

To: House of Representatives Standing Committee on ~~Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs~~, Parliament House, Canberra ACT
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ON:

CAPACITY BUILDING IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs regarding Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities.

Part of the terms of reference for the Committee to inquire and report on strategies to assist Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders better manage the delivery of services within their communities is to enable Indigenous Organisations to better deliver and influence the delivery of services in the most effective, efficient and accountable way.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES) in Moree has gone some way towards a broader acceptance of employment of Aboriginal people in Moree.

This submission is to highlight a positive strategy for employment of Aboriginal people; which we feel would be of benefit in Dubbo. Some of the factors; which have ensured the success of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy in Moree are a large Aboriginal population; a buoyant local economy and a strong and growing industry.

The AES was partly successful because there was participation in the program by a large and prosperous industry; which would benefit from the training and employment of local people in Moree.

Moree is a town where people don't want to live because there is "nothing there". Young people leave to be educated in other areas and often don't come back. The one consistent in human resources in Moree are the Aboriginal people of Moree. The benefits to industry to the training and education of Aboriginal people in Moree are enormous – once the mind-sets of the employers about Aboriginal employment have been broken. The long term affects for both industry and the Aboriginal people of Moree will be hugely positive.

Dubbo is a completely different city and for the AES to have an affect on the industry it will need to have a Strategy that will show the benefits of training and employing Aboriginal people. This would be a good time to develop the Strategy in Dubbo with the Youth crime becoming such a focus.

From observation the one of the biggest industries in Dubbo is tourism; and the youth crime concerns and the fact that the media have blown it all out of proportion has developed a climate which has thrown it wide open for this kind of a Strategy to be a success in Dubbo.

It would make sense to highlight the fact that if there were more employment opportunities for Aboriginal youth in Dubbo that it would have a significant impact on youth crime. As Dick Estens said it is the psychology of the Strategy that enables it to work. If you involve key stakeholders in the tourism industry which puts the onus on them to be proactive in solving some of the problems that directly affect their profits and at the same time giving the Aboriginal people the skills and abilities to interact and become key participants in the tourism industry, then you will not only have achieved some way towards employment of the Aboriginal people in Dubbo but there would come from this Strategy a more cohesive community in Dubbo.

The Dubbo City Council, Dubbo Social Plan for 2003-2004 the section on employment in young people has acknowledged an "unacceptably high rate of unemployment". Part of the strategy to assist youth in obtaining employment would be to establish an Aboriginal Employment Strategy in Dubbo.

An Aboriginal woman from Dubbo was discussing some of the problems which were confronting the youth in the area in obtaining employment. She has started her own cleaning business and talks to some of the business owners in town. She was indicating that there were a lot of opportunities for employment in the businesses in town but many of the young people do not obtain jobs because of the manner in which they approach the business owners. She was concerned that the young people needed to be trained in how to approach employers and how to talk to them as first appearances make a big impact.

From her perspective having a job was a crucial part of self-esteem in a person's life, she had been brought up in a hard working family and when she found herself on the pension with children after an abusive relationship she said that she became lazy.

This lady had a background of hard work and so she was used to putting in the effort and that is partly why she is a business woman today. This may not be the case with a lot of the young people. There has been no discipline in getting up every day to go to school and no work ethic instilled in them. This is going to make it a lot harder for these young people to keep their jobs once they have obtained them. The cycle needs to be broken and committed work ethics need to be taught which may take some time.

That is why the Aboriginal Employment Strategy would have some success. When you are working with businesses where the main concern is to pay the bills and try to make some profit, they are not going to expend a lot of time training someone who is going to be unreliable and they are not going to want to take the time or the effort to chase after people who may need to learn some good work habits.

The AES mentoring strategy is meant to do that for the business owners. They have some commitment from the AES workers to chase up their newly recruited employees and to exert some peer pressure onto the workers so that they are learning how to become responsible and reliable employees. It also helps change the mindsets that business owners have regarding Aboriginal people. As an employee an Aboriginal person can be a great asset to the business – one who is committed and dedicated to not only their jobs but to their employers as well.

This has been clearly indicated recently at NAIDOC week awards in one average sized town where the recognition of Community Service Award for 10-year service was given to nine employees of the one Aboriginal Corporation. This is incredible dedication, commitment and loyalty. One of these employees started as a child care assistant 23 years ago and now has completed a five year course of study to obtain a University degree which has enabled him to take on the position of Director of the preschool. Three more of these employees are also studying a Front-line management course, which they will complete next year. One of whom is the CEO of the organization, having been trained through the years to take on the position.

It is clear from this example that an environment that is both accepting and supportive is going to provide the best opportunity for Aboriginal people to excel.

Education

The Aboriginal woman who has her own cleaning business stated that she regretted not having a good education but she can understand why Aboriginal children don't like being at school. She said that she had enrolled in a course but the long hours in the classroom made her bored and she had to get outside. She said that she had worked in a school canteen and could see that the children left by about 11 o'clock because they don't enjoy being in the classroom and being in confined spaces and were quite happy outside in the playground. So part of her solution to some of the education problems were to have outside classes.

There is some controversy in the Aboriginal community about whether there should be Aboriginal schools for Aboriginal children. Some believe that Aboriginal schools would be segregating the children and keeping them from mixing with other children, and some believe the only way to give them a good education and to build their self esteem is to have Community schools that are accepting and supportive.

It has become quite clear from the education system that the teachers are having more and more problems teaching and spend far too much time policing the classroom. Too many young people cannot read and write. There has been more than one generation with many youth coming out of the schools illiterate. This is ridiculous when you consider that the schools have the children for 6 hours per day, 5 days per week for 12-13 years. You could train someone to be a rocket scientist in that amount of education time. Something isn't working.

Myers-Briggs personality indicators have classified four personality types. 34% of all children DO NOT LEARN BY THE METHODS EMPLOYED IN OUR SCHOOLS. So that means we are already setting up 34% of the population to FAIL. We have schools being run by one personality type - SJ, training children by the methods that are most effective for them to learn by – 80% of teachers are this one personality type according to Myers-Briggs American statistics and in white society this is not much different in Australia. (*Please Understand me – character and temperament types; copyright 1978 David Keirsej and Marilyn Bates; copyright Gnosology Books Ltd.*)

Having Community schools that are based around Aboriginal learning methods could not only have some effect on Aboriginal children but also 34% of the white population. Part of the solution could be smaller classes where parents are encouraged to come into the schools and be lay educators. Even having the parents go through

some courses so that they can be effective in the classroom. Definitely different learning techniques are needed and also more appropriate subjects. Because families are broken down and society has changed so much most of the things that were learned at home are not being taught. It seems pointless to teach algebra when a young girl doesn't know what to do when she takes her baby home. There are a lot more issues around this subject but it needs more consultation with the Aboriginal community. Someone needs the courage to take the initiative to make changes.

One of the main issues in education that needs to be addressed is the issue of evolution. Evolution is racist and you can tone it down and make it sound as nice as you like but it has taught generations of white people to think they are superior and has caused them to be arrogant and patronizing when it comes to dealing with Aboriginal people. Even Charles Darwin recanted his theory when he was older. The only reason he came up with the interpretation of facts the way he did was because of the instilled mindsets that he already had from a racist society that scorned black people.

The human race has not been evolving into a higher species. If you look at history and the fact that people lived longer and were healthier years ago belies that fact. Egyptian history proves that man has always had the capacity for intelligent thought and the capability of inventing anything with the knowledge and resources available and how black were they?

Addictions

It has never made any sense when programs have been set up to address addictions and little has been done to rectify the real underlying heartaches and sense of worthlessness. If someone suggested to a person with a broken leg to throw away his crutch and spent numerous hours telling him why a crutch was not a good thing to have – most logical thinking people would say he was saying something pretty stupid. First fix the leg and then you don't need the crutch.

Alcohol, sex, drugs, gambling, overeating and all the other things that people do that become compulsive and addictive gives them some comfort and for a short time makes them feel good about themselves. The reason why these things are so powerful is because they give the illusion of making life better, but after the initial buzz has worn off the hope of a better life is gone and their hearts become sicker than before. This continual trying to fix the heartache only leads to more emptiness and disappointment - a continual decreasing circle of increasing misery.

A personal story

When I was a child I was continually told by my mother that she hated me and that I was wicked. She said this to me because that was the way she was taught to handle her frustrations and to cope with having children. She did not know a good way of discipline or communication.

I was also told that God would strike me dead for all my wickedness one day. Being brought up in a Catholic home was good, and bad. It taught me about Jesus who I

love but it also taught me about this horrible God who was just waiting for the day to strike me dead. I sincerely believed I was an evil person who deserved to go to hell.

When I was a teenager and had sex with my boyfriend and got pregnant it proved my mother right. When you are a child you believe what you are told, you have no other terms of reference to go by – so you believe all the lies about yourself. Then when you grow up you become just what they said – because that is who you are. The only thing is it is not who you REALLY are it's just who you have learnt to be.

When I had to sign the adoption papers something inside me snapped. For years I could hear a phantom baby crying and I had a hole inside me that nothing could fill. I tried to fill it with more babies and it didn't work and I tried to fill it with alcohol and that didn't work either. It was 21 years later before that part of me was healed and that was when I met my daughter.

But the damage I caused to my husband and children was huge. They call it post-traumatic stress disorder. I married a man I did not even like because he was safe and I didn't want anyone hurting me again. I couldn't bond with my children because I was damaged and was scared someone would come to take them from me. It was only my Lord Jesus Christ who stopped me from killing myself. He is the only one who could heal all the damage inside me and the damage I have done to my family. He is a healer. You might say he is a crutch – but without him I can do nothing and now I am not spending my life hurting myself or other people- to the best of my ability.

I had a pretty good life and I was accepted and could walk up the street without people looking at me in an ugly manner. I wasn't belittled, rejected by a whole society or made to feel an inferior species. I didn't have a government coming and chasing my children through the bush trying to steal them from me. I didn't have to live in terror and have my family and culture and identity taken from me.

Life is hard enough when you have most things going for you. But what the white people have done to the Aboriginal people is horrific and it is time to repair the past.

This story was written to give an insight into what can cause a person to become an addict. Children need to be taught that they are valuable and precious. Maybe instead of some of the useless, never use again subjects in schools there should be some on the value of each person. But you would have to start with the teachers because a lot of them are damaged and are damaging our children. It is hurting people that hurt people – once they have been healed they can become healers.

Teaching children how to communicate, how to handle anger and frustration, how to discipline themselves and their children when they grow up. These things must be taught. It is time to stop expecting people to know the right things to do when no-one has shown them a better way.

It is time to stop teaching children that if they have sex they should use a condom so they don't get aids or some other disease. It is time to teach them to respect themselves and to value themselves because aids of the heart and soul is more damaging than aids of the body. These children are having sex at 10 years of age.

They have sex for comfort and feel good for a few hours and then end up emptier than they were before. Young boys are killing themselves because of the emotional mess they are getting themselves into. Society has given the children something that they treat like a toy and it is blowing up in their hands.

The damage from having a child taken from a mother is pretty clear both on the mother and the child and it lasts for a very long time. Society thinks they have solved the sexual FREEDOM issue by having abortions. If society thinks that is less damaging than having your baby taken from you, society is obviously NOT taking notice of all the girls out there who are killing themselves and who are becoming addicts because of the pain.

It is time to stop destroying the children, it is time to teach children and parents that it is not okay to be abusive, it is not okay to have sex with your children, it is not okay to take away a child's innocence BUT before that you have to heal their hearts, build up their self-esteem and give them value. Because when they value themselves and love themselves they will be able to love other people and treat them of value as well.

It's time to give men jobs and give them back their pride and dignity so they don't have to get drunk and beat their women because of the frustration and anger of not being able to change their circumstances and be a productive member of society.

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