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BY: ATZIA



**Western Desert
Puntukurnuparna
Aboriginal
Corporation**

ABN 43 390 658 595

Submission No. 16

Date Received 14-4-05

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Re: Inquiry into Indigenous Employment

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution to the inquiry seeking to identify positive outcomes and best practice for Indigenous people generally, with a focus on employment.

I am the Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) Manager for Western Desert Puntukurnuparna Aboriginal Corporation (WDPAC) based in Port Hedland, Western Australia. WDPAC administers 18 CDEP's across a very large area, most of which are very remote desert communities with little or no opportunities for mainstream employment. CDEP Participants work in community schools, clinics, stores and administration areas as well as undertake community activities such as rubbish collection, community greening, building maintenance etc. Other programs are also conducted in the communities such as Home and Community Care (HACC), Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP), Disabilities and Respite, Sport and Recreation etc.

Some of these programs run well or have run well in the past with the result that they have achieved the desired outcomes with a very tangible benefit to the people they are targeting. In all cases, where a program has been successful, it has been due to the efforts made by the person coordinating the program.

Unfortunately it is very hard to attract good people to these positions and consequently, some shortcuts have been made in the recruitment process in an endeavour to fill a position. Often a program coordinator is selected on availability and not merit. Sometimes the right person is found but more often than not, they aren't. This is due in part to the poor working conditions found in communities, such as poor housing (if available at all), poor water supplies (often undrinkable but still all that is available to the community members) and poor pay rates within a resource rich, high paying mining environment. Coupled with these are the wider communities' misconceptions of Aboriginal communities being populated by violent substance abusers.

In individual communities where suitable accommodation has been available and an extensive (and expensive) recruitment process has been undertaken, good staff have been identified with a subsequent substantial improvement in service delivery.

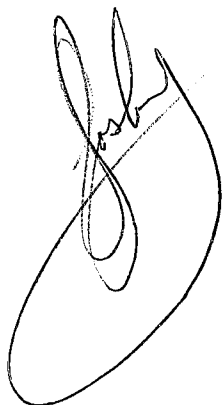
In summary, as service providers to these communities, we are aiming to do ourselves out of jobs by delivering services in a manner that will see community members take over these roles themselves. Unless suitable staff are identified and recruited, suitable working role models will not be available and programs will fail.

The above issues are only a small part of a very large picture but are currently of great concern. I believe CDEP delivery in particular is suffering due directly to a lack of suitable housing in most communities.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I sincerely hope this inquiry identifies ways that all stakeholders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs can improve outcomes for all.

Regards,

Rob Lasker
CDEP Manager
WDPAC
11th April 2005

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rob Lasker', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.