme, and had requested permission and the necessary subsidy to use the fuel.

The main gain in relation to Opal measures implemented under the 8 point plan was to make Opal provision comprehensive in the region and, importantly, to include Alice Springs (the regional centre) and surrounding roadhouses. Given participation in the Opal scheme was voluntary, this element of the plan has been achieved remarkably well. All outlets in Alice Springs stock Opal instead of standard unleaded fuel and all but a few roadhouses and community outlets have changed to using the fuel. A more proactive

publicity and information campaign supporting the introduction of the fuel may have resulted in better uptake and use by retailers and consumers in the region; unsubstantiated myths persist that the fuel damages cars, and that it can be modified in various ways to become intoxicating if sniffed. However, there has been significant and sustained reduction in levels of sniffing in the region, preventing enormous harm to individuals and communities, and reducing the burden on the health and criminal justice systems that resulted from sniffing. It is estimated that this saving could be \$73 million per annum, based on the cost of sniffing in the region in 2005.⁵

Under current federal legislation, who decides if a remote community gets Opal fuel?



Despite the obvious success, the full value of the Opal initiative is yet to reach communities like Balgo, Lake Nash, Warburton and Wiluna; many nearby roadhouses refuse to stock the fuel, often citing the myths mentioned above. As a result, petrol sniffing continues in these locations. A way to address this is for the Commonwealth to create legislation that can be used to force retailers to stock the fuel, or face sanctions. The second of the 8 points includes examining legislation, and harmonising State variations in the cross border region. With young people's lives and futures at stake, the decision as to whether sniffing persists in Aboriginal communities in Central Australia should not be left to the vagaries and eccentricities of roadhouse owners. Successive Labor and Coalition governments have had no qualms inconveniencing thousands of Aboriginal people by imposing management of their income, in the name of the benefit to children under the NTER, yet the same governments seem to be stalling when it comes to inconveniencing a handful of business people.

Youth services

\$12 million dollars was allocated as part of the petrol sniffing strategy to extend the provision of youth services to communities, along with Opal fuel. The allocation may have been originally intended to support services in communities throughout the cross-border region; however, only a few months into the strategy a tender was issued allocating all of these funds to services in just four NT communities: Mutitjulu, Impanpa, Docker River and Aputula. These sites were all communities with a history of sniffing prior to the use of Opal fuel but, arguably, not the highest risk sites in the region. Mutitjulu, located close to Uluru, was probably the most high profile community of any in Central Australia. Perhaps the decision to allocate all of the region's funds to just four sites resulted from CAPSSU's lack of success in quickly garnering collaboration from the relevant state departments in WA

and SA, and the political need for some quickly demonstrable results. However, this allocation of funds meant that \$750,000 per annum per community was being allocated to the four communities for operational costs of a youth service, in addition to another \$4 million allocation for relevant infrastructure. To put this in context, the better funded youth services in other sites at the time were operating on \$70-100,000 per annum. At the time, CAYLUS estimated the cost of bringing youth services up to a basic standard in the 20 communities in the southern half of the NT at \$16 million.

At least two agencies tendered for the provision of the service; NPY Women's Council and Mission Australia. NPY Women's Council had operated smaller scale youth services in all four communities for a number of years and had existing full time youth workers stationed in two of the four communities. They had operated a broad range of services in the affected communities since 1980 and had a governing committee that included representatives of the four affected sites. They also had a history of strident advocacy which, no doubt, at times had been unsettling and unpopular with funding bodies and government departments.

Mission Australia, on the other hand, had never operated services in Central Australian remote communities.

The tender selection criteria included an emphasis on local knowledge and proven ability in the region. The tender was awarded to Mission Australia and the agency commenced operation of this service with no-one on staff who had ever run a youth program in a Central Australian remote community before. Only one staff member had ever lived in a remote community: he had worked as a store keeper. It takes time to learn how to operate in an environment like Central Australia and it was inevitable that a new agency without such experience would struggle. An agency with on the ground experience in the region would not have made such a wide range of promises; perhaps a hesitancy to make promises it would be unable to fulfil may have worked against NPY in the tender process. Mission Australia promised to meet a range of outcomes including improved school attendance, provision of breakfast programs, operation of a service 24/7 365 days a year in all four communities for the period of the project, and provision of intensive programming during school holidays. It also promised casework and training for local people in youth work certificates. Despite the unprecedented level of funding which was allocated to the project, Mission Australia struggled to meet many of the objectives to which it had committed in the original contract⁶ and eventually was able to renegotiate its contract with the federal government to move away from some commitments. Toward the end of the three year contract, the service recruited staff with experience in running successful remote projects into their management team, and appeared to be gaining some ground.

Allocating all of the Petrol Sniffing Strategies youth services money to just four communities left most Opal-affected communities across the 8 point plan zone in the lurch. It was not until 2009, 3 years after the original roll-out of Opal, that there was an investment in core youth services in communities such as Papunya, Hermannsburg, Mt Liebig and Kintore, all sites where petrol sniffing had been endemic prior to the introduction of Opal. This allocation required that the MacDonnell Shire spend \$2.4 million in a six month period, a very tight timeframe. If there had been any consultation undertaken, a better investment of the funds would have been possible, and more lasting benefits would have accrued to the people of the region.

As an apparent acknowledgement of the mistakes that were made around youth services in this phase of the petrol sniffing strategy, the tender for continuation of this service in the

next three years has just been given to NPY Womens Council, who will now return to delivering youth services in these communities.

Conclusion

A large part of the Opal roll-out's success is because it was a strategy that had the support of local Indigenous people, who advocated strongly for it. This has reliably been a feature of successful programs in the region. In contrast, the provision of youth services in the region through the 8 point plan was managed in a way that dropped a proscriptive model on top of people, undermined existing programs and excluded local people and agencies from meaningful involvement in directing initiatives. The vast infrastructure needs in the region are still mostly unmet, and the availability of youth services is still inconsistent across the region; some communities have adequate funding, others almost none. The failure of the 8 Point Plan to resolve the issues which it was generated to address appears to be the result of lack of consultation and collaboration with local stakeholders and no clear long term strategy. Sadly, it appears the NTER is making similar mistakes and likewise fails to have an articulated strategy to address the issues for which it was supposedly brought into being - the safety of children.

Tristan Ray and Blair McFarland are joint co-ordinators of CAYLUS, and together have over 30 years of experience running successful community wellbeing projects in Central Australia.

Blair is also the cartoonist used in this and the previous edition of Dialogue.

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- ¹ Robinson, N (2010). Disabled in Remote Areas Abandoned and No Responsibility Taken for the Kids in Greatest Need *The Australian*, 9 Feb: 5.
 - ² Opal fuel was developed by BP in conjunction with the federal government. It is manufactured with reduced level of toluene and other aromatics, that are present in standard unleaded petrol, which cause intoxication when inhaled.
 - ³ D'Abbs P and Shaw, G (2008). *Evaluation of the Impact of Opal Fuel*. Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra.
 - ⁴ Urbis Keys Young (2008). A Review of the First Phase of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy <http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/evaluation/petrolsniffing/Documents/app.htm>.
 - ⁵ Access Economics (2006). Opal Cost Benefit Analysis. <http://www.accesseconomics.com.au/publicationsreports/showreport.php?id=2&searchfor=2006&searchby=year>.
 - ⁶ Mission Australia (2008). Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/COMMITTEE/clac_ctte/petrol_sniffing_substance_abuse08/submissions/sublist.htm.

Mt Theo Program Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation

Brett Badger

Since 1993, the Mt Theo Program has dedicated itself to developing strength, health, meaningful pathways and leadership in Warlpiri youth. The notable, and sustainable success of the program is based on the support and character of Warlpiri youth and their communities, and the outstanding dedication of its staff. The program was created by and for Warlpiri people, and is governed by a Committee of 62 Warlpiri people. According to Tristan Ray from the Central Australian Youth Link Up Service 'The Mt Theo Program has established itself as a benchmark for the creation and delivery of youth development programs in the Central Australian region. It delivers outstanding youth development, leadership and rehabilitation services in the Warlpiri region'. In 2006 the efforts of the founders of the program were recognised with the award of the Order of Australia.

The Mt Theo Program was started by Yuendumu Community to address chronic petrol sniffing in Yuendumu with a twin focus of a) youth diversion program in Yuendumu and, b) cultural respite and rehabilitation at Mt Theo Outstation. In 2002, the program broadened in nature and scope to confronting any 'at risk' behaviour for Warlpiri youth, its underlying sources, and most importantly, the construction of meaningful and positive futures. This construction of a youth development and leadership program has led to comprehensive services and opportunities for Warlpiri youth across this region. The program is based in Yuendumu Community, but also runs youth development programs in Willowra (2005), Nyirripi (2008) and Lajamanu (2009) communities as well as continuing rehabilitation services at Mt Theo.

The Mt Theo Program comprises :

Yuendumu Programs

- Jaru Pirrjirdi Youth Development Program (incorporating Yuendumu Youth Program)
- Warra Warra Kanyi Youth Counselling and Mentoring Service
- Yuendumu Community Swimming Pool
- Yuendumu Mechanic Training Workshop

Mt Theo Outstation

Mt Theo Outstation Cultural Respite and Rehabilitation

Outreach Programs

- Willowra Youth Development Program
- Lajamanu Youth Development Program
- Nyirripi Youth Development Program

Further details can be found at www.mtttheo.org.

There are a number of key elements that have been critical to the success and growth of the Mt Theo Program. The crucial element has been Warlpiri initiative and dedication; Warlpiri people have shown insight, compassion and responsibility towards Warlpiri youth in their creation and ongoing development of the Program. This has involved significant individual, family and community-wide efforts, and of course, involved serious challenges and setbacks among the achievements. The importance, process and nature of the Warlpiri commitment has been critical in achieving real, local and sustained outcomes.

Mt Theo Outstation

In 1993 the Yuendumu community was facing chronic levels of petrol sniffing. Community meetings were held and members of all the families (and local agencies) agreed to refer petrol sniffers to Mt Theo Outstation, a traditional healing site 150 km from Yuendumu. This was based on the willingness of traditional owners, such as Johnny Hookercreek Miller OAM and key carers such as Peggy Nampijinpa Brown OAM (as well as others who have since passed away and cannot be named). These individuals, along with the Schools Home Liaison Officer Andrew Stojanovski OAM, established the cultural rehabilitation service at Mt Theo to care for petrol sniffers and to rid Yuendumu of a chronic problem.

These efforts were strongly supported, and made possible by local Warlpiri people, client families and local agencies such as the Yuendumu Stores, who contributed money for food and fuel. Carers such as Johnny and Peggy were paid no wages. They used their own pension cheques to feed the clients at Mt Theo and to fuel their own cars that were used, and ruined, in coming back and forth to Yuendumu for client pick-ups and food. Over time, and with growing success, the program slowly attracted government funding, notably the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) and has long since become a well-funded and recognised program. But those critical first efforts of creation, project design and thus ongoing *community ownership* have ensured that the program remains a Warlpiri organisation with very high community engagement.

Critically, the community itself, most especially the elders, bonded together to clearly send a message that anyone sniffing petrol would be sent to Mt Theo. This message was consistently reinforced by enormous efforts and action over many years and many late nights. This initial struggle in Yuendumu took almost a decade but was ultimately successful, long before any effective supply reduction measures such as Opal fuel were introduced. Following in this tradition, the Yuendumu community once again showed not only its commitment to youth issues but also the value of local insight and experience in generating sustainable and genuine youth pathways with the construction of the Jaru Pirrjirdi project in 2002.

Jaru Pirrjirdi

In 2002 the Mt Theo Committee and staff were keen to expand on this success, and the Outstation began to admit Warlpiri youth clients for any kind of 'at risk' behaviour such as other forms of substance abuse and court diversions, as a positive alternative to prison or juvenile detention. In Yuendumu, particularly from the former petrol sniffing clients themselves, there was eagerness to understand, explore and prevent the underlying reasons for 'at risk' behaviour. The youth program was providing excellent sport, recreation and entertainment options for Yuendumu youth, a basic community service (that should have been available and funded in all communities). The Yuendumu community recognised that basketball and discos would not automatically create meaningful futures for their young people and more sophisticated approaches were needed for the long term.

The Jaru Pirrjirdi (Strong Voices) Youth Development and Leadership Program targeted the 15-25 age group, who required more significant challenges as after-care for a generation involved in petrol sniffing. These young people have helped develop and evolve the Jaru project design such that today the project consists of 6 key elements that provide a pathway to achieve the initial aim – strong young Warlpiri people with positive and meaningful futures.

The 6 project elements are 1. Acting as *trainee youthworkers* by helping to run Youth Program activities, 2. *Education* - 'Night Club' and homework centre – projects aimed at re-engaging young people in education through literacy, workshops etc, 3. *Culture* – involvement in bush trips with elders, 4. *Projects* – formal projects aimed at young people's interests and needs, eg: art, media, internet banking, drivers' licences, 5. *Mentoring* – providing a strong and positive pool of peer mentors for youth at risk, 6. *Pathways* – facilitating training and employment opportunities for young people.

The project has proved extremely successful in Yuendumu (see website) with over 47 graduates, 27 of whom are employed in salaried positions. Over 100 other young people are project members today, working towards more positive futures. Once again the Jaru project involved thousands of hours and late nights from Mt Theo staff and community, easily double that which was funded. The value of the project was not only this effort, but the insight and experience that generated and refined the project, most especially from the young people themselves.

The success of the Jaru Pirjirdi project has resonated in other communities and in recent years these youth development services have been established in other Warlpiri communities of Willowra, Nyirripi and Lajamanu. What is of most note is that these services are funded by the Kurra Corporation through the Warlpiri Education, Training Trust (WETT, set up in 2004 by traditional owners). Other than Willowra, where some earlier federal government funding had been provided, the entirety of the significant funding for these essential services is provided by Warlpiri people from Warlpiri mining royalties.

Other elements and partners

The achievements, efforts and struggles of the Mt Theo Program have not involved just Warlpiri people in isolation. Government funding has been crucial in establishing a sustainable and comprehensive service. A strong, positive partnership has been formed with government over the years, most especially with OATSIH. This partnership was strengthened by the empirical evidence of success, and through the confidence and control that Warlpiri people had over the Mt Theo Program.

Even more importantly, the Warlpiri communities have been clear that part of their local solution was the need for *kardiya* (whitefellas) who had empathy and complementary skills, in order to help create and run a compassionate, dedicated, professional and sustainable organisation. From its outset the Mt Theo Program has had numerous outstanding *kardiya* staff, committed to working long-term in a Warlpiri setting to realise the aims of the program. Significant long-term familial relationships have been formed between Warlpiri and non-Warlpiri staff. This partnership, especially between management and committee, has been critical to a work, or indeed life, orientation that has seen countless unpaid hours dedicated to community engagement and service delivery towards this shared cause of Warlpiri youth. As Peggy Nampijinpa Brown OAM notes 'we work together, we all care like family together and we work hard together for a long time'.

Conclusion

It is not recommended that government demands that other remote communities be *required* to display similar amounts of unpaid effort or self-funding. Indeed, the establishment of a successful youth service should *not* take the level of sacrifice, struggle and commitment that was the Mt Theo Program experience for granted. Rather, the lesson is to recognise the special and remarkable efforts of the Warlpiri people, and those

most closely associated with Mt Theo, in growing a program dedicated to positive futures for Warlpiri youth.

Too often the stories covering remote communities portray them as passive entities, in need of 'intervention', because of a lack of commitment, leadership or responsibility. This program stands in clear contrast to that conception, and as a testament to the value of grass roots solutions and power, informing stronger and genuine partnerships. The Mt Theo Program demonstrates the importance of local ownership and authority, and confirms that local people have valuable insight and experience to inform their decision-making and project design. Local investment, engagement and involvement must be real, not token or short-term, as it so often has been. Without real engagement and authority in decision-making processes by local people, valuable insight, effort and experience is lost. And without that, no real or sustainable solutions can possibly be generated.

Brett Badger's first taste of the desert came as a youthworker in Nyirripi in early 2004. After completing his Masters in International/Community Development, he began working for the Mt Theo Program in 2005 as a youthworker and counsellor. In 2008 Brett moved to his current role as Operations Manager.

A Small Program under Threat

Meg Mooney

Tangentyere Council's Land and Learning Program aims to increase learning about country and the relevance of education for school students, Aboriginal teachers and others in remote Aboriginal communities by supporting the inclusion of Aboriginal language and knowledge in school programs. The vast majority of students in these communities speak an Aboriginal language as their first language.

The Land and Learning program provides practical, on-ground support for elders and remote community schools to teach Aboriginal language and culture, linked to western science, about the bush. It supports Aboriginal teachers, mostly Aboriginal Assistant Teachers, to work with elders and use their own expertise to teach students.

Aboriginal Language and Culture (ILC) is an elective unit of the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework, and as such is only taught if there is interest from the school principal. Aboriginal teachers are keen to teach language and culture but usually need some support, of which there is little generally available in schools, because of pressures on other staff, lack of interest and/or ignorance about the richness and relevance of Aboriginal knowledge. Land and Learning also supports the science and environment areas of the curriculum. Although the bush is such a great resource for teaching these subjects, they are rarely taught with a local focus in remote community schools, because non-Aboriginal teachers usually don't know much about the local country.

Working with schools means there is a critical mass of people and other resources needed to achieve real outcomes in two-way learning about country. The focus on learning about the local bush means the students engage easily, build on knowledge they already have, have more respect for the elders who accompany and guide them and improve their own self-esteem. Aboriginal teachers also build confidence and learn from elders. Land and Learning is the *only* long-term program in the arid zone, anywhere in

Australia, providing on-ground support for two-way, natural science and language and culture-based education.

Resources produced by the program include a large resource booklet for teachers, with extensive activity ideas and information, under the themes of plants, animals, water, fire, soils and erosion, tools and planning; Big Books (large format laminated booklets) for Aboriginal communities on fire, camels, foxes and monitoring wetlands; a series of plant and animal photo-cards; and dozens of Big Books documenting activities with particular schools and relevant Aboriginal and scientific knowledge.*

Land and Learning has been running for 12 years, employing two biologist/education officers for most of the last 10 years. It has always run on a shoestring and until recently received a significant proportion of its funding from the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT). It does not fit under the guidelines of Caring for Our Country, which replaced NHT, and is now surviving on a minimal budget while it looks for other long-term funding.

For more information contact meg.mooney@tangentyere.org.au, or visit www.schools.nt.edu.au/tlcland.

* The Editor has copies of two of these Big Books; they are engaging and informative for both children and adults. Despite its success over many years, this excellent Program is threatened with closure should the minimal funding required not be found.

Meg Mooney is a natural scientist and poet. She has been in central Australia for 23 years, living and/or working in remote Aboriginal communities most of that time. Meg has worked with Tangentyere Council's Land and Learning Program for the last eight years. For the Dry Country: Writing and drawings from the Centre, by Meg and artist Sally Mumford, was published by Ptilotus Press in 2005.

The poems by Meg, one of Central Australia's few award-winning poets, were commissioned especially for this edition of Dialogue.



Central Australian Endangered Languages: So what?

Josephine Caffery

Central Australian languages

250 years ago Australia was the home to 250 – 300 distinct Indigenous languages. All of these languages had dialects, which brought the total number of Indigenous languages spoken in Australia to between 800 and 1100 languages and dialects. This was a very large number of languages on a world scale. Currently it is estimated that only eighteen Australian Indigenous languages are likely to survive for any length of time. Even though these languages are categorised as 'strong' and situated in remote areas, experiencing less pressure from the more dominant languages, it may not be enough to save them. The Australian government's commissioned National Indigenous Languages Survey Report (NILS Report 2005),¹ stated that if the current trend continues, no Australian language will be spoken in Australia by 2050. This is disturbing for many reasons and these reasons include the effects of such a loss on Indigenous children's education across Central Australia. These reasons are the subject of this paper.

Today, Central Australia's vast deserts are home to around seventeen² survivors of Australia's 250 – 300 Indigenous languages. Figure 1 provides a list of these and the number of speakers for each language. The languages with the largest number of speakers in Central Australia are Warlpiri and Pitjantjatjara. Warlpiri, spoken in the region north-west of Alice Springs, and Pitjantjatjara, spoken in the region south-west of Alice Springs in the Western Desert, each has around 3000 first language speakers. The Central Australian language with the smallest number of speakers is Ngaatjatjarra (also spoken in the Western Desert), with only 12 speakers.³

Figure 1: Central Australian Aboriginal Languages and Number of Speakers

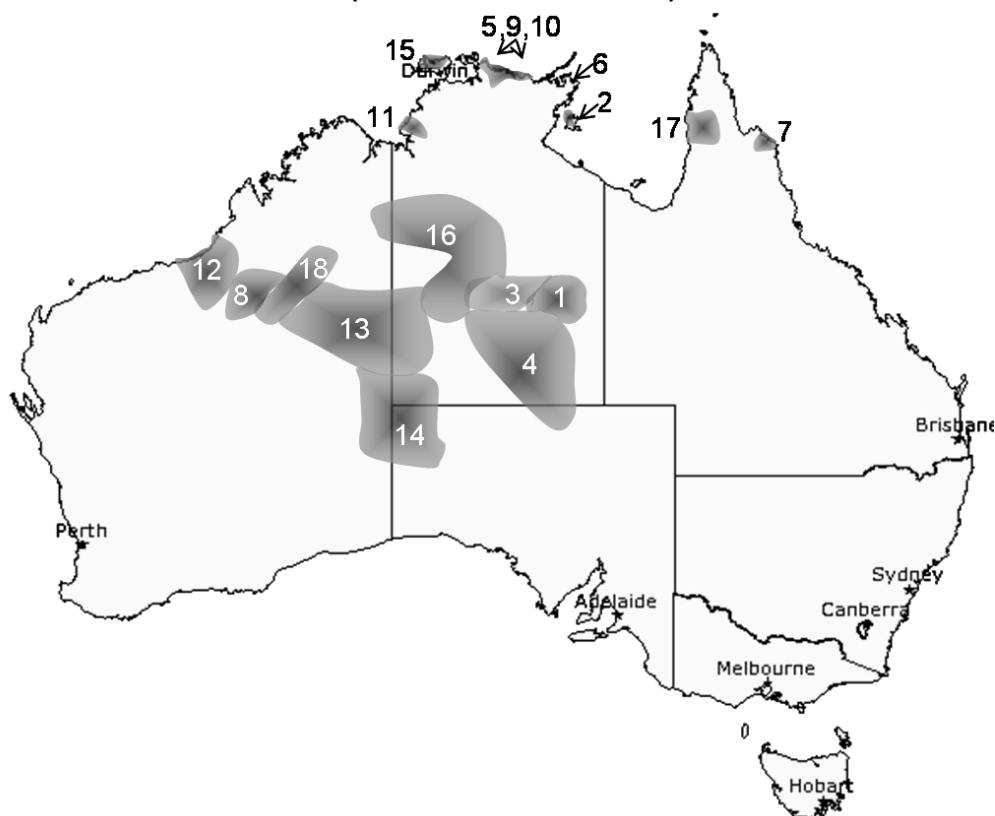
(*numbers are estimates only from the NILS Report 2005

**supplemented from AUSTLANG⁴)

Central Australian Language Name	Number of first language speakers *
Alyawarr	1664**
Anmatyerr (Central & Eastern)	1500
Arrernte (including Central & Eastern Arrernte & Western Arranta)	2000
Kaytetye	200
Kukatja	1000
Luritja	1480**
Ngaanyatjarra	1300
Ngaatjatjarra	12
Pintupi	600
Pitjantjatjara	3000
Waramungu	50
Warlmanpa	30
Warlpiri	3000
Yankunytjatjara	70

Central Australia is also home to 40 per cent of Australia's 'strong' Indigenous languages, seven of the eighteen.⁵ These languages, taught to children as their first language and spoken across all generations are Alyawarr; Anmatyerre; Arrernte; Kukatja; Pintupi; Pitjantjatjara, and Warlpiri (for locations see areas 1, 3, 4, 8, 13, 14 and 16 respectively on Map 1). All of Australia's 'strong' languages are in remote areas of Australia. Map 1 shows that whilst not all remote regions have retained strong language, all strong languages are to be found in remote regions.⁶ It is estimated that approximately four to five thousand of the world's languages are spoken by Indigenous peoples who live in environments where they have been able to retain their specific customs, languages, practices and beliefs, which are usually in remote areas.⁷

**Map 1: Approximate regions of the remaining strong Indigenous languages.
(Creoles are not included).**



Note The data for this map were drawn from the information provided in the NILS Report (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005) and the Department of Communication, Information, Technology and the Arts (2006). Languages are: 1-Alyawarr, 2-Anindilyakwa, 3-Anmatyerre, 4-Arrernte, 5-Burarra, 6-Dhuwaya, 7-Guugu Yimidhirr, 8-Kukatja, 9-Kunwinjku, 10-Maung, 11-Murrinhpatha, 12-Nyangumarta, 13-Pintupi, 14-Pitjantjatjara, 15-Tiwi, 16-Warlpiri, 17-Wik Mungkan, 18-Yulparija.

Loss of Central Australian languages

Historically, the decline or loss of Central Australian (and indeed all others in Australia) Indigenous languages were due to 'a post-contact history of demoralisation'⁸ including

mass poisonings, massacres, relocation, political and social inequality, and the assimilation policy that pressured Indigenous people to adopt the white lifestyle, language and sociocultural values.⁹

More recently the loss can be attributed to political and social inequality and linguistic and sociocultural values. Currently, Indigenous people are increasingly required to speak English in most domains in their home community: domains such as community schools, health clinics, stores, administrative offices and when meeting with outside government and non-government organisations. The pressure to speak the dominant language, English, and conform to western society norms, combined with poor living conditions and lack of opportunities in remote communities¹⁰ means that the remaining Indigenous languages will rapidly disappear unless decisive action is taken. Yet government policy on bilingual education in Central Australia is directly contrary to such action.

Bilingual education

Currently across central Australia, particularly in the Northern Territory, Indigenous children no longer have the opportunity to learn to read and write in their first language in the one place that has the best chance of teaching them these skills; in primary school. Generally, Indigenous children, particularly those born into strong language communities, will enter primary school either not speaking the language of their teacher or speak it as a second or third language. Yet all Northern Territory schools are required to use English only in the classroom, even if the child does not speak English very well or at all, including in the schools where Indigenous languages are strong. At the end of 2008 the Northern Territory government, supported by the Federal government, all but ended bilingual education in all Northern Territory schools.

This is one of the most recent and greatest threats to the survival of the eighteen strong Indigenous languages. The change in education policy was announced by the Northern Territory Minister for Employment, Education and Training on 14 October 2008 when she said

....the first four hours of education in all Northern Territory schools will be conducted in English.¹¹

This meant that the 33 per cent of Indigenous children who live in remote areas and speak an Indigenous language as their main language at home¹² no longer had the opportunity to use their first language as a conduit to learning to read and write in English. The government argued that this change in policy would improve attendance rates and literacy and numeracy for Indigenous children but did not provide any evidence to support their argument, and chose to ignore the plethora of national and international evidence to the contrary.

National and international research strongly indicates that a well-implemented, -run and -resourced bilingual education program enhances learning in all curricular areas and that such programs create a strong link between the community and its culture.¹³ In 1992 an Australian report¹⁴ argued that there were sound educational reasons for establishing literacy in the child's first language before developing literacy in English. Bilingual education breaks the pupil's initial learning tasks into two: first they learn to read and write, and then they begin to develop the same skills with English. Children only have to deal with one major task at a time; that of learning to read, without the added burden of learning a new language simultaneously. Because the children understand their mother tongue, what they read makes sense; once they know how to read they can apply basic reading skills to learn to read in English. The children also gain a sense of satisfaction,

rather than frustration, at being able to read and express themselves orally and in writing, initially in their first language and later in English.

Despite this research, Australian governments chose to end bilingual education in the Northern Territory. In fact, there are years of evidence - even in Australia - that bilingual education programs benefit child education.

The history of bilingual education in Central Australia

Bilingual school programs have been successful in Central Australia since before the 1900s, well before governments realised the benefits for Indigenous children. The first bilingual education program started in 1896 in Hermannsburg (now known as Ntaria), about 150 km west of Alice Springs. All language of instruction in the school was in both English and Western Arrarnta. The 1930s saw a second Central Australian school, Ernabella (in the Pitjantjatjara lands) offer education instruction in the local language. Then in the late 1940s Yuendumu started a vernacular instruction program. These schools were started by the missionaries but funded by the federal government.¹⁵

Between 1950 and 1970 the federal government established schools in most Aboriginal communities, but in the 1960s they announced that they would not fund Aboriginal schools unless all instruction was in English. This was the first time the government tried to end bilingual education in all schools across the Northern Territory.¹⁶

Policy changed again in 1972 when the then federal education minister, Kim Beazley senior, was visiting the Hermannsburg Lutheran mission school and saw that the children were being taught in their first language; they were not distracted by his presence and class attendance seemed to be high. This was in contrast with most of the other schools he visited where the language of instruction was English, the class numbers were small and the children were quite inattentive. As a result when the Australian federal government introduced its self-determination and self-management policy for Indigenous Australians it included a campaign to have children living in communities given primary education in community languages. By 1973 a program of bilingual education was launched in five schools in the Northern Territory and the number of bilingual schools continued to grow to 25 by the 1990s;¹⁷ eleven of these were in Central Australia.¹⁸

The definition used by the Commonwealth when introducing bilingual education into the Northern Territory, which still stands today, was from the US Bilingual Education Act of 1967:

Bilingual Education is the use of two languages, one of which is English, as mediums of instruction for the same pupil population in a well organised program which encompasses part or all of the curriculum and includes the study of the history and culture associated with the mother tongue. A complete program develops and maintains the children's self-esteem and a legitimate pride in both cultures.¹⁹

However, bilingual education in the Northern Territory remained controversial and in December 1998 the Northern Territory government announced that they would close bilingual education to make way for the development of *English as a Second Language* programs. This caused an outcry from around the Northern Territory, and indeed Australia, from Indigenous parents, various community members, teachers, linguists and educators. At the same time the government commissioned Bob Collins to undertake an inquiry into education in the Northern Territory. Collins produced a scathing report on the education system of the Northern Territory arguing that 16-17 year olds had an education

level of around 2-3 years and that education in both the vernacular and English should be reintroduced.²⁰

In 1999, a year after the closure of bilingual programs, the government announced that these could continue in selected schools in the Northern Territory but with the name changed to 'two-way learning'.²¹ Bilingual/two-way schools remained highly controversial and in 2008 the Northern Territory Government, supported by the Federal Government, announced - to the surprise of all concerned - that the first four hours of instruction in schools must be provided in English only. This essentially represented the end of bilingual education and the introduction of compulsory English-only schools, regardless of the language of the community and children in the school.

The 1998 and the 2008 decisions to end bilingual education were made without any consultation with Indigenous communities, or the schools that ran bilingual education programs. These decisions were also made despite the international and national evidence that bilingual education provides many benefits for Indigenous children.

Why care about saving Australia's endangered languages and bilingual education?

People may question whether we should care about the loss of traditional languages. From a global perspective, the world loses a great deal when a language dies. Indigenous cultures have a rich reservoir of knowledge that could be preserved and developed to the benefit of all human kind. Every language is a store of intellectual capital and reflects a unique view of the world.²² 'Indigenous groups have developed their own special culture and relationship to the environment they live in, and in their languages they have developed rich means of expression for their culture and environment'.²³ This knowledge contributes substantially to research, as illustrated by partnerships throughout Central Australia between Indigenous people and many organisations such as the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, Desert Knowledge Australia, the Desert Park and the many other researchers and research bodies. Indigenous elder, Veronica Dobson²⁴ argues that Central Australia has lost much traditional knowledge about 'caring for country' through ignorance or disregard for those whose skills and experience had safeguarded scarce water resources, plants and animals during aeons.

Indigenous peoples' identity, land and culture are intimately tied to their language.²⁵ The maintenance of languages not only sustains peoples' identity but also their social acceptance to the wider community. Language and culture also play an important economic role in the arts, media and tourism. Local languages are valuable because they promote community cohesion and vitality, foster pride in a culture, and give a community self-confidence.²⁶

The loss of potentially fundamental knowledge²⁷ is exacerbated when we consider that much of this knowledge is handed on through the generations verbally. Australia's Indigenous languages are relatively undocumented: of those that are documented approximately 51 have good documentation and 110 have fair materials whilst ninety have poor or no documentation.²⁸ Therefore it is urgent that Australia's surviving Indigenous languages are documented or maintained before we lose all of the vital knowledge that they hold. UNESCO²⁹ argues that a 'language that can no longer be maintained, perpetuated, or revitalized still merits the most complete documentation possible' and that the process of documentation often helps the language resource workers to re-activate linguistic and cultural knowledge. Such documentation also helps Indigenous children learn to read and write in their first language. It is these children who can help retain and pass on traditional Indigenous knowledge to the benefit of all society.

Good education is essential in providing opportunities to build societies that combat inequality, so that all may benefit and prosper. 'Not only do schools teach literacy and lay the groundwork for productive lives, they also play a crucial role in promoting tolerance, peace and understanding between peoples, and in fighting discrimination of all kinds. Schools are the place where indigenous children can learn to read and write in their first language, where cultural diversity can thrive and where children can try to escape the hardships of conflict and displacement.'³⁰

Ironically, the Australian government has ended bilingual education for Indigenous children in the Northern Territory at the same time the rest of world, including other Australian States, supports and encourages it for other sectors of the population. Recently, Victoria and Western Australia have recorded notable successes in their bilingual education programs.

The Victorian program, which is government funded, is offered at the Richmond West Primary school where the languages of instruction are in English/Mandarin Chinese and English/Vietnamese. This school has been running bilingual education programs for nearly 20 years. The school recently reported on the outcomes of its bilingual programs. The report shows that bilingually educated students perceived themselves as able to do either most things or everything they want to do in both languages of instruction, including listening/understanding, speaking, reading and writing. Students also expressed a number of other benefits that related to family and social communications, future education and current studies. *All* students said they believed learning two languages helped rather than hindered learning.³¹

The students' NAPLAN results support their arguments, indicating that their achievements in language learning have not come at the expense of English-language development. The teachers also said that the benefits included team planning and the opportunities for more explicit teaching and modelling of particular structures and features within each language. 'The research highlighted the students' strongly bilingual, biliterate self-identities. It demonstrated that learning bilingually can enhance outcomes for students of all social and economic family backgrounds including those identified among the most disadvantaged in Victorian schools, and it has provided an insight into how to equip students to be global citizens in the future.'³²

More recently, Biddle and Mackay³³ outlined the *Deadly Ways to Learn* programs offered to Indigenous children in Western Australia. The program began as a pilot in fourteen government, private and Catholic schools across rural and urban Western Australia. The results showed that targets set by the Commonwealth education department in terms of the literacy outcomes of the target students were met, and exceeded. They also reported a number of qualitative improvements that will have longer-term impacts on the schools that were involved in the project. There was an increase in the input that Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers provided to the planning and conduct of school and classroom programs and teaching practices. Furthermore, teachers had become more inclusive in terms of embracing Aboriginal meanings and Aboriginal English. The program highlights the importance of all students in Australia receiving an education that is sensitive to the history, culture and language of Indigenous Australians.³⁴

UNESCO's international research³⁵ demonstrates strongly that children taught in their first language usually learn better and faster than children studying in second languages, perform better in tests taken in the official language of instruction later in their school careers, and that the benefits extend beyond cognitive skills to enhanced self-confidence, self-esteem and classroom participation.

In ending bilingual education the Australian government has ignored all national and international research without providing any counter-evidence. This paper has highlighted some of the international and national evidence for the need to maintain Indigenous languages and to teach children literacy in their first language, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. Chuck Grimes³⁶ provided a list of 691 documents that justify documenting and maintaining traditional languages and providing bilingual education to Indigenous children. In addition, Simpson, Caffery and McConvell³⁷ further detail the case for bilingual education being vital to the future of Indigenous children and for 'Closing the Gap' in relation to health, education, and employment of Indigenous Australians.

Central Australian languages: so what?

Nearly half of Australia's 'strong' Indigenous languages are in Central Australia. Despite this, and the fact that they represent a key remaining storehouse of Indigenous culture, they are dangerously close to dying. Whilst reversing this state of affairs is challenging, recent changes in government policy have not only failed to meet this challenge, but, in fact, are making it more difficult.



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Not quite burning the books

Meg Mooney

1.

Cream metal louvres
stained with the red dust
they don't keep out,
dirty lino tiles, sloshed each afternoon
from a muddy bucket,
I spent years in this room
with the clatter and whirr
of folding, binding and stapling machines,
fragments of gospel songs from a dying tape player
continually rewound by young artists and transcribers
talking in long runs of words I couldn't understand
the only texts in this language
apart from a small dictionary
the bible, a hymn book or two
are the booklets made in this room
stories about a young man running from a plane
thinking it was a devil in the sky,
revenge parties tracking down men
who'd stolen young women,
couples who married wrong way,
sometimes whole families
in feuds that went on for generations,
'all the Tjampitjinpa men' chained together
and taken off for killing cattle
readers with sentences like
Wati ananyi ngurrakutu
The man is going home
with a drawing of a man
walking toward a corrugated iron humpy
legends about warriors spearing giant, man-eating goannas
a man full of spears turning into a centipede
western desert versions of Grimms' tales –
dingos devour a lost boy
after weeing on the log he's hiding in, so it falls apart

mamu litutjarra – louse-y monsters – and devil-men
steal babies and roast them on fires
all the hunting stories
looking, looking, looking
and often finding
goanna, emu, kangaroo, bush turkey,
tales of country full of food
grubs, honeyants, berries, yams

2.

the preschool has taken over the old printery
no-one knows where the books are
I imagine piles of them –
the stories the old people carried,
the pictures the young artists drew
sitting for hours at an old wooden table
etched with their names,
photos of an echidna cooking in the coals,
an old woman grinding grass seed on a stone to make damper –
all these thrown next to old washing machines
mattress skeletons and dead cars at the rubbish dump
the acting principal hasn't seen the books
thinks they got packed up at the beginning of the year
all the white teachers are new since then
later we find some of the Aboriginal aides knew
there's only one room we haven't looked in
in a corner of the old printery
none of the teachers have a key for the padlock
but the janitor does
the little room is piled high
with boxes, filing cabinets, crates,
all the stories
locked away
in the darkroom
to make sure English is taught better

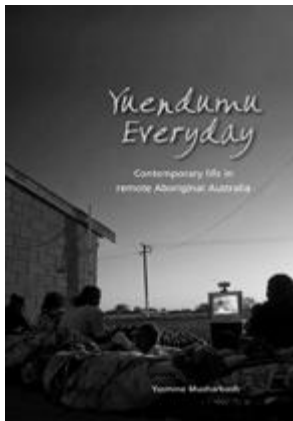
[Since this poem was written, I have found that these booklets were packed away, some time after the bilingual program ended at this community school, mainly to protect them. The NT Department of Education (DET) is now co-ordinating the documentation of all the resources from this program, and have set up a committee with local school and community members to oversee that process. DET has already digitised hundreds of booklets and there are plans to display some of the resources in the new school library and elsewhere in the school.

The idea of this poem still stands, in that the NT government has now ended all bilingual programs and announced that all schools have to teach in English until lunchtime. Also, many of the resources made under some other bilingual programs have not been accounted for. There is still an Indigenous Language and Culture subject area, which schools can choose to teach, in the NT Curriculum Framework.]

Books

Yuendumu Everyday: Contemporary life in remote regional Australia. By Yasmine Musharbash. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press. 2008.

Yuendumu Everyday is an engagingly written ethnography focusing on life in the *jilimi*, single Warlpiri women's camps, in the remote Aboriginal community of Yuendumu. The book begins with Musharbash and a number of Warlpiri women lying outside watching 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' on the television under the night sky. This prompts Tamsin, a seventeen-year old Warlpiri woman, to say what she would do if she won a million dollars: buy a big house with lots of rooms from which she would exclude others. Musharbash explains this as a contradiction arising from 'the dynamics between the social practices of everyday life in a remote Aboriginal settlement and the realities of living in a First World nation state' (p 3); the contradiction is between a self, defined through relating to others, and the wish to exclude those others. Musharbash's central aim in this book is to 'explore these dynamics and the meanings encapsulated in them' (p 3).



Musharbash's focus on the *jilimi* (single women's camps) is an apt way to explore domestic space, and indeed, the central themes she identifies in the women's lives as they move through the *jilimi* and in their relationships with each other – those of mobility, immediacy and intimacy. Drawing on Heidegger's (1993[1951]) 'Building Dwelling Thinking' – a philosophical argument about how dwelling, building and thinking are implicated in a processual cycle in which each influences the other (eg, what we build reflects how we think; how we think reflects how we dwell) – Musharbash contrasts 'the Western series of building-dwelling-thinking' with building-dwelling-thinking 'Warlpiri way' (p 6). While in the Western context it is the house that embodies this concept of building-dwelling-thinking, the house's metaphoric equivalent in the Warlpiri context is *ngurra* (a polysemic term meaning, amongst other things, camp, home, country, shelter, land, burrow, nest, and so on). Musharbash explains that the term *ngurra* has spatial, temporal and emotional dimensions: Warlpiri camps are but one manifestation of *ngurra* (p 5).

Aboriginal housing in remote Indigenous Australia communities has frequently been identified as problematic for a number of reasons: the provision of substandard or inadequate housing not suited to Indigenous living needs, problems of overcrowding, deterioration and upkeep. In the Warlpiri context, Musharbash notes that colonialism has meant sedentarisation and the provision of Western-style housing in which 'Warlpiri people have been experiencing an intersecting of the two series of building-dwelling-thinking' (p 6). In other words, culture is highly implicated in the taken-for-granted domain of the house. Musharbash explains that while Warlpiri people do want Western-style houses, the way that they live in these houses is often regarded from a Western perspective as a failure of expectation, namely that by living in Western-style houses, Indigenous Australians will become like 'us' (p 7). An important contribution of this book is Musharbash's exposition of these perspectival differences, with reference to the actual use the domestic space of the *jilimi*. She makes it evident, too, that Warlpiri ways emerge in a distinctly intercultural context, and are subject to change: for example, she argues

that sedentarisation has meant that the importance of single women's camps (*jilimi*) as a central point of sociality has increased (p 9). Musharbash's focus, though, is on the 'everyday', an everyday that emerges in a kind of ethnographic present, rather than on the forces of historical change and transition. It is also an 'everyday' in which a great deal of the social malaise commonly reported in remote Indigenous communities is largely absent, as other reviewers have commented (eg, Trigger 2009). This is not to say that the impacts of health issues, premature mortality, marginal socio-economic status and related social issues are entirely absent from this book; they inform a number of the interactions Musharbash describes. Rather, it is to suggest that social dysfunction, where it does exist, would also express and embody 'the dilemmas of contemporary settlement life' (p 10) quite forcefully (as in the recent film set in Central Australia, *Samson and Delilah*, for example).

As Handelman has said, 'phenomenologists commonly write of the everyday, not of the everynight life-world'. This book is no exception, in that it refers to the 'everyday' in its title. So much of what is described in this book is concerned with night-time and sleeping arrangements, though, that I could not help thinking as I read this about the power of the metaphors we live by that structure our own thoughts and perceptions. One of the contributions this ethnography makes is precisely in its exploration of that which happens after dark: its focus on the relationship between nocturnal sleeping arrangements and emotions within a small community, and how the emotional import of the day's events are reflected in sleeping and living arrangements. There is room here, I think, to reflect further on what it is that the night or darkness specifically allows, in the same way that Musharbash reflects on the intimacy that co-sleeping arrangements signal. Centred as it is on the *jilimi*, a limitation of this work is that its focus, necessarily, is primarily on women, meaning that other kinds of sleeping arrangements and social interactions are excluded. Notwithstanding this, *Yuendumu Everyday* provides a valuable contribution to the anthropology of sleep, and is an evocative introduction to the life-worlds of many Warlpiri women.

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Power, Culture, Economy: Indigenous Australians and Mining. Edited by Jon Altman and David Martin. ANU Press, Canberra. 2009.

Mining in Australia accounts for a significant proportion of the national economy and mineral commodities represent a large and increasing share of Australia's exports. While the value of mining's contribution to the national accounts is undoubted, from a local community perspective, the prospect of mining can be daunting. Mining can dramatically affect regional economies and change local social conditions. The sheer volume of material shifted in a modern large-scale long life mine alters landscapes permanently. For Indigenous communities these issues are magnified manifold; where personal and group identity is inextricably linked to the land; where responsibility to kin is overriding; and where formal educational standards and economic independence are low. How then, in

these circumstances, can Indigenous stakeholders best deal with mining and share in the wealth generated on their land?

Power, Culture, Economy: Indigenous Australians and Mining delves into the core of this arena and seeks to answer the key question of whether large scale mining proximal to Aboriginal communities can deliver sustainable benefits that alleviate social and economic disadvantage.

In this arena, the interests of mining companies and government meet Indigenous interests in a 'complex triangulated relationship', a theme that is central throughout the book. It is not giving too much away to say that the fundamental conclusion is that Indigenous people do not share equitably in the wealth generated by mining on their land. A key issue raised is 'why not'?

This is a scholarly work designed to stimulate thinking, canvas options and lay possible policy pathways. The monograph presents the key findings from an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project 'Indigenous Community Organisations and Miners: Partnering Sustainable Regional Development?' undertaken between 2002 and 2007 at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) the preeminent centre of Aboriginal policy research at the Australian National University. Project industry partners were the major mining group, Rio Tinto, and economic policy 'thinktank,' the Committee for Economic Development of Australia.

The book contains a collection of eight chapters written by scholars engaged in the ARC project and based at CAEPR. The majority of authors are anthropologists but also include a demographer and a political scientist. The research is therefore firmly ethnographically based and brings Aboriginal viewpoints to the fore. Editors, Jon Altman and David Martin, who have also contributed chapters, have extensive experience in the field of Aboriginal political and economic study. Similarly the other contributors have significant research experience and professional experience working with Aboriginal organisations. As such the work carries considerable authority.

The approach taken is to use case studies of three large scale mining operations which have agreements with local Aboriginal owners. The case studies represent a neat spread across northern remote Australia. These include Rio Tinto's Yandicoogina Land Use Agreement for mining iron ore in the Pilbara region of Western Australia; the ERA Ltd Ranger Uranium Mine agreement in the Northern Territory; and the Century Mine Agreement in the lower Gulf of Carpentaria region in Queensland. Each agreement arises out of different historical and political circumstances. The Ranger Agreement is an early agreement negotiated under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976* while the other agreements were made under the *Native Title Act 1993*. In each case the researchers identify the effect of differential power relations whereby the state side with mining companies to establish arrangements, which in turn fail to recognise regional Indigenous diversity. They find also, disappointingly, that the agreements have only minimal positive impact on the socioeconomic status of Aboriginal people living in the mine hinterland. Exposed glaringly is the shrinking of government services in remote Australia as well as the deeply entrenched levels of disadvantage in Aboriginal communities, factors which combine to detract from efforts to cause positive change under the agreements.

Not all chapters, however, relate to the three mines in the case study. The chapters are in fact quite distinct and diverse in subject, method and approach. The chapters are designed to stand alone or be read together.

Robert Levitus, for instance, considers the role of Aboriginal organisations as instruments in the delivery and distribution of economic benefits. His examination identifies some structural pre-conditions that bear upon their capacity to implement development objectives. Martin's chapter on governance of agreements based on experiences with the Century Agreement similarly offers practical understandings that highlight the importance of planning for implementation of agreements.

A refreshing feature of book is that it brings Aboriginal aspirations for maintaining cultural identity and practice to the fore. For example Sarah Holcome's study of the Yandicoogina trust fund identifies a nascent 'Aboriginal entrepreneurialism' and sees opportunity for benefits in the customary economy, in addition to Aboriginal entry into the market economy. The notion originally espoused by Altman of the 'hybrid economy' is also taken up in Ben Scambary's analysis of agreements outcomes. Overall, *Power, Culture, Economy* builds a compelling case for policy makers and practitioners to understand how Aboriginal activities that aim to maintain connection to land - including activities such as ceremony, hunting, visiting outstations, art and craft production - constitute legitimate economic pursuits that should be recognised in the pursuit of beneficial outcomes from agreements.

This book is anathema for anyone seeking simple solutions in the field of mining and Indigenous agreements. Indeed it sets out to counsel against unilateral approaches or binary views. This is 'a complex field of enquiry replete with paradoxes' with little or no room for binary views. While true, there is a risk of promoting the intractability of issues. Also readers could lose sight of positive pathways that are on offer in this book. At times the variety and multiplicity of issues become overwhelming. Altman, however, through the introduction plus his first two chapters masterly sets the background and expertly synthesises the chapters that follow.

Power, Culture, Economy shows how the triumvirate of the state, mining companies, and Aboriginal interests can work 'but it is only when concerted action is taken by government and mining companies in unison and in collaboration with Indigenous interests that positive outcomes are generated'.

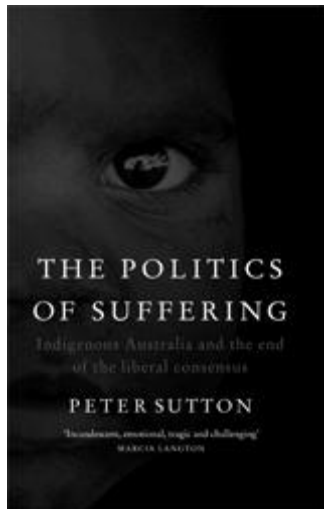
There is clearly more work to do in the arena of achieving positive outcomes of agreements. This book would be of interest to anyone concerned about the interaction of miners with Indigenous people. In particular it is essential reading and an immensely important resource for practitioners and researchers in this field.

Rodger Barnes is a post graduate scholar at the Aboriginal Environments Research Centre and the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, The University of Queensland. He also wrote the article on 'Mining and Land Rights in Central Australia' in the last edition of *Dialogue*.

The Politics of Suffering. Indigenous Australia and the end of the liberal consensus. By Peter Sutton. Melbourne University Press. 2009.

Sutton opens with the untimely deaths of his loved ones in the Aboriginal community of Aurukun. Many perished at the hands of partners, some by their own hand. This tragic background contextualises what the book cover promises - an erudite assessment of three decades of Indigenous policy and 'hope' for a new era. Although I disagreed with many of his arguments, there is some worthy content, especially Sutton's historical analysis of the transition from church control to self-management. My major criticism falls

at the feet of Sutton's editor. Too often the analysis is compromised by personal bitterness, self-righteousness and Sutton's need to defend his discipline.



As I understand it, Sutton's argument begins with the premise that dysfunction flourished in remote Aboriginal communities with the advent of progressive liberal policy. It follows that Indigenous disadvantage cannot be blamed solely on governments. Cultural practices may, at least in part, be responsible for the calamitous state of some remote communities. But there are glaring holes.

Sutton's analysis is confined to remote Australia. So how can he be sure that the disadvantage in remote Australia does not find resonance in cities and country towns? Furthermore, he claims that in order to be effective, cultural change must begin in childhood. However, Sutton doesn't actually say who should be responsible for initiating this change, or how it should be implemented. And what of Aboriginal parents who fall outside his stereotypes?

Perhaps, these questions may have been addressed if Sutton had refrained from settling personal scores, some apparently expanding across the length of his career. An unfortunate exchange with Dennis Walker on Palm Island thirty-six years ago even warrants a mention (p 23). There are plenty of insults for urban elites of 'Aboriginal descent'. But perhaps he is most venomous towards those aligned with the 'rights agenda', whom he presents as latter day versions of Marie Antoinette offering the starving masses rights instead of cake:

It is remarkable how many people living in the comfort, affluence and healthy surroundings of Australia's suburbia have, in the debates over Indigenous policy and especially over the Intervention, covertly promoted the view that respect for cultural differences and racially defined political autonomy takes precedence over a child's basic right to have love, wellbeing and safety (p 10).

I am not aware of any public intellectual who has argued that respect for cultural difference should take precedence over the safety of children. Presumably, neither is Sutton, because he provides no source.

In any event, Sutton is wrong in his assertion that rights are the luxury of the urban elite. From the reviewer's experience of being a co-writer (with L Behrendt, M Harris and A Vivien, 2009) of the report, *Will They be Heard?*, many Aboriginal people subject to the Northern Territory Intervention are outraged over the loss of protection under the *Racial Discrimination Act*. For many in prescribed areas, the suspension of the Act has become the badge upon which they hang the indignities of separate shopping queues and signs declaring prohibitions on pornography.

Sutton's analysis of the Intervention is too brief and superficial. He appears to support it, on the basis that the Intervention sent a message to abusers that 'could be heard in their own lingo' (p 9). He even apparently concurs with those who pointed to the childlessness of many critics, as to somehow disqualify them from the debate (p 42-43). Matters of substance, such as the incongruence between authoritarian elements of the Intervention, such as compulsory income management, and the recommendations of the report, *Little Children are Sacred*, are ignored. Likewise, the lack of evidence suggesting that this expensive albatross has actually enhanced child safety is overlooked.

The chapter, 'Unusual Couples', is a convoluted and romanticised narrative of relationships between prominent Australian anthropologists and their Indigenous informers. Apparently, race was irrelevant to these 'intellectual partnerships'; which should somehow provide a foundation for future policy. Perhaps, some reference to this history was useful, but did it really warrant an entire chapter? For those hoping for fresh insight into Indigenous policy, it was yet another exercise in self-indulgence.

The final chapter, 'On Feeling Reconciled' raises some important questions. In particular, does a formal process 'politicise and collectivise' gestures that should be made on an individual basis? However, some of his arguments were the stuff of self-righteousness rather than dispassionate debate. A case in point was Sutton's argument against Indigenous scholarships and football matches, on the basis that such schemes encourage victimhood. In the writer's experience however, those schemes often raise the self-esteem of active participants and their families. But there is no need to rely on me – just reflect on the recent outpouring of pride throughout Indigenous Australia when the NRL Indigenous All Stars were victorious. For a brief moment, so many Indigenous kids walked an inch taller and aimed to work harder to emulate their role models. Perhaps, a more interesting question is why is Sutton so threatened by even benign expressions of black pride?

Finally, Sutton has unwittingly revealed some disturbing home truths about the academy. Most emerging academics have felt the sting of being dragged over the coals by a merciless professor. Such experiences are a rite of passage and useful; even when one has to rake constructive criticism from the proverbial pile of vitriol. They are also an exercise in character building. Few emerging academics would have the gall to attempt to publish a manuscript replete with personal snipes and navel-gazing about the history of one's discipline, under the pretext of a serious policy critique. This begs the question – why do similar standards not also apply to luminaries such as Peter Sutton?

Nicole Watson is a Birri Gubba woman and a research fellow at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, UTS. Nicole's debut novel, *'The Boundary'* will be published by the University of Queensland Press later this year.

Body and Mind: Historical Essays in Honour of FB Smith. Edited by Graeme Davison, Pat Jalland and Wilfrid Prest. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne. 2009.

The fragmented career of the History profession in Australia over the past 50 years is a story mainly untold. Perhaps a prosopography of its personnel and their recruitment would expose some of its linkages and the intellectual divisions running through the discipline over these decades. Not least would be the deplorable decline of economic history in our own times. It would also show the influences radiating from, for example, Melbourne, Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Oxbridge.

In this story, History at the ANU warrants particular attention. Well-funded for research and specifically located in the Research School of Social Sciences, it was originally required to promote historical scholarship for Australia at large. Some of the national account is now being told in commissioned institutional histories, some in the new genre of biographies of historians. And some of it resides in *Festschriften* such as the present volume. At the core of historical scholarship in Australian and Modern British History has been FB Smith. Here the prolific career of one of the pillars of the RSSS is celebrated by

his colleagues and former students. As they doff their caps to the master, they also illustrate some of the pathways of the profession over the past few decades.

These essays sample the work of three generations of historians, loosely connected with Barry Smith's own long career. They show how historical research has sometimes inter-connected with current methods and priorities among the social sciences in general. Too often, however, history and the other social sciences have been like ships that pass in the night.

James Phillips Kay was a pioneer social statistician and reformer in Manchester where he exerted influence on social policy in mid-Victorian England. But here Graeme Davison adopts a psychological approach to explain how his thwarted love life affected the entire course of his life's work. Catherine Helen Spence similarly influenced reform and public life in Victorian Adelaide and now Susan Magarey, who has already devoted much energy to her biography, thinks that her domestic circumstances, offered in dense and loving detail, deserve a much larger role in explaining her good works. MJD Roberts proposes a revised account of the debate about sanitary reform in Palmerston's England in which political feasibility had to be balanced against the realities exposed in the social statistics of the reformers. Descriptive social history is represented by Alex Tyrrell on the great Victorian industry of 'the Water Cure'. Hydropathy spread from Austria to Britain from the 1840s and vaulted over the widespread scepticism of the established medical profession. The desperation and, indeed, the gullibility of sick people pervaded every level of society. Charles Darwin himself was an enthusiastic customer of these watery nostrums, some of which may even have been beneficial.

Another kind of social history comes in a wonderful evocation of life in the outer suburbs of London at Osterley in the 1930s by Geoffrey Best. He rescues his own upbringing, and indeed suburbia itself, not only from the condescension of historians but also its dismissal by urban theorists and cultural commentators in general. Best is particularly interested in class and in Hilaire Belloc's 'people in between'. He captures the 'many nice distinctions' which entangled so much of British life and he is especially incisive about the demise of domestic service in the social system by the time of the Second World War. Best need not have wondered whether this is 'a legitimate subject of historical-sociological enquiry' (p 116) for this is self-documented social history in the most captivating mode. He has excavated his own memory, and employed anecdote, impressionism, and most of all, context, to display the historian's intrinsic advantage in such an investigation.

In terms of Smithian territory, we are left short of labour history. Phillipa Mein Smith, however, ponders the texture and meaning of terms such as 'Australasia', and 'Trans-Tasman' in the evolving relationship between New Zealand and Australia. Joanna Bourke displays another aspect of her influential work on the historical psychology of war behaviour, in this case the category of 'malingering', outlining the late Victorian emergence of, and response to, the phenomenon. She concentrates on military 'malingering' and then the broader industrial context. Summarising attitudes to 'shirking' from contemporary accounts, she argues that the military authorities and their psychologists conspired to construct the 'man machine unit' (p 111), fitted up for war and indeed for the demands of industry. Her argument is typically provocative.

Appropriately, the social history of medicine receives the fullest representation in this volume. It features, though somewhat tangentially, in Pat Jalland's study of the realities, as opposed to the myths, of the Blitz in London and Coventry. Calling on reminiscence evidence, she argues that the facts of mass civilian death and destruction were deliberately masked by the propaganda authorities to defeat the express purpose of

German bombing, that is, the destruction of British morale. Stoicism was elevated over grief. By contrast, Janet McCalman reports part of an ambitious longitudinal study of people at the bottom of Melbourne society. Her research project examines many thousands of people born in the Lying-In Hospital around the late 19th century and beyond. This systematic 'life course epidemiology' employs the rich nominal data contained in the death certificates of the time. McCalman focuses on those 'who died without friends', combining individual cases with large samples which, for instance, demonstrate that birth weight was a primary indicator of 'brutal biological and social selection' (p180). Economic and biological risks are delineated with unusual precision and exhibit their crucial interaction over several generations. Her research shows also that the real casualties of the 1930s depression were probably long dead before they could be interviewed by oral historians in the 1960s. This is the sort of study which should persuade social scientists of the practical possibilities of social history.

Another function of historians is that of synthesising and balancing the accumulated evidence of past controversies. Peter Edwards produces a beautifully clarifying résumé of the recent and long-running battle over the alleged effects of Agent Orange among Australian personnel in the Vietnam War. Barry Smith was a prominent and rather exposed commentator in the hot debates of the 1990s. Edwards' account suggests that the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia pressed its legal/political/medical case too far, and in the process, undermined the traditionally generous Australian treatment of returned soldiers.

Body and Mind is a lively and engaging collection: ten samples of scholarship from three generations of historians. Some revisit old work, others offer a foretaste of research to come. They mainly employ the close reading of literary sources, and the production of clear, cogent narratives of society in its different facets. Their methods are mainly descriptive, dealing with consequences and outcomes, rather more than with causes and explanation, in the broadest sense. *Body and Mind* offers plenty of good reading for social scientists of a liberal persuasion.

Eric Richards, Flinders University



Academy News

Public Forums Program

2010 Paul Bourke Lecture

Arrangements are underway for *Mark Bellgrove*, the recipient of the 2009 Paul Bourke Award for Early Career Research to present a public lecture at the University of Queensland. The lecture will be presented during May-June of this year.

2010 Keith Hancock Lecture

The 2010 Keith Hancock Lecture will be presented by *Stuart Macintyre*, at the University of Melbourne, sometime during June-July. The lecture will coincide with the launch of Stuart's book about the History of the Social Sciences in Australia.

2010 Fay Gale Lecture

The inaugural Fay Gale Lecture was given by *Kay Anderson* on 10 March at the University of Western Sydney. As part of the Academy's outreach, the Lecture was also presented at the University of Adelaide, on 18 March, and will be delivered at the University of Wollongong on 28 April.

ASSA Symposium 2010

The Annual Symposium and related events will take place 8-10 November 2010.

The Symposium will draw from work organised by *Michael Bittman*, *Dorothy Broom*, *Duncan Ironmonger* and *Sue Richardson* for their project 'Children of the Recession'.

International Program

Australia – France Program

Three grants have been awarded to Franco-Australian teams of researchers as part of the Australia-France Social Sciences Collaborative Research Projects scheme, which is run with the valued support of our program partner, the French Embassy in Australia.

Dr Lynne Chester from the John Curtin Institute of Public Policy at Curtin University and *Dominique Finon* from the Centre International de Recherche sur L'Environnement et Le Développement have received a grant of AU\$4,000 for their project 'Design of an empirical analysis of the reasons constraining investment in EU and Australian electricity generation capacity'.

Professor Matthew Spriggs from the Australian National University and *Dr Frédérique Valentin* from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique have received AU\$4,500 funding for their project 'Reconstruction and morphological study of Lapita skeletons from Teouma cemetery'.

Associate Professor Heather Booth from the Australian National University and *Dr Sophie Pennec* from the Institut National d'Études Démographiques have received a second year of funding of AU\$5,000 for their project 'Innovative methods of forecasting the size and demographic structure of ageing populations, with applications to Australia and France'.

■ 'Innovative methods for forecasting the size and demographic structure of ageing populations, with applications to Australia and France': report on progress.

In 2009, Associate Professor Heather Booth of the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute (ADSRI), Australian National University, visited the Institut national d'études démographiques (Ined) in Paris to work collaboratively with Dr Sophie Pennec. Research activities involved the forecasting of French mortality, fertility and net international migration using methods developed by Booth and Hyndman, and their use in probabilistic population projections. An important benefit is statistically-valid confidence intervals for the forecasts, which are used in socio-economic planning and policy development. This is the first stochastic population forecast for France using state-of-the-art methods and software developed in Australia by Hyndman and Booth. Pennec gained expertise in the use of this software and the application of these methods. Useful insights were gained through discussions between Booth, Pennec and others at Ined. This work was presented by Booth and Pennec at the International Population Conference in Marrakesh, Morocco in September 2009. As a result of this work, the advice of both researchers has been sought by the French statistical office in the preparation of its next population projections.

It is planned that the collaboration will be extended in 2010 to involve the use of demographic forecasts in microsimulation modelling of the multigenerational family structure, using a model developed by Pennec. This will produce reliable forecasts of the size, age-sex structure and detailed family structure of the French and Australian populations. The statistically-valid variance estimates, which are a feature of the forecasting method, will enhance the reliability and validity of the existing model of family structure. The models will thus better inform policy and be important tools for further socio-economic planning and research. It is expected that this collaboration will be further developed to incorporate greater detail in the modelling of the demographic structure of the two populations.

Through the above collaboration, Dr Pennec is also involved in an ANU-based project on Dynamic Analyses to Optimise Ageing (DYNOPTA). Her expertise contributes significantly to the Project's development of a microsimulation model of health and ageing in later life; this research is a joint activity of NATSEM (University of Canberra) and ADSRI (ANU).

The financial assistance for this work is much appreciated. Through early and careful planning, significant economies were achieved, enabling an extra visit to be planned. Dr Pennec will make a visit to ADSRI, in early 2010. This will significantly enhance her contribution to the research.

Australia-United Kingdom Special Joint Project Scheme

Two grants for projects in 2010 have been awarded under this scheme, run jointly by the Australian Academies of the Humanities and of the Social Sciences with our international partner, the British Academy. The 2010 awardees are:

1. Dr Daniel Palmer from Monash University and Dr David Bate from the University of Westminster have been awarded a grant of £4,000.00 for their project titled 'Is Photography Global?', which will address 'the subject of the practice and responsibility of global thinking with the discipline' of photography.
2. Dr Michael Davis from the University of Tasmania and Dr Barry Godfrey from Keele University have been awarded a grant of £3,826.00 for their project 'Courtrooms and the public sphere in the British Colonies 1750-1950'. Their research will focus on courtroom interactions between lawyers and defendants, judges and juries, and judges

and advocates with a view exploring differences between British Justice UK and the Australian Colonies.

■ Report from *Louise D'Arcens*, University of Wollongong:

I visited the Institute for Mediaeval Studies at the University of St Andrews as part of the research program for two weeks, 5-18 October, 2009. During my visit, I delivered the inaugural presentation for the Institute's research seminar series, on 5 October. This seminar was entitled 'Old Songs in the Timeless Land: Australian Mediaevalism'. The seminar attracted a large audience that included both staff and postgraduate students within the Institute. The research paper was very well-received, and generated a lively and lengthy discussion that laid a very positive groundwork for the discussion and planning that took place at a later seminar/workshop (see 3 below). Evidence of this seminar can be found at: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/saims/seminars.htm>.

Subsequent to this initial seminar, I provided informal research project guidance to postgraduates within the Institute working on projects involving medievalism, early modern literature, and theories of nostalgia. This took place throughout my visit to the Institute.

I delivered a presentation and participated in a roundtable as part of a one-day workshop/seminar event organised at the Institute by Dr Chris Jones in conjunction with his colleague, Dr Bettina Bildauer. 'The Middle Ages in the Modern World' gathered together a range of scholars in the field from St Andrews, Manchester, Cambridge, Kings College London, and other institutions. My presentation outlined the current research position of medieval and medievalism studies in Australia, with a view to developing strategies for future Australian-British collaborations. Again, the presentation generated positive feedback and discussion. In the roundtable section of the day, there was vigorous and productive planning discussion for a future major conference on medievalism to be held in 2011 at St Andrews, in which I will be a main participant. I was able to contribute my own suggestions based on the symposia and seminars I have already organised on this topic. I will undertake to ensure a strong Australian presence at the 2011 conference, as there are numerous excellent scholars of medievalism in Australia whose work takes an approach that is compatible with the British scholars in this field.

Chris Jones and I commenced in earnest the writing of our co-authored article 'Standing Stones and Mummies: Excavating the Borders of Literary Anglo-Saxonism'. We have identified the journal to which we will send the article: *Representations*, an ERA A* journal in literary and cultural studies. The introductory section has been completed, and we have both produced clean drafts of the first parts of our respective sections of the article. Our writing program was, unfortunately, interrupted for several days because I fell ill; we continued when I had recovered sufficiently, and are currently drafting the remaining sections.

As part of our collaboration associated with this project, Dr Jones and I also delivered a joint paper 'Fossil and Root' at the 44th International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, in May 2009, and I will be delivering a paper on Australian medievalism within a panel organised by Dr Jones for the 2010 International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds in July 2010. We are also in discussions about a possible book contribution from me to a book series on medievalism which Dr Jones has been asked to co-edit for the publishers Boydell and Brewer. Dr Jones visited Australia in January. I am, therefore, very pleased at how this collaboration is proceeding, and am grateful to the AAH/AASS for their assistance in facilitating it.

Australia-China Program

The Academy has had a program of scholarly exchange with our Chinese partner, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences for nearly thirty years. We are pleased to announce that the recipient of the Australia-to-China exchange from this year's round of the Australia-China Exchange scheme is *Dr Thomas Wilkins* from the Centre for International Security Studies at the University of Sydney, who will travel to Beijing in May. Dr Wilkins will conduct interviews with Chinese social scientists to inform his research project examining China's network of Strategic Partnerships. The total value of Dr Wilkins' award is AU\$6,000.

The International Committee is also able to report that on 26 October 2009 a delegation from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences met with representatives from ASSA for a productive discussion of our current and future relations. ASSA took the opportunity to propose to the CASS representatives that our current bilateral exchange program be upgraded to a Joint-action Program, as per the Academy's current UK and France programs. We are pleased that CASS has agreed to the implementation of this program, which will run from the calendar year 2011.

Under the revised Australia-China Joint-Action Research Program, the current support for an Exchange will be upgraded to an initial offering of two grants of AU\$7,500 per annum, which will be awarded to collaborative teams comprising at least one Australian and at least one Chinese researcher for a project of up to one year. ASSA Joint-action Programs aim in particular to support research collaborations which incorporate early career researchers and which are multidisciplinary. More information will be available on the Academy's website shortly.

Australia-Netherlands Exchange

The Australian Academies of the Social Sciences and the Humanities in partnership with the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences manage the Australia-Netherlands Exchange scheme. We are pleased to announce the recipients of the two, 2010 Australia-to-the Netherlands exchanges:

1. *Dr Sara Charlesworth* from the Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT, will travel to the Netherlands in April-May. Dr Charlesworth will collaborate with colleagues gathering data for projects which address gender equality in employment and in working time regulations.
2. *Dr Joost Coté* from the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University will travel to the Netherlands in May-June. Dr Coté is researching the Dutch East Indies during World War II and will visit the Dutch Institute for War Documentation and the Dutch National Archives.

■ Report from *Associate Professor Anne Bardoel*, Monash University:

Participating in the Australia-Netherlands Exchange Program was an enriching experience – both from a research and cultural perspective. My research program had two major components.

1. International research collaboration with Dutch researchers on determinants of employer involvement in flexible work arrangements using the CRANET dataset.

I was invited by *Professor Erik Poutsma* from the Department of Business Administration, Nijmegen School of Management (NSM), University of Nijmegen, in the Netherlands to undertake collaborative research on the determinants of employer involvement in flexible

work arrangements using the Cranfield Network on Comparative Human Resource Management (Cranet) dataset. I spent four weeks (April 19 – May 20, 2009) at NSM and in collaboration with Professor Poutsma have developed a framework for conducting a comparative research project on analysing flexible work arrangements using the Cranet dataset. We are currently working on a conference paper based on analysing the dataset.

As a consequence of my visit to the NSM, Professor Poutsma also visited Monash in August 2009 to further work on our research project on flexible work arrangements. Several other research outcomes have been achieved as a result of my visit to NSM. First, based on my collaboration with Professor Poutsma I was able to contribute to a proposal for European Commission Funding (2010-2013) as part of the Monash European and EU Centre Relex Funding Bid in June. The bid builds on the collaborative research with Professor Poutsma on the determinants of employer involvement in flexible work arrangements using the Cranet dataset. At this stage we are waiting to hear the result of the Monash application. Second, Professor Poutsma and I have begun discussions with representatives from our universities exploring the possibility of extending the current Master Program in European Human Resource Management (EHRM) (which Professor Poutsma leads) to develop an International Masters Program for Human Resource Management by partnering with the Department of Management at Monash University. In addition, we submitted an application to *The Australia-Netherlands Research Collaboration (ANRC)* in April 2009. The project supports Australia-Netherlands academic relations and brings together researchers from both countries to focus on Southeast Asia. The application was a collaborative grant submission with Professor Erik Poutsma and Dr Pascale Peters, Department of Business Administration, Nijmegen School of Management (NSM), Radboud University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands and also Professor Ron Edwards, Head of School of Business, Monash Malaysia, Sunway Campus. Unfortunately our application was not successful but the scheme was competitive and our application received positive feedback.

While I was at NSM I also gave a seminar to academic staff and research students entitled 'Family Flexibility'. The opportunity to visit Dutch scholars has provided me with the opportunity to foster what I anticipate will be ongoing and valuable international research collaborative links.

2. The Exchange Program also enabled me to attend the *Community Work and Family Conference* that was held at Utrecht University (16-18 April 2009).

I presented two refereed papers: Haar, J and Bardoel, EA (2009). Work-family negative and positive spillover and outcomes: Direct and moderating effects, *Community Work and Family Conference*; and Bardoel, EA, Maher, JM, Lindsay, J (2009). Configurations of flexibility for employees and their families: Family flexibility, both forming part of the *Proceedings of International Community Work and Family Conference*, Utrecht, the Netherlands, 16-18 April.

I would like to thank the Academies for supporting my visit to the Netherlands and also to Professor Poutsma for facilitating my visit to the Nijmegen School of Management (NSM).

■ *Dr Nonja Peters*, Director, Migration, Ethnicity, Refugees and Citizenship Research Unit, Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute, Curtin University, has submitted an extensive report on her visit to the Netherlands under this scheme. Visiting many places around the world on study leave May-December 2009 to pursue more in-depth research on Dutch Australians' maritime, military, migration and mercantile history and heritage, she delivered conference papers in Ancaster (near Toronto), Hamburg and Utrecht, and participated in workshops. This is an edited version of her report.

I booked an around-the-world ticket to the Netherlands to enable me to visit migration museums and resource centres in the USA, Canada and the UK on the way to research a 'best practice model' website for the preservation of immigrant's cultural heritage digitally; and towards establishing a Family Migration History Centre in the new development on Fremantle harbour, Western Australia. I also visited related institutions in Germany and Italy.

My main hosts in NL were The Royal Institute for South East Asian and Caribbean Studies (Koninklijke Instituut Land Taal Volkenkunde - KILTV) where, with support from my mentor *Dr Fridus Steijlen*, I specifically sought to work with the *KNOOPPUNT* (fasten together) oral history project; join the KITLV inner circle networks to study their fieldwork methods, analysis and collation of Dutch Indies data; and attend their combined seminars with the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) which is located in Leiden University - to extend my scientific knowledge of the area and to have input into the research team working on the institute's oral history projects, databases and publications; broaden my knowledge about the violence that took place in the Netherlands East Indies 1945/46 during what is known as the Bersiap Period that followed on from the 'Declaration of Independence' (by Sukarno) on 17 August 1945; and to gain more knowledge about the intelligence coming into Australia from the NEI and its impact on the role the Australian Maritime Unions in Australia played in the Indonesian Independence Movement.

The University of Amsterdam Media and Archival Studies Department were my second hosts. Here my focus was to increase my knowledge on archival records digitisation, privacy and technological considerations for the website: *Dutch Australians at a Glance (DAAAG) Virtual Centre and Portal* that I conceptualised to preserve the cultural heritage of Dutch Australians digitally with Emeritus Professor Eric van Ketelaar; and explore concepts of war, memory and commemoration with Rob van der Laarse (Professor Heritage Studies University of Amsterdam UvA) and Frank van Vee (historian and Professor of Journalism and Culture at UvA), authors of the 2009 publication *De Dynamiek van de Herinnering: Nederland en de Tweede Wereld Oorlog in een internationale context (The Dynamic of Commemoration: The Netherlands and WWII in an international context)*, Bert Bakker, Amsterdam.

I sought also to work with academics at Leiden University History Department, the Centre for International Heritage Activities (CIHA) in Leiden and the Institute for Dutch History (ING - Instituut Nederlands Geschiedenis) in The Hague who are working with me on the website.

While in the Netherlands I also established a working reference group in the Netherlands to internationalise the www.daaag.org website for the preservation of Dutch Australians' cultural heritage to include all countries of the Dutch diaspora and collect data at the National Archives, The Hague. I had discussions with fellow researchers and others at the Centre for International Heritage Activities, Institute Netherlands History, the Press Museum, Erasmus University, Bronbeek Museum, the Aboriginal Art Museum, Utrecht, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, and the Open Air Museum, Arnhem, among others.

The numerous follow-up activities, papers and networks listed in this indefatigable researcher's report include:

- I have assessed the information I gathered on migration museums and resource centres and digitisation in Canada, USA, UK, Holland, Germany and Italy and prepared a 9,500 word report detailing my findings for my reference group in the Netherlands

and for the Western Australian Government. Since arriving back in Australia the report has gained the support of the Fremantle Port Authority and the City of Fremantle who have offered to finance turning it into a business plan.

- UvA archivists assisted me to read original Dutch East India Company correspondence books for the 17th and 18th century at the National Archives. These were compiled at the Cape and sent on to Holland for archiving. My interest was in the ones that contain references to the *Zuiddorp*, *Vergulde Draak* and other ships that went down on the WA Coast. This research relates to my Dutch Embassy grant on Dutch Aborigines.
- I have submitted 2 X 6000-word (12000 words) articles on digitisation. One to the AEMI Journal and another to 'Crossing the Borders', Conference Proceedings.
- I have also submitted (by invitation) an 8000 word article on the Dutch in Australia for the *Journal of Economic and Social History* to be edited by Professor Marlou Schrover, Leiden University History Department and Marijke van Faassen Institute for Dutch History, The Hague.
- I have established a 'Hartog Commemorations Committee' in Australia and had meetings to raise awareness, organise collaborations and funds for bilateral and national activities to celebrate the 400th 1616-2016 anniversary of Dirk Hartog. He was the first European to officially visit WA and first to locate Australia on world cartographic maps.
- I have started working with the Netherlands Embassy in Canberra and the Australian Embassy in The Hague on the Hartog Commemoration for 2016.

The full report for those interested in this field is available from Will Douglas (assa.admin@anu.edu.au) in the Secretariat.

Vietnam Delegation visit

The Academy received a delegation from the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) on 28 January 2010. ASSA representatives had a productive meeting with the seven-member delegation. ASSA has invited VASS to reinstate a formal relationship between the two institutions via the implementation of a Joint-action Program along the lines of the current Australia-UK and Australia-France schemes. VASS is currently considering the Academy's proposal.

International Science Linkages (ISL) Grants

The first funding round of Joint-action Bilateral Research Grants has been completed. Two funding rounds are being conducted as part of the Academy's ISL-funded International Program. Given the short notification provided to researchers in Australia and partner countries the strong response to the first round has been gratifying.

A call for applications for the second round will be made in April 2010 and advertisements will be published soon. Based on interest in the first round, a good response from partners and Australian researchers is anticipated. Potential applicants should note that *partner countries in round two will vary from those in round one*.

The first round of Joint-action Bilateral Research Grants called for applications from teams of collaborative researchers which included at least one each from Australia and a designated partner country, in order to conduct a research project of up to one year which

involved face-to-face collaboration. Partner countries and applications received from each were as follows: Canada (29), Finland (4), Japan (2), Spain (1), Taiwan (13), UK (3) and USA (1).

Applications were reviewed by members of the International Committee and Workshop Committee and partner organisations. The Academy is pleased to announce the recipients of round one ISL Joint-action Bilateral Research Project grants as follows:

Canada

Professor John Sutton, Macquarie Centre for Cognitive Science, Macquarie University and *Professor Roger Dixon*, Department of Psychology, University of Alberta: 'Social remembering and distributed cognition in older couples'.

Dr Seyed Abdolhamed Hosseini Farradonbeh, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Newcastle and *Dr Khalid Mustafa Medani*, Department of Political Studies, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University: 'Political Islam and the formation of political identity among young Muslims in the west: a comparative study of Australian and Canadian cases'.

Associate Professor Sarah Wilson, School of Behavioural Science, University of Melbourne and *Professor Isabelle Peretz*, Department of Psychology, Université de Montreal: 'Using music to understand the organisation and rehabilitation of language'.

Finland

Professor Adam Graycar, Australian National University and *Dr Matti Joutsen*, Ministry of Justice, Finland: 'Controlling corruption - transnational issues'.

Dr Daud Timo Hassan, School of Law, University of Western Sydney and Research

Professor Matti Koivurova, Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law, Arctic Centre, University of Lapland: 'Maritime spatial planning system in the Baltic Sea region: lessons from the Great Barrier Reef mark'.

Japan

Professor Anthony Elliott, Flinders University and *Professor Masataka Katagiri*, Chiba University: 'The new individualism and Japanese society and economy'.

Associate Professor Karen Malone, University of Wollongong and *Professor Isami Kinoshita*, Chiba University: 'Independent mobility as a critical aspect of children's development and quality of life - a comparative analysis of Japanese and Australian children's lives'.

Spain

Dr Richard Woolley, Centre for Industry and Innovation Studies, University of Western Sydney and *Dr Carolina Canibano*, Institute of Knowledge and Innovation Management: 'Socio-economics of scientific and technical human capital'.

Taiwan

Dr Jean Burgess, ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, Queensland University of Technology and *Associate Professor Pai-Lin Chen*, Department of Journalism, College of Communication, National Chengchi University: 'Flood and fire: understanding public communications in times of crisis'.

Professor Mark Mosko, Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University and *Dr Shu-Ling Yeh*, Social Sciences Research Centre, National Science Council: 'Aboriginal Austronesians of Taiwan and contemporary anthropological theory'.

Professor Deborah Bird Rose, Macquarie University and *Associate Professor Yih-Ren Lin*, Providence University: 'Extinction in multi-species communities: moon bear case study'.
Professor Zhongwei Zhao, Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University and *Associate Professor Chingli Yang*, Institute of Gerontology, College of Medicine, National Cheng Kung University: 'A preliminary investigation into the long-term relationship between environmental factors and mortality in Taiwan'.

UK

Professor Alison Lee, University of Technology Sydney and *Professor Jill Thistlethwaite*, The University of Warwick: 'Developing an international research agenda in interprofessional learning and collaborative practice in health'.

Dr Valerie Harwood, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong and *Professor Julie Allan*, Stirling Institute of Education, University of Stirling: 'Child poverty in Australia and Scotland: Exploring the impact of the medicalisation of behaviour of children living in disadvantaged contexts'.

Research Program

'Children of the Recession' Research Project

The Academy's applicant to the ARC for Learned Academies Special Projects (LASP) funding for the period 2010-12 is the proposal 'Children of the Recession: The social consequences of an economic downturn' put forward by *Michael Bittman*, *Dorothy Broom*, *Duncan Ironmonger* and *Sue Richardson*.

The proposal 'Children of the Recession' was selected by the Research Committee as part of a competitive Call for Expressions of Interest from the ASSA Fellowship conducted between December 2009 and January 2010. The proposal from Bittman *et al* aims to exploit an opportunity provided by the global financial crisis to assess the impact of economic downturn. It has assembled an interdisciplinary team to study the effects of the severity of the downturn on family income and employment, non-market production, family functioning and child well-being in Australia, the USA and the UK, using existing major data sets. The project's findings will improve the evidence base for formulation of policy, provide important evidence about different policy settings in aiding recovery, and allow for better targeting of welfare expenditure. It will also demonstrate the practical value of advances in social science knowledge and provide valuable training and opportunities for early and mid career scholars.

In anticipation of a positive funding outcome from the ARC, the project was provided with some preliminary funding by the Academy to allow it to commence immediately and the project held its first workshop in Sydney on 16-18 February. The multidisciplinary workshop assembled social scientists from across Australia to discuss the social consequences of the economic downturn associated with the global financial crisis. The workshop discussed the nature of the current crisis, its origins in housing debt and how Australia may have escaped the worst impact. It also discussed which families are most vulnerable to the impacts of any economic downturn and how the current downturn had affected workplaces. Significant time was devoted to discussing the effects of downturns on the quality of parental employment, parental health (especially mental health) and child well-being. The participants agreed that the workshop had been a stimulating multi-disciplinary event and resolved to try to continue their collaborative efforts and to deepen their understanding of the effects of economic cycles.

The funding rules for the ARC's LASP scheme were amended in 2009, and the scheme will now operate on a three-yearly cycle. The Learned Academies will next apply for funding in late 2012 for the period 2013-15 inclusive.

Workshops Program

The Call for Proposals for the 2011-12 round of workshops opened in early March, and will close on 29 October 2010.

ISL International Workshops

As part of the Academy's International Science Linkages Program, the Workshops Committee called for proposals to receive up to \$20 000 for Workshops with an international focus. Workshops funded under this program must include at least two international researchers and serve to enhance international collaboration.

The Call for Proposals for International Workshops was opened on 16 February 2010, and will close on 30 April.

Recently Completed Workshops

'Unsettling the Settler State: Creativity and resistance in Indigenous settler-state governance'. Sarah Maddison, Morgan Brigg and Jon Altman: 22-23 February 2010.

'Philanthropy and Public Culture: The influence and legacies of the Carnegie Corporation of New York in Australia'. Kate Darian-Smith, Julie McLeod, Glenda Sluga and Barry McGaw; 24-25 February 2010.

'Ethics for Living in the Anthropocene'. Katherine Gibson, Deborah Bird Rose, Ruth Fincher; 7-9 February 2010.

Forthcoming Workshops

'The Public-Private Hybridisation of the 21st Century State. Linda Weiss (FASSA, USyd), Ronnie Lipshutz (UC Santa-Cruz), Beatrice Hibou (CERI, Paris): August 2010.

'Understanding Emotions: An interdisciplinary workshop'. Phillipa Maddern (UWA), David Badcock (FASSA, UWA) and Andrew Lynch (UWA): 24-25 September 2010.

'Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Intercountry Adoption in Australia: History, policy, practice and experience'. Denise Cuthbert (Monash), Shurlee Swain (FASSA, ACU) and Marian Quartly (Monash): 30 September – 1 October 2010.

'Contesting Neoliberalism and its Future'. Damien Cahill (USyd), Frank Stilwell (FASSA, USyd) and Belinda Edwards (ANU): 2-3 December 2010.

'Whither Australia's Children's Courts? Contemporary challenges and future prospects'. Allan Borowski (FASSA, La Trobe) and Rosemary Sheehan (Monash): date TBC.

'Migration and Diversity in Australia in 2030: Future scenarios and Australian migration research'. Stephen Castles (USyd), Graeme Hugo (FASSA, UAdel) and Ellie Vasta (UWS): date TBC.

Reports from workshops conducted under the Workshop Program, including policy recommendations, are published in *Dialogue*, usually in the first issue following the workshop.

Workshop Report

Sisters of Sisyphus?* Human service professions and the new public management

Gabrielle Meagher, Raewyn Connell and Barbara Fawcett

Human service professionals work with citizens at their most vulnerable - with children, with the frail aged, with the ill and with those affected by social risks such as disability, unemployment, exclusion, and violence. During the last two decades, profound organisational changes have swept through human service agencies, as the 'New Public Management' (NPM) has reshaped how and by whom human services are provided. Formerly public services have been privatised or contracted out, generic managers have replaced those specialised in human services, new modes of accountability and surveillance for both providers and service users have been enacted, and market concepts and frames have been imposed on the discourse and organisation of human services work. Significant changes to their working environments challenge theorists, policy researchers, policy makers, and human service professionals themselves to understand the implications of changes and to fashion responses that preserve or renew capacity to deliver humane and effective services. This workshop brought together researchers and professional leaders to explore the impact of the (now not so) new public management on the meaning, experience and organisation of professional work teaching, nursing, allied health and social work.

Many, perhaps most, human service professionals work in institutions such as schools, hospitals, and social welfare organisations. In the past, one would have, on reflex, called these 'bureaucratic' institutions, but one of the aims of NPM is to remake large organisations, particularly those in the public sector, along new 'post-bureaucratic' lines. One key dimension of this process of remaking organisations has been the introduction of new technologies, such as risk assessment tools, performance targets, new approaches to budgeting and standardised testing. These technologies change the way human services work is conceptualised, organised, managed, and measured within institutions providing - and experienced by - human service workers and service users.

Several participants presented findings on the impact of these developments at in a workshop sponsored by the ASSA and held October 2008. A paper by Professor Karen Healy (University of Queensland) examined how the competence, even the suitability, of social welfare professionals is currently being challenged by changes to policy and practice in the Queensland Department of Child Safety. In a context of rapidly escalating workforce turnover and some high profile system failures, the Department has reoriented the construction of the role of child welfare workers away from holistic, change-oriented relationships with service users towards risk management and forensic investigation, underpinned by detailed decision making tools and practice manuals. University-based training in human service disciplines such as social work is represented by the Department as both unsuitable and unnecessary preparation for the work, and the Department proposes to move to less 'restrictive' recruitment practices. Taken together, these kinds of developments are effectively de-professionalising an increasingly complex field of human services practice.

In education, de-professionalising is happening without replacing teachers with other categories of workers. The contribution of Professor Marie Brennan (University of South Australia) explored how successive waves of neoliberal changes in education policy since

the 1980s have sought to control teachers' work. Steering mechanisms - standardised testing of students, centralisation of curricula, and codification of teachers' knowledge and practice into 'standards' - have been introduced to judge the value of teachers' work and its 'outcomes', replacing the broad ethic of 'service' for the public good that previously operated at a common sense level.

De-professionalisation is also happening in nursing, as the management of nursing in hospitals is being removed from nurses and handed over to generalist managers. Contributions by Professor Mary Chiarella and by Stuart Newman and Professor Jocelyn Lawler (all University of Sydney) examined how changes in hospital organisation are effectively sidelining nurse managers from the management of clinical services, and decoupling professional and clinical lines of reporting. Overall, a loss of capacity for nurse managers to lead in clinical practice and to participate in policy development has resulted, partly because of new organisational structures, and partly because of the growth in their workload as more, and sicker, patients move faster through hospital systems.

Behind these developments is fundamental scepticism about professionalism, apart from professional 'management', in the discourse and practices of NPM. It would be a mistake to dismiss the devaluation of professionalism in human services as little more than a setback for a group of mostly women, who are aspiring to higher social and economic status. Participants in the workshop discussed how developments directly affect the quality of services available to the most disadvantaged Australians. One basic problem, particularly evident in education and social work, is that the least experienced human service professionals are frequently placed in the most difficult jobs, with inadequate resources. Many schools in disadvantaged areas have a high proportion of recent graduates on their staff. Inexperience and rapid turnover among teachers make it difficult for schools to consolidate their role as hubs for community development in locations with significant need. In services like child protection, turnover and inexperience can have catastrophic consequences for individual families.

Clearly, one key way that New Public Management has changed human service organisations is through (re)defining in particular ways the role and appropriate ways of working of these organisations and the practitioners they employ. Thus there is a clear discursive politics in play, as problems and their solutions are reframed. Dr Toni Schofield took up these issues in her analysis of the technocratic 'problem definition' that prevails in the field of workforce planning for the feminised allied health professions. The context for her study is the critical workforce shortages predicted for the health professions, including allied health. Schofield shows how the prevailing problem definition fails to grasp the *gendered dynamics* of the organisation and practice of health service work, and so throws up limited solutions that are unlikely to remedy the underlying problem.

In his contribution, Associate Professor John Germov (University of Newcastle) showed that the impacts of managerial technologies are complex and context specific, and do not invariably cut across professional ideals nor reduce professional autonomy. His research has explored the experience of professionals in the health care system who chose to participate in a new form of work organisation based on multi-disciplinary teams. He found that different kinds of team structures emerged in different contexts with different impacts on professional autonomy.

Another problem, which demands further investigation, is the *cost* of the monitoring, measuring and managing of human services work in the intensive modes currently operating. How many resources are being diverted away from education, social work and nursing to undertake these activities? Pressures to increase efficiency and cut costs seem

pervasive, despite sustained and high economic growth in recent decades, and so human service professionals are being squeezed by demands to 'do more with less' and 'work smarter', while also being measured, monitored and controlled in new ways. These are demoralising working conditions, and workshop participants believed that standards are being maintained in human services, paradoxically, by exploiting what we might call the old fashioned public service ethics of human service workers.

Despite the sense that human service professionals are, like Sisyphus, engaged in an apparently endless uphill struggle, participants in the workshop discussed spaces and strategies for resistance within organisations dominated by NPM ideas. In her contribution to the workshop, Professor Barbara Fawcett argued that the ideas of 'community', 'participation' and 'social entrepreneurship' that have been central to 'Third Way' social policy can be re-appropriated to facilitate meaningful participation in by people in decisions that affect their lives. By paying attention to the dynamics of power in places, and by thinking creatively and collaboratively about genuinely engaging people, human service professionals can open up space to reconfigure and rework NPM and Third Way approaches to re-forge social connections. In her contribution, Professor Raewyn Connell (University of Sydney) offered a compelling account of the deleterious impact of neo-liberalism on teaching, education, and society more broadly. Yet she also concluded on a note of (very cautious) optimism, remarking that 'resistance to neoliberal agendas in education does occur, and can be effective – at least in the short run'.

In the wide-ranging and spirited discussion around the papers, workshop participants also identified a range of positive strategies for the education and professional development of human service practitioners in the challenging environments they face. Participants particularly relished the opportunity to discuss common concerns and potential for collaboration across the boundaries of professional disciplines and organisations. Academic participants offered both strong encouragement and some pointed challenges for moving forward: contesting technologies such as NPM is intellectual as well as practical, and involves resisting a Cassandra-like position that sees neoliberalism and NPM sweep all before them. These academic participants included Associate Professor Jenny Lewis (University of Melbourne) and Dr Lesley Scanlon (University of Sydney). Professional leaders from unions and professional associations contributed both further evidence and nuance to the research claims made in the papers. These professional leaders included Ms Jenni Devereaux from the Australian Education Union, Ms Marcia Gleeson from the Australian Nursing Federation, Professor Bob Lonne, President of the Australian Association of Social Workers, and Dr Nicole Mockler, independent educational consultant.

Several papers from the workshop have been recently published in a special issue of the *Journal of Sociology* entitled 'Neoliberalism, New Public Management and the human service professions', edited by Raewyn Connell, Barbara Fawcett and Gabrielle Meagher (Volume 45, 4, December 2009).

*Condemned to roll uphill a huge marble block, which as soon as it reached the top, always rolled back down again.

