

Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

“The Committee will inquire into and report on the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring”

SUBMISSION

5 March 2013

This submission makes observations about the Indigenous Marathon Project (“the Project”).

The Project is a non-Indigenous intervention program in the private sector which is owned and administered by Rob de Castella’s SmartStart for Kids Limited (“SmartStart”). The Project’s mission is to contribute through sport and recreation (the sport of distance running and the recreational activity of walking) to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring.

A major element of the Project’s aims and objectives is to identify and train young Indigenous athletes to run a marathon – and consequently become community **role models** and **mentors**.

Observations are made in my role as the first Project Coach in 2009-2010 who was recruited for my background in the Indigenous community to establish and maintain the Project’s field operations in the remote Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory. A description of the duties I performed as Project Coach is at **Attachment A** of this submission and a description of my qualifications and experience for the position is at **Attachment B**.

During my employment I noticed a number of flaws and weaknesses in the Project which I believe impacted unfavorably on the attainment of the Project’s short- and long-term aims and objectives, particularly the stated aims of identifying, educating and encouraging young Indigenous athletes to become role models and mentors in their communities..

I hope that my observations may prove useful in the future implementation of similar initiatives in the Indigenous community, particularly initiatives which are owned and operated by non-Indigenous individuals and organizations.

In making this submission, I wish to emphasise that I do so as a continuing supporter of the Project’s mission to promote healthy lifestyles in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through the sport of marathon running and recreational walking activities.

John Bell

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MAIN POINTS

- 1. The Indigenous Marathon Project is a non-Indigenous intervention program which seeks to provide benefits for the Indigenous community by having a favorable impact on Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring through sport and other healthy lifestyle activities.**
- 2. As a high public profile private sector initiative which has attracted national and international public attention and is in receipt of significant federal government funding, the Indigenous Marathon Project presents itself as a best management program delivery model to be imitated by other organisations in Indigenous sport and healthy lifestyle development.**
- 3. This submission identifies flaws and weaknesses in the Indigenous Marathon Project's program delivery processes during the first two years of the Project in 2009 and 2010 which had an unfavorable impact on Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring, and threatened to compromise the Project's aims and objectives.**
- 4. The identification of these flaws and weaknesses is intended to assist organisations in the future development of best management program delivery of sport and healthy lifestyle initiatives in the Indigenous community.**

THE INDIGENOUS MARATHON PROJECT

A Non-Indigenous Intervention Program

1. There is a long history of public criticism of federal government-funded, non-Indigenous intervention programs which seek to provide benefits to remote Indigenous communities, but which have failed to deliver, or have been compromised in their program delivery.
2. Such programs have been criticised by the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community alike as ill-conceived, poorly executed ‘fly-in-fly-out’ initiatives from the “Big Smoke”.
3. A variety of factors has been responsible for program failure or lack of long term effectiveness. Factors include (1) a general lack of knowledge of the remote Indigenous community, (2) misconceived notions of community aspirations and needs, (3) lack of community consultation and (4) a failure to fully identify and properly utilize appropriate local community program support mechanisms when implementing of the program.
4. Monitored from afar, program management periodically visits the targeted remote communities on a short-stay, flying visit basis to implement and monitor progress.
5. As a high public profile initiative which in 2013 is receiving favorable national media coverage and has been the recipient of significant public funding, the Project is seen by the wider Australian public as an ideal model to be adopted by other non-Indigenous initiatives which promote the wellbeing in remote Indigenous communities through sport and a healthy lifestyle.
6. However, during the first two years of its operation in 2009 and 2010, the Indigenous Marathon Project (“the Project”) showed signs of making the same mistakes made by past programs.

Misguided Notions

7. The Project was first conceived as an idea for a film in 2009 by a non-Indigenous film company based in Sydney, Good Oil Films Ltd (“Good Oil”), to identify young Indigenous potential marathon runners in remote communities of Central Australia, and to film their preparation and journey to compete in the 2010 New York Marathon.
8. Good Oil took the proposal to Rob de Castella’s SmartStart for Kids Limited (“SmartStart”), a non-Indigenous not-for-profit organisation based in Canberra¹.

¹ The Project’s origin is described in an article titled ‘Marathon Men – Road Runners’ in *The Brisbane Courier Mail Q Weekend Magazine* 25-26 September 2010: ‘Matt Long is a film maker....decided to make his fist documentary: a film about a group of indigenous runners, taken from the remote outback of Australia and transported to one of the

9. When Good Oil floated the idea to SmartStart, both held a misconceived notion that there existed in the Central Australian Aboriginal communities a culture of distance and marathon running and that there existed in those communities potential Olympic marathon champions, similar to Kenyan African Olympic marathon runners.
10. Although misconceived, this notion was understandable at the time. Not only Good Oil and SmartStart, but many in the wider Australian community who are urban-based and who have had no contact with the Indigenous community hold a stereotypical, but untested notion that Indigenous Australians and Indigenous Africans have genetic similarities in sport, and in the sport of distance running particularly.
11. At the outset, SmartStart management announced that the Project was looking for potential Olympic marathon running talent that it believed existed in the remote Indigenous community, and which could be identified and fast tracked to represent Australia in the 2012 London Olympic Games.
12. In March 2009, through the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Institute of Sport, a notice calling for athletes was posted in remote Indigenous communities throughout Australia².
13. The media picked up this message of Indigenous Olympic talent in outback Australia and ran with it throughout the first two years of the Project.
14. During 2009 and 2010, SmartStart management continued to hold the misplaced notion that there were Indigenous athletes in remote communities could be fast-tracked as marathon runners to the 2012 London Olympics and encouraged the media to promote this notion.
15. In the article *'Marathon Men – Road Runners'* in *The Brisbane Courier Mail* of 25-26 September 2010, Project management was reported to be *'stunned'* by the improvement of the four Indigenous athletes in the few months that they had been training for the New York Marathon, and that one of the Project athletes *'in particular could make the Australian team for London 2012.....These guys have so much talent it's incredible.'*
16. However, it was realized very early in the Project from the 300 applications received from around Australia that despite recorded incidents of long distance endurance feats by Indigenous men and women in remote communities³, there was no current culture of

biggest cities in the world...where they would run a marathon...Long put his ideas on paper and went to see (Rob) de Castella in Canberra.....De Castella's first call was to the Australian Sports Commission'.

² As described in *'Marathon Men – Road Runners'*, the notice to remote communities asked three questions *'Do you want to go to New York? Do you want to meet rapper P.Diddy? Do you want to run a marathon?'* The notice attracted 300 expressions of interest, but only three applicants from the Northern Territory.

³ In 1922, Hezekiel Malbunka, a young Arrente tribal man from the Hermannsburg community in Central Australia ran in to Alice Springs to get help for a sick missionary Carl Strehlow, returning to the community, a distance of 260kms, in a little over two days, beating men on horseback. The grandmother of one of the first four Project

marathon running or distance running in the Indigenous community, nor were there Indigenous athletes in the remote community who could be fast-tracked to London in 2012.

17. It was evident from the very beginning of the Project to athletic expert organizations and individuals in the Northern Territory remote communities from which the first four pioneering Project athletes were subsequently selected that, as courageous and committed as the athletes were, none of the four displayed the potential to be fast-tracked to the London Olympics. The athletes themselves freely admitted that they had no aspirations to be marathon professionals and that they were simply promising AFL footballers who were accepting the marathon as a new life challenge.
18. The focus of the Project subsequently evolved from seeking fast-track Olympic marathon potential during 2009 and 2010 to concentration on educating selected young athletes to become role models and mentors in promoting healthy lifestyles within their individual remote communities.
19. However, it was a shift that came too late during the Project's operations in 2009 and 2010. By that time, the Project's focus on developing athlete role models and mentoring was lost in the wider public perception which had taken hold in the media that this was a non-Indigenous initiative from Canberra to identify Indigenous marathon Olympians in the bush.
20. When the four athletes had successfully completed the 2010 New York Marathon it was finally accepted and recognized by the public and all concerned that the pioneering Project athletes were not Olympic aspirants.
21. Consequently, Project management made a more realistic re-assessment of its Olympic representation goals, and from 2011 lowered its expectations from Indigenous Olympians at the marathon distance to shorter distances, and has extended the Olympic Games target to Rio in 2016
22. In 2013 the Project now focuses primarily on a healthy lifestyle program in the community in which the young athletes who trained to run the marathon are trained to become role models and mentors in their communities because of their New York Marathon experience.
23. The Project's 2013 website now states: ***The Indigenous Marathon Project: 1. Uses the marathon to change lives 2. Creates Indigenous Champions to increase physical activity and promote healthy lifestyles 3. Aims to have an Indigenous distance runner in the 2016 Australian Olympic Team.***

athletes in 2010, Yulgnu man Juan Darwin, regularly walked many hundreds of kilometers from the community of Maningrida into Darwin and back with other tribal ladies during the 1950s

OBSERVATIONS

24. Direct community consultation with the intended beneficiaries of a program such as this Project is a fundamental operational principle that underpins all publicly funded initiatives by the federal government in the Indigenous community.⁴
25. Prior to the launching of the Project through the Australian Sports Commission in 2009, Project management failed to consult with the remote communities that were being targeted during its first two years of operation in the Northern Territory.
26. Had Project management done so, the misconceived notion of Aboriginal marathon runners in the Northern Territory who could be fast-tracked to the 2012 London Olympics would have been addressed, allowing the Project to focus on more appropriate objectives in its first two years of operation.

FIELD OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS

27. The Indigenous Marathon Project got off to a poor start in 2009 by approaching the Australian Institute of Sport with its misplaced notions of Aboriginal Olympic marathon potential in the remote communities of the Northern Territory.
28. In the general perception of the wider Australian public, the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra are elite athlete institutions.
29. When the Commission issued a notice in March 2009 to all Indigenous communities throughout Australia calling for applicants, this sent a message to everyone that the Project's objective was to identify talented Aboriginal marathon athletes who would become Olympians.

1. ⁴ The generally accepted principle of community consultation of all government-funded *special measures* initiatives in the Indigenous community is articulated by Justice Gerard Brennan in *Gerhady v Brown* (1985) 159 CLR 70 (28 February 1985) 37: "Advancement" is not necessarily what the person who takes the measure regards as a benefit for the beneficiaries. The purpose of securing advancement for a racial group is not established by showing that the branch of government or the person who takes the measure does so for the purpose of conferring what it or he regards as a benefit for the group if the group does not seek or wish to have the benefit. The dignity of the beneficiaries is impaired and they are not advanced by having an unwanted material benefit foisted on them.' The International Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has stated: 'parties should ensure that special measures are designed and implemented on the basis of prior consultation with affected communities and the active participation of such communities (see Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General Recommendation 32(2009), The meaning and scope of special measures in the ICERD UN Doc A/64/18 (Annex VIII) at <http://www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/cerdccomments.htm>) The Committee calls upon parties to ICERD to: ensure that members of indigenous peoples have equal rights in respect of effective participation in public life, and that no decisions directly relating to their rights and interest are taken without their informed consent(general Recommendation No.23)

30. When this message was picked up by the media and re-inforced throughout the first two years of the Project it created problems for the Project Coach, whose job was to identify potential athletes and to establish the Project's base of field operations in the Northern Territory.
31. The notice sent to the communities by the Australian Sports Commission was driven by the demands of the Good Oil documentary '*Running to America*', which required that the Project athletes selected for the 2010 New York Marathon were to be teenagers from remote communities in the Northern Territory, preferably from the desert communities of Central Australia.
32. On the list of 300 applicants of all age groups and all States and Territories, there were only three from the Northern Territory, and the first labor-intensive duty for the Project Coach on commencing employment in April 2009 was to contact approximately 297 applicants to inform them that they were ineligible, either because of their location or their age. It was extremely time wasting and caused embarrassment for all concerned.
33. On regular travel to the Northern Territory to establish the field operational base during 2009 and 2010, the Project Coach was met with well-justified skepticism of Project management's London Olympic expectations from the athletic distance running experts who lived locally - particularly the Alice Springs Running and Walking Club, the Darwin Running Club, and the Sports Development Officers and physical education school teachers who lived and worked with sport in the communities.
34. There is a long history of athletic running events including distance running in remote Northern Territory Indigenous communities. For example, there is the annual Yuendumu Sports Weekend in Central Australia which was established in 1962 and the Barunga Sports Carnival, established in the Top End in the late 1970s.
35. These local experts know the existing sporting culture in remote communities and they understand the demands of Olympic marathon representation. They found it hard to believe that Project management would seek to promote the unrealistic notion of elite marathon running potential in their community which could be fast-tracked to Olympic representation.
36. They expressed surprise and concern that they had not been consulted before the Project was launched, as they would have been happy to appraise Project management of the reality of marathon running in the remote Indigenous community, and would have provided practical advice on how to implement the Project's healthy lifestyle goals.
37. It was a difficult task for the Project Coach who identified the pioneering athletes for the Project from AFL team sport and set their training programs for New York, to have to re-assure the athletes and their families that Project management did not expect any of them to be Olympians, the image being portrayed in the media.

38. The community expectation with which the Project athletes were burdened, simply to take on the challenge of a full marathon in New York, and to be filmed trying to do it, was stressful enough. For them to carry the extra burden of unrealistic public perception of their Olympic potential within the wider community was, to use the vernacular of Indigenous youth, a significant '*shame job*.'
39. In interviews with the local media of the Northern Territory it became necessary to explain that the first four Project athletes were not expected to be Olympians, that they were AFL footballers accepting a daunting marathon challenge, and that the Project's objectives were primarily about developing young athlete **role models** and **mentors** in a community healthy lifestyle Project.

OBSERVATIONS

40. The field operational problems during the first two years of the Project were initially generated by Project management's failure to consult with the remote Indigenous communities who were the intended beneficiaries of the program, prior to launching the Project in March 2009 through the Australian Sports Commission.
41. The problems were exacerbated by Project management's failure to identify and consult the established local expert authorities and potential support organisations and individuals, prior to launching the Project in 2009.

PROJECT FUNDING

42. The deadlines set by the Good Oil documentary '*Running to America*' in 2009 pressured SmartStart to get the Project operational in the field as quickly as possible.
43. Consequently, when the Project was launched through the Australian Sports Commission in 2009 it had no funding and existed on a wing and a prayer financially throughout 2009 and into the early months of 2010.
44. Initial grant applications by Project management to the Department of Health and Ageing focused on obtaining funding to identify Aboriginal potential marathon champions and give them an opportunity to run in the New York Marathon. Because they did not meet departmental guidelines, the applications were rejected.
45. Consequently, by March 2010, the Project was under serious threat of being abandoned through lack of funding.
46. In an article titled '*Deek faces funding marathon for running program*' in *The Sun-Herald* of 7 March 2010, it was reported that the Project was on the brink of *being abandoned unless a further \$500,000* was obtained.
47. Project management was reported saying about early public funding submissions to the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) '*I was very disappointed with the knockback*

from Health and I've contacted them to ask why it wasn't successful. We sought funds under the national anti-binge-drinking program, looking at getting our kids involved in promoting responsible alcohol use, but it was rejected. I was staggered. The explanation in the letter just doesn't stack up.'

48. Funding for initiatives such as the Project is a prime consideration in the Indigenous and wider community. In discussions with community-based sporting organizations in the Northern Territory who were seeking government funding for similar sporting and healthy lifestyle programs, and who had been given the notion that this SmartStart Project was to identify potential Olympians, the Project Coach was frequently asked how much public funding the program received.
49. These organisations were extremely critical of a Project which they considered to be a non-Indigenous 'fly-in-fly-out' initiative based in Canberra which they were led to believe from media reports was an elite athlete initiative which benefited only a handful of athletes and did not appear to satisfy community benefits criteria that justified any public funding
50. When substantial federal government funding of \$500,000 for the Project from the Department of Health and Ageing was announced towards the end of 2010⁵, a number of organizations expressed puzzlement and anger, at how SmartStart could meet the community benefit criteria demanded by federal government funding agencies in receiving such a large grant

OBSERVATIONS

51. It was unfortunate for Project management that the *Sun-Herald* reported that applications for Project funding had been rejected because they did not meet federal government criteria. It suggested to organisations who were experienced in program delivery in remote Indigenous communities, and who believed at the time that the Project was all about identifying a handful of Olympic athlete beneficiaries, that Project management did not have an appropriate grasp of public funding criteria in this area.
52. The increased criticism which followed the subsequent announcement of substantial public funding of \$500,000 was understandable, but could have been avoided.
53. In my opinion, Project management should have resisted the timeline demands of the documentary.
54. Public criticism of the Project would have been minimised if Project management had consulted with the community, familiarised itself with departmental guidelines, and applied for and received public funding before launching the Project's field operations.

⁵ A joint media release dated 8 November 2010 from Minister Macklin, Minister Arbib and Minister Snowdon announced that the Indigenous Marathon Project had been awarded a grant of \$500,000 for its first two years of operation.

ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS – SUPPORT IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

55. The challenge for the Project Coach in establishing the field operations of the Project in 2009 was to turn the community's attention from the identification of potential Olympians in the short term to the identification of young athletes who had the potential to not only complete the 2010 New York Marathon but who had the potential to become **role models** and **mentors** for community-based lifestyle programs in their own communities which provided participation for all.
56. Project management was faced with the challenge of imparting the rudimentary elements of role model behaviour and mentoring skills to the young pioneer Project athletes.
57. However, a non-Indigenous Project management based in Canberra could not be expected to be fully aware of all the factors that pertain to an Indigenous individual athlete's understanding of appropriate role models in sport, or what an ideal role model is in the remote Aboriginal community, let alone be aware of tribal community expectations of appropriate mentor behaviour.
58. For example, while the non-indigenous community would no doubt see the non-Indigenous former world champion marathon runner Project Director to be an ideal role model in this type of sporting Project, it is a fact that in the Aboriginal community young people prefer Indigenous role models such as Cathy Freeman, Kurtley Beale, Nova Peris, Greg Inglis and Lance Franklin⁶.
59. Nor could non-Indigenous, Canberra-based Project management be expected to be aware of local community cultural pressures that affect athlete and mentor behaviour. For example, in the lead-up to the 2010 New York Marathon, two weeks before the event, the sister of one of the Project athletes made it known to the Alice Springs Running and Walking Club that the athlete's mother was concerned about the effect that competing in the New York Marathon would have on the athlete; the athlete *"had been gifted special Indigenous healing power and his mother was concerned that the marathon would damage him in this regard."*⁷
60. Therefore, it was a vital first step towards teaching and encouraging the young pioneer Project athletes to become role models and mentors that Project management establish a suitable and knowledgeable local support system in the athletes' individual communities .

⁶ In her 1999 study "School Sport Concept of Urban Aboriginal School Children: teacher Influences" for the AARE-NZARE National Conference, Aboriginal academic Cheryl S Kicket-Tucker concludes that "sport is perceived as an important element of Aboriginal students' self-concepts because of their opportunities to demonstrate their sport and physical competence. This is evident in Aboriginal student' perceptions of their role models. The majority of students preferred Aboriginal sport role models because of their demonstrated competence....Demonstration of sport competence by Aboriginal role models made students feel proud of their Aboriginality..and demonstrated that sport provided an opportunity for Aborigines to prove their worth and gain acceptance and equality from the wider community""

⁷ Outlined in a letter dated 11 November 2011 from the Alice Springs Running and Walking Club to the Project Coach.

61. Three people in the respective Project athlete communities were identified by the Project Coach for this task in 2010 and all three feature prominently in the Project documentary *'Running to America'* which was filmed Australia-wide on ABC television on 1 December 2011.
62. Senior Constable Naomi Beale of NT Police was an experienced mentor of youth and a High Schools Liason Officer who worked with Indigenous students. Also a marathon runner and committee member of the Alice Springs Running and Walking Club, Senior Constable Beale mentored Project athletes Charlie Maher and Caleb Hart from Alice Springs. Naomi is a true Territorian, having lived her whole life in the mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous community of the NT.
63. AFP Commander Andy Wharton in Darwin was assigned to mentor Maningrida athlete Juan Darwin. As a career AFP officer, Andy specialized in inter-community public relations and made it his business to get to know Juan's community circumstances in Maningrida.
64. High school teacher and endurance triathlete Gary Dagg mentored Project athlete Joseph Davies in Kununurra. Gary had worked with Joseph and his family in difficult social circumstances through High School, and Joseph now credits Gary with being a significant positive influence at a critical time in his life
65. In conjunction with Project management, these three mentors played a critical and invaluable role, ensuring by their own example in the local community that the Project athletes came to an understanding of what becoming a role model and mentor in their respective communities entailed.
66. As Team Manager and Assistant Team Manager respectively of the Project team that went to New York in November 2010 for the Marathon, Naomi and Andy played a further significant mentoring education and support role for the athletes during their first overseas competition experience.
67. Following the success of the four Project athletes in New York, the Project Coach's services were terminated in the Project.
68. Andy was transferred overseas in his AFP career, and Gary was transferred as a teacher to Perth WA, leaving Juan and Joseph to fend for themselves in their communities as fledgeling role models and mentors.
69. Although Naomi remained in Alice Springs in 2011 and 2012, Project management no longer involved her in the mentoring of new Project athletes from Central Australia, nor did Project management provide for her to be involved in any ongoing role model or mentoring education support for Charlie or Caleb.

70. As far as I am aware, Project management did not move to replace Naomi, Andy and Gary with any ongoing local community role model and mentoring support for the four pioneering Project athletes of those first two years.

OBSERVATIONS

71. In failing to provide ongoing local support for the first four Project athletes after 2010, Project management gave an appearance that it did not fully understand or appreciate this vital need for continuing local community support for young athletes who were still in the early stages of learning the ropes as community role models and mentors.
72. A reasonable observer would expect that Naomi, who as mentor for two Project athletes had invested substantially more voluntary time and effort into her role in the Project than anyone else in the field operations in the Northern Territory, would have been retained in an ongoing role as local mentor and Project Team Manager.
73. Project management's failure to retain the services of Senior Constable Beale as an experienced Project mentor, and the termination of the services of the Project Coach who had been responsible for establishing the Project's mentoring support structure sent an unfavorable message to the local community in Central Australia, where the Project continues to focus its remote community activities in 2013.
74. The message is that Project management takes this vital support for granted and considers field staff to be expendable. It does not augur well for the future operations of a Project that depends overwhelmingly on voluntary field support and community goodwill.

THE SANTA TERESA/LHERE ARTEPE FUN RUN

75. In order to turn public awareness to the wider healthy lifestyle and community benefits objectives of the Project, the Project Coach role involved implementing a community 3k/1k Fun Run and 1k Walk event in the tribal Arrente community of Santa Teresa/Lhere Artepe, a community of 600 people approximately 80kms south east of Alice Springs.
76. Santa Teresa is a major Arrente tribal community with a proud AFL sporting tradition. In 2010, the Santa Teresa "Saints" won the all-NT community championship at the MCG in Melbourne, playing before a crowd of 90,000 spectators in the curtain raiser to the AFL Grand Final.
77. In that first early stage of the Project, a potential athlete for New York had been identified in the Santa Teresa community.
78. The purpose of the event Santa Teresa Fun Run was to identify, bring together and promote all the desirable support and funding awareness elements required for the Project to achieve its objectives.

79. With the community council's approval, a number of people and organisations were invited to take part, for specific reasons.
80. The Alice Springs Running Club coordinated and conducted the 3k Fun Run and 1k Walk through the streets of Santa Teresa. Charles Darwin University Alice Springs Campus donated \$3,000 towards costs and Apex donated personnel to run food and refreshment barbecue afterwards. Santa Teresa's primary school students were participants and the community Health Centre gave medical support.
81. Project athletes Caleb Hart and Charlie Maher competed in their first-ever competition Fun Run as part of the training program for New York, and their mentor Senior Constable Beale supervised their participation.
82. Charles Darwin University funded a group of 15 wonderful ladies who had been invited to participate from the tribal community of Atitjere (Harts Range) in the NT's Sandover River region. They traveled for 12 hours in a rickety old hired mini-bus through inhospitable country in 45 degree heat to participate in the 1k Walk as a social statement in their own community anti-grog and healthy living campaign. Their leader was a vision-impaired elder whose white cane was conspicuous as she walked.
83. The SBS *'Living Black'* program travelled from Sydney to film the event. Program presenter Karla Grant donned her running shoes as an indigenous female mentor for Project athlete hopeful Roberta Long in the Fun Run.
84. NT Minister for Sport Karl Hampton competed, as did federal Minister Warren Snowdon, NT Police Superintendent Sean Parnell and Alice Springs ABC radio identity Stuart Brash.
85. A tribal elder of the Arrente tribal council presented the trophies and prizes, while Project athletes Charlie Maher, Caleb Hart and their mentoring support Senior Constable Beale were presented to the community as examples of the Project's role model and mentoring education program.
86. In all, there were 200 participants in the Santa Teresa Fun Run. Of the participants, 90 per cent were Aboriginal and 60 per cent were female.
87. The Santa Teresa Fun Run was subsequently featured in the SBS *'Living Black'* program that went to air nationally on 1 March 2010.
88. Good Oil filmed the event for the DVD documentary *'Running to America'* which went to air Australia-wide on ABC television on 1 December 2011.
89. Nine weeks after the Santa Teresa Fun Run, on 28 April 2010, Minister Snowdon's Department of Health and Ageing approved a grant of \$187,291.50 as the first of a total grant of \$501,265.50 for the first two years of the Project.

OBSERVATIONS

90. The Santa Teresa Fun Run of 21 February 2010 was the first community Fun Run event to be staged to my knowledge in a Central Australian remote tribal community. With all of its organizational elements, it was the ideal vehicle to promote the Project's holistic aims and objectives in the wider Indigenous community.
91. More than any other single event in first two years of the Project, the Santa Teresa Fun Run was the model that presented the wider Australian public with the right balanced perspective on the overall program objectives that the Project was trying to achieve.
92. To my knowledge, Project management has not returned to the Santa Teresa/Lhere Artepe community since 2010.

THE DEADLY FUN RUN SERIES

93. The *Deadly Fun Run Series* is a series of Fun Runs and Walks in remote Indigenous communities that commenced in 2011, one year after the Santa Teresa Fun Run. The *Series* is the single community event that underpins the Project's community-based activities, and is described on its 2013 website as:

An Indigenous Marathon Project initiative that introduces running and walking to remote communities in a fun, non-intimidating environment for indigenous men, women and children. A 1km fun run / walk and a 3-5km run took place in a number of communities in 2011 and 2012, with the hope of expanding in 2013 and beyond.

94. Like the Santa Teresa Fun Run, the *Series* event consists of a 3k and 1k run and a 1k walk, for everyone in the community. Like the Santa Teresa Fun Run, the *Series* event is a major vehicle to showcase Project athletes as role models and mentors for their community.
95. The *Series* features a 'grand final' Fun Run event at Uluru, in which the Project athlete winners of each community Fun Run compete against each other for a further prize.
96. In 2012 the Project staged a *Deadly Fun Run* event in four remote communities and has plans, as advertised on the Project website, to expand the *Series* to a further six remote communities in 2013.

OBSERVATIONS

97. In 2013, the Santa Teresa Fun Run is not an event in the *Deadly Fun Run Series*, nor was it included in 2011 or 2012.

98. Project management is on the public record in 2012 stating that *'the Deadly Fun Run Series has nothing to do with the Santa Teresa Fun Run. It is a far more reaching and wider program than one fun run in one little community'*.
99. Project management does not appear to be aware that Santa Teresa is far more than *one little community* – it is a major Arrente tribal community in Central with a proud sporting tradition.
100. In 2013, the people of Santa Teresa are certainly aware of the *Deadly Fun Run Series*, especially as the 'grand final' event is staged at Uluru in Central Australia. Project management's failure to include a Fun Run at Santa Teresa in the *Series* sends a negative message to the Arrente people whose generosity and acceptance of the Project's objectives ensured the success of the project in its first two fragile years. It also sends a negative message to other remote Indigenous communities which the Project is targeting with the *Series*.
101. There is little doubt that the people of Santa Teresa would be puzzled and offended by the Project's rejection of their community. As the former Project Coach who has had a longstanding relationship with that community since 1968, and who went to them in 2010 as the representative of a non-Indigenous initiative from Canberra seeking their generosity, I feel embarrassed and ashamed to have let these good people down.
102. In my opinion, non-Indigenous initiatives in remote Indigenous communities would be well advised not to treat communities in the manner that the Santa Teresa community has been treated by the Project in the *Deadly Fun Run Series*.
103. I would be grateful for any opportunity to return to the community with Project management to say 'thank you.' I would be happy to pay my own expenses to do so.

THE DEADLY FUN RUN SERIES - OTHER CONCERNS

104. Project management's intention is to establish a *whole new culture* of marathon and distance running in Indigenous communities, mainly through *The Deadly Fun Run Series*.
105. Since the first four Project athletes went to New York in 2010, Project athletes have been drawn increasingly from urban and semi-urban communities where Fun Runs are readily available in the wider community.
106. For these urban and semi-urban based athletes and their communities, the Fun Run is not such a critical benefit element.
107. However, for Project athletes in isolated remote communities such as Maningrida, Yirrkala and Aurukun, the community Fun Run is absolutely vital to the establishment and growth of the Project's stated aims of introducing and cementing a *whole new culture* of distance running and walking as a healthy lifestyle activity.

108. In my opinion, the Project Fun Run culture in remote indigenous communities is in a fragile state as the Project heads into 2013. In some ways, the current situation is reminiscent of a Christian *cargo cult* movement that took root in outstation communities in the Balgo region of WA during the 1970s.
109. This revivalist movement gained huge overnight momentum, sweeping down through the Western Desert regions of WA across the border into the Tanami and Sandover River regions of the NT.
110. The movement swept into the Wailbri tribal community of Yuendumu, 295kms NW of Alice Springs, at the time of the annual Yuendumu Sports Weekend, which I attended regularly. On a memorable Saturday night under the stars in front of a crowd of 2000 tribal sportspeople from all over Central Australia, Aboriginal born-again Christian preachers in black suits, white shirts and thin black ties exhorted sinners in the crowd to come up onto the makeshift semi-trailer stage and repent their sins, to the wonderful hand-clapping hallelujah country and western gospel tunes of the *Areyonga Tigers* and *Warumpi* bands.
111. It was a fantastic event and got everyone buzzing with excitement, before continuing to other remote NT communities. However, because it had no strong support base, it peaked and began to wane within a period of a little more than two years, fading away quickly on the Tanami desert wind until it disappeared altogether.
112. The Project's *Deadly Fun Run Series* has worrying similarities. It is a fantastic community event with potential for community benefits, but in need of a much stronger Project management support structure and hands-on presence in the targeted communities if it is to endure and grow.
113. During 2011 and 2012, the *Series* consisted of Fun Runs in only four remote communities Australia-wide, despite significant public funding of \$1.6 million from the federal government for the Project.
114. The 'grand final' *Series* event at Uluru is cosmetic, good for wider community media publicity purposes, but short on direct community benefit.
115. Evidence was given by Project management at the Standing Committee hearing on 22 November 2012 that current Project policy is to attend only the first Fun Run in the remote community.
116. Project management policy is not to attend ongoing Fun Runs, but to provide advice from head office in Canberra, and to dispatch a *box of medals* by mail to the community for participants, on the rationale that this *encourages self-management*.
117. Organising a Fun Run/Walk event is a big challenge for any individual, whether it is in the Indigenous or wider community. Organising a *Series* community Fun Run as

part of the skills and confidence training that the Project provides for the Project athlete is a labor-intensive task that requires a continuing hands-on monitoring presence for at least a couple of further Fun Run events to comply with best management practice.

118. In my experience working in remote Indigenous communities, I found that a *'three strike'* monitoring presence was appreciated by the community for a new event like this. After obtaining community approval, the *first strike* was to attend the first event (ie the first Fun Run) to assist with any organisational problems on the day; the *second strike* was to attend the second event (ie the second Fun Run) to monitor the organisational lessons learned from the first event; the *third strike* was to attend the third event (ie the third Fun Run) to re-inforce the organisational lessons learned and ensure that the event was running smoothly.
119. The major incentive for participants from remote communities in the *Deadly Fun Run Series* is to compete in a 'grand final' event that is not in their community in front of their own people, but at Uluru.
120. While this may give the individual participants incentive to be competitive and gives them a trip to a famous landmark in *Mutijulu* tribal country, it is not the best way to enhance a culture of Fun Runs in targeted Fun Run communities.
121. A suggested better way is to rotate the 'grand final' between participating communities wherever possible. This would enhance the skills and confidence training of Project athletes, promote an inter-community exchange of role model and mentoring experience and expertise and experience, and enhance community Fun Run organization generally.

OBSERVATIONS

122. The manner in which Project management appears to be implementing the *Deadly Fun Run Series* in remote communities without a strong, visible ongoing monitoring presence tends to create and re-inforce an unfavorable impression in remote communities that this Project is a 'fly-in-fly-out' interventionist program controlled and administered by a distant, non-Indigenous head office in Canberra.
123. Too often in the past, interventionist program management has relied on the twin arguments of lack of financial resources and the promotion of community self-management to rationalize retreating to the "Big Smoke" after initial implementation, leaving communities who have been lumped with the initiative from the South to battle on as best they can.
124. Non-Indigenous initiatives such as the Project which seek to provide healthy lifestyle benefits for remote Indigenous communities should maintain a structured and visible practical support presence in the community to ensure that the intended benefits are delivered.

PROJECT - VOLUNTARY INPUT

125. The success of the Project in the field and the long term attainment of the Project's aims and objectives depends overwhelmingly on the generosity of volunteer individuals and support organizations in the Indigenous and wider community.
126. Prior to the launching of the Project through the Australian Sports Commission in March 2009, no field research had been conducted by Project management to identify likely support volunteers.
127. It was only when the Project Coach began visiting the targeted remote communities in the Northern Territory in November 2009 that these voluntary field support mechanisms and networks began to be identified and developed.
128. The Santa Teresa Fun Run model was a micro-model which identified and brought together the categories of key people and organizations who would be critical to the short- and long-term viability of the Project, not just in the Northern Territory, but Australia-wide.
129. They were typical of individuals and organisations who would give their time, their money, their expertise and their goodwill for the Project, particularly in remote communities which Project operations were to target beyond the 2010 New York Marathon, the first stage of the Project.
130. During my employment as Project Coach I felt uncomfortable observing Project management's poor treatment of a number of these volunteer people and organizations. I wish to cite two examples.
131. In the first example, the staging of the Santa Teresa Fun Run was made financially possible by the Alice Springs campus of the Charles Darwin University, which donated \$3000 towards the costs, engaged Apex participation and attended the event with University equipment.
132. In the second example, the Australian Centre for Environmental Compliance (ACFEC) volunteered and provided a full day's practical compliance training course for the four Project athletes during their attendance at the AIS in May 2010.
133. In conjunction with ACFEC, the Project Coach organized a day of introductory theory and practical application at Bateman's Bay. A senior training officer of the NSW Fisheries and Wildlife Department conducted the course, which was all about compliance with wildlife legislation. The athletes later conducted a search of a boat for contraband fish which had been hidden on board. The cost of the day was \$6,000, donated by ACFEC

134. Project management did not say thank you, acknowledge their input or offer a letter of thanks. Both organizations were rather offended. They are now reluctant to provide further support.

OBSERVATIONS

135. Project management’s poor treatment of volunteer support individuals, sponsor organisations and sections of the Indigenous community in the Northern Territory who made the the first two years of Project operations a success sends a negative message to the local and wider community. Those volunteers are entitled to draw an inference that their services have not been fully appreciated.

136. Such treatment is not conducive to further growth of the Project in the remote communities from which the volunteer support has already been drawn and in which there are limited volunteer resources.

CERTIFICATE IN HEALTH AND LEISURE

137. The Project’s strategy to provide remote community benefits by developing Project athletes beyond their distance running athletic career to become *healthy leaders and role models* in their own communities is summed up on the Project’s 2013 website:

IMP squad members each complete a Certificate IV in Health and Leisure. The certificate is delivered at the training camps by industry professionals with the hope that they use this qualification to gain employment or participate in other community based health initiatives.

The Certificate compliments their running endeavors and gives the athletes tools to become healthy leaders and role models within their communities

138. [Redacted]

139. [Redacted]

140. [Redacted]

141. As indicated on the website, the Certificate IV courses conducted in 2012 were delivered by health and leisure *industry professionals*. These professionals are usually non-indigenous with no experience in remote indigenous communities, and the training camps are not conducted in the Project athletes' remote communities.
142. It is very difficult indeed to provide Project athletes from remote communities with the appropriate tools to apply newly learned **role model** and **mentoring** skills taught in a short time frame by non-indigenous professionals who are unfamiliar with the individual's community, and for Project athletes to be expected to then apply these skills to their own particular community circumstances when they return home.
143. At the AIS training camp in 2010, the four Project athletes were from three varying community backgrounds. Charlie Maher and Caleb Hart were from Alice Springs, where there is a small pool of health and leisure industry expertise, with no immediate employment opportunity for newly trained Project athletes. Joseph Davies was from Kununurra, a smaller town version of Alice Springs, with even fewer health and leisure industry facilities and job opportunities. Juan Darwin, a fully initiated Yulgnu man, was from the isolated tribal community Maningrida where the health and leisure industry simply does not exist.
144. As outlined earlier in this submission, Project athletes participated in a day of introduction to a compliance course in fisheries and wildlife conducted at Bateman's Bay as part of the camp. This course was immediately relevant to the four athletes, especially to Juan and Joseph, who live in remote communities in Arnhem and the East Kimberley where fisheries and wildlife is so much part of their community life.
145. For the purpose of father-son bonding and role modeling in this Project Joseph's father Des Hill, and Caleb's father Sonny Hart accompanied their sons to the AIS.
146. Both fathers are keen fishermen (Sonny is from the Queensland coast) and the day's introductory mini-theory and major hands-on compliance course had a very positive impact on all involved. Certificates of participation were issued and the athletes saw immediate relevance to their own individual community circumstances in this course. Conservation Ranger work is a big part of community life in their communities, and the course clicked with them.
147. By comparison, the Certificate of Health and Leisure concept of personal development for Project athletes at the AIS Camp was a much less concrete concept for them to apply back home.
148. Of course, the more urban-based the Project athlete (in 2011 and 2012 there was a significant number of urban Project athletes, some with tertiary education and other professional qualifications), the more likely the athlete is to be able to recognise and apply the compressed skills they learn at the Project training camps.

149. In 2009, the Project management had no Indigenous personnel on staff.
150. Apart from the Project Coach who possessed formal qualifications as a coach and mentor of athletes at national and international level and had extensive relevant experience in the Indigenous sporting community, Project management had no experience in the Indigenous community and only one person with a basic Level 1 coaching qualification.
151. In 2013, four years on, Project management has only one Indigenous staff member, no one on staff with formal qualifications as a coach or mentor of athletes at national or international level, and still only one staff member with a Level 1 coaching qualification. The current occupant of the Project Coach position to my knowledge has no formal coaching qualifications.

OBSERVATIONS

152. The Leisure Certificate strategy in 2009-2010 to educate Project athlete **role models** and **mentors** was not delivered effectively and had minimal beneficial community impact beyond the Project athlete's brief New York experience.
153. In seeking to deliver a Leisure Certificate course that educated Indigenous athletes as role models and mentors in their communities in 2009 and 2010, non-Indigenous management did not appear to have the background or the experience to understand what this entailed in the Indigenous community.
154. In 2013, it appears that Project management still does not have the necessary background or experience and is hardly in a position to be expert in this area.
155. Leisure Certificate and other Project courses that are intended to educate Project athletes as **role models** and **mentors** in their communities would be more relevant and effective if they were to contain modules that educate the non-Indigenous Project management in the teaching of role modelling and mentoring, as well as educating the Project athlete.
156. Indigenous teaching institutions could provide valuable advice in this area. Project athletes and Project management alike would benefit from conducting such courses in targeted remote Indigenous communities as an appropriate Indigenous teaching and learning environment, to complement the AIS in Canberra and other non-Indigenous institutions.

ATTACHMENT A

PROJECT COACH ROLE IN THE INDIGENOUS MARATHON PROJECT

I was the first person recruited by Mr de Castella in 2009 for the Project. I was recommended to Mr de Castella by Professor Richard Telford, eminent sports scientist and coach of Olympic marathon athletes.

As the AIS coach of Australian Olympic team distance runners, Professor Telford was introduced by me to the indigenous community of Alice Springs and Central Australia in 1988 when I invited Professor Telford and his wife Sue, a primary school teacher and fitness instructor, to Central Australia to observe indigenous sporting culture and individual sporting talent in remote communities.

It was also to demonstrate to Professor Telford that Alice Springs was an ideal location to base the AIS distance running discipline.

My qualifications and experience were well suited to the position. I am a former marathon runner at national level, a professionally accredited coach of indigenous male and female athletes in athletics and AFL team sport, and an administrator in indigenous sport at national and international level.

As a former distance runner I set the Northern Territory race record for the marathon in 1981 in Alice Springs, a record that still stands in 2012. In 2011 I was inducted into the *Desert Sports Foundation League of Champions* sports Hall of Fame in Central Australia as an athlete and coach of indigenous athletes in AFL team and athletics. I co-founded the Alice Springs Running and Walking Club in 1975.

I am an internationally qualified athletics coach. I coached female triathlon athlete Christine Canning to win the Japan World Long Course Triathlon Title in 1990.

I have represented Australia as Head Coach and Team Manager of Australian Paralympic intellectually disabled track and field teams to World INAS-FID Athletics Championships in Europe, Asia and Africa over many years.

I have had many years' experience in indigenous sports administration. From 1980-1985 I was the Administrative Officer of the National Aboriginal Sports Foundation based in Canberra, where I worked to a Board of eminent Aboriginal sportspersons, including Tony Mundine, Faith Thomas, Elley Bennett, Eric Simms, Syd Jackson, Lionel Rose, Darby McCarthy and Michael Ah Matt.

In conjunction with Board Member Merv Ah Kee, in 1985 I brought Merv's niece 10 year old Cathy Freeman to Canberra to experience the Australian Institute of Sport. I was the first coach to introduce Cathy to starting blocks. On the athletics track at the AIS in July 1985 Cathy ran her first 100 metres out of starting blocks under my coaching guidance with Executive Officer Syd Jackson and Cathy's family friends as spectators.

I coordinated the first indigenous male athlete residential scholarship to the AIS in 1983, Thursday Islander basketball player Sammy Mills, uncle of current Australian Boomers basketball Olympian Patrick Mills.

The Project director and I are marathon running associates and in 2009 we were friends of long standing. We had been team members in the ACT team at national marathon championships.

My tasks as Project Coach in the first two years of the Project's operations can be summarized as follows:

- To establish the field operations of the Project from scratch in Central Australia and the Northern Territory
- To introduce and gain community acceptance of a '*whole new culture*' of marathon running and recreational walking as a means of enhancing healthy lifestyles in remote Aboriginal communities.
- To identify, coach and mentor young Aboriginal Project athletes in the remote communities towards their first marathon in New York.
- To introduce the concept of Project athletes as community role models in the new sporting culture of marathon running and recreational walking activities in their communities
- To establish local mentoring support for the Project athletes and establish community support mechanisms to grow the Project for future years.

My role as Project Coach during the first two years of the Project is featured in the DVD documentary '*Running to America*', and was detailed on the Project website's *Timeline* in 2011

ATTACHMENT B

JOHN BELL

PERSONAL HISTORY

DOB 24 MAY 1946
Melbourne Victoria

CAREER HISTORY

1967 -1975 Northern Territory Administration, Alice Springs

I worked in remote community program delivery and administration, in various positions, traveling extensively to remote communities in Central Australia.

1975 -1976 Northern Territory Administration, Darwin

As the Territory's Industrial Officer overseeing award wages and employment I traveled extensively to remote communities throughout Top End and Central Australia

1978 -1980 Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Cairns

As Patrol Officer in Far North Queensland, traveled extensively to remote communities throughout the Peninsula and the Torres Strait

1980 – 1985 National Aboriginal Sports Foundation, Canberra

As National Administrative Officer, I provided secretariat support to a Board of eminent Aboriginal sportspeople, indigenous sport and recreation national policy research, and supervised national sport and recreation program implementation in urban and remote indigenous communities throughout Australia

1985 – 1995 Department of Aboriginal Affairs, ATSIC, Canberra

In the Sports Policy Section I provided policy advice, conducted research and implemented national sport and recreation programs in indigenous communities throughout Australia.

1993 – 1999 Australian Institute of Sport, Canberra

As residential Athlete Supervisor and Tutor in the Halls of Residence at the AIS I looked after the welfare needs of track and field athletes, female gymnasts, indigenous and Pacific Islander athletes for 7 years.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

1980

Recruited as the only non-indigenous employee, Administrative Officer in the National Aboriginal Sports Foundation (NASF)

1982

Member of the NASF delegation at historic meeting with African Council for Sport at Brisbane Commonwealth Games

1982

I coordinated the first male indigenous residential scholarship at the Australian Institute of Sport (Sammy Mills, basketball TD).

1982

I coordinated the first Indigenous Youth Sports Awards on HSV Channel 7 World of Sport, Melbourne

1985

I coordinated 10 year old Cathy Freeman coaching visit to the Australian Institute of Sport

1991

I was a member of the three-person federal government working party that conducted the feasibility study which recommended establishment, structure and federal government funding of the Indigenous Unit at the Australian Institute of Sport (a five year budget of \$7.1 million was subsequently approved by federal government)

SPORTING CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

1969, 1970, 1972, 1973

I represented Alice Springs in AFL football at Northern Australia Championships (1969, 1970). I was Coach of the Alice Springs AFL town team in 1972 and 1973.

1972 – 2002

I competed in 31 successive annual May Day Mile event, Alice Springs, winner 26 times

1977, 1980

I represented South Australia (1977), Queensland (1980) as member of state teams at National Marathon Titles.

1976, 1981, 1982, 1983

I set the Northern Territory marathon race record (1981) in Alice Springs. The record remains current in 2012. I won three successive Northern Territory marathon championships (1981-1983). Won the Northern Territory Marathon Title (1976) in Darwin

1980,1982,1983,1984

I represented ACT at National Marathon Titles

1994

Won the IAAF Veterans 1500 metre athletics track World Title, Brisbane

2011

I was inducted into the Desert Sports Foundation League of Champions Sports Hall of Fame, Alice Springs as distance athlete and coach

COACHING CAREER

I am an internationally accredited track, field and distance coach with Athletics Australia. I gained a Graduate Diploma of Sports Coaching as Scholarship Coach at the Australian Institute of Sport in 1996.

I have been a coach of track and field athletes, AFL and netball teams over 40 years in remote communities.

I have also written articles on sport, including the story of intellectually disabled world champion athlete Paul Mitchell in the book *'I Made a Promise – 50 Inspirational Australian Stories'* by author Danny Smith, with a *Foreword* by Robert de Castella

HIGHLIGHTS

1990

Coached Christine Canning to win the Japan World Long Course Triathlon Championship

1999

Team Manager, Australian Paralympic Track and Field Team INAS-FID World Championships Sevilla, Spain

2003, 2004, 2005, 2006

Head Coach, Australian Paralympic Track and Field Team INAS-FID World Championships Tunis, Tunisia (2003), Stockholm Sweden (2004), Canberra (2005) Kuala Lumpur Malaysia (2006)

2004

Head Coach Australian Team Vision Impaired World Championships, Tokyo, Japan

2005

I coached intellectually disabled shot put and discus athlete Murray Goldfinch to win the INAS-FID world title and set world record in shot put.

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