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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE
ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
AFFAIRS

**INQUIRY INTO INDIGENOUS
EMPLOYMENT**

Prepared by Bret Fishley and Veronica Hammond on behalf of three families
from Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley region of Western Australia known as
Nyirrangu Muay.

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Indigenous employment is not an issue that can be approached without including proper strategies that address existing shortcomings, particularly in the areas of governance and land ownership. State and Federal government policy and legislation have in effect created barriers that prevent families from being able to break away from their dependence on welfare. Since the welfare approach was adopted after the 1967 referendum, State and Federal Government policy has forced Indigenous people to co-exist within organisational entities that have inadequate internal mechanisms to guarantee even-handedness when it comes to resource distribution and land ownership. In particular we refer to mechanisms that could have been incorporated within the rules for multi-family Indigenous corporations and other representative bodies, which would have ensured that all Aboriginal families could enjoy an equitable, transparent and accountable operating environment. This would have meant a better chance of achieving a standard of living comparable with that enjoyed by non-Indigenous people. We also refer to inappropriate shared land ownership arrangements and activities that take place 'in country' that have exacerbated the above problems that will be explored in more depth later in this document.

The current thrust of government policy to move indigenous people away from welfare dependence is viewed by the Nyirranggu Muay families as a long overdue and welcome eventuality. A healthy degree of scepticism is however justifiably maintained as a result of previous promises of government policy 'salvation' that have proven to be an illusion. This should be no surprise given that social and economic statistical outcomes for Aboriginal people continue to radically differ from non-Aboriginal people despite regular statements made by state and federal politicians of the progress occurring to address inequalities. The United Nations Index that measures human development, compiled by researcher Martin Cook, who is a PhD student in sociology at the Western Ontario University in Canada, suggests that the conditions Australian Indigenous people live under are arguably the second worst living conditions of any distinct cultural group anywhere in the world. The human development measure was compiled from three measurements - educational attainment, life expectancy at birth and median income levels. The findings were presented to the 18th World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education in Melbourne on April 27th 2004.

This situation is cause for national shame. If the situation as it exists now is an indictment, then the lack of any coherent policy response to this situation is an even greater indictment because it demonstrates the continued lack of concern that the Australian government and the wider Australian nation have for the plight of the first peoples of this continent. Where are the practical national programs to build the self-esteem and capacity of Aboriginal people so that they might break from welfare dependence and run their own businesses? Instead Indigenous people can look forward to a continued existence on work for the dole schemes and other forms of welfare. Where is the opportunity for Aboriginal people to obtain an appropriate form of land title that truly reflects Aboriginal law so that they might have autonomous unalienable land ownership that continues as it always has under that law? Instead there is what can only be viewed as a cynical new policy approach, the offers of freehold land title and housing loans that promise even greater horror in future years as people in the poverty cycle are tempted into selling what little they have been given in exchange for a temporary gain that ultimately leaves them worse off in real terms.

If the intention of these policies was to compel Aboriginal people to fight amongst each other and encourage dominating, exploitative and greedy behaviours then it has only been partially successful. Aboriginal people in many places still prefer to live a life of despair rather than compromise their cultural values. There are many who

refuse to engage in these types of behaviours in order to access resources. However there are those who have assimilated and have used the existing system to benefit themselves by marginalising others around them. They have been well rewarded by a government which continues to legitimise their behaviours by allowing them to continue. Even once government is told what is going on and autonomy is requested, these individuals continue to represent and usurp the rights of the families under their jurisdiction.

There are some very real ways in which Government at State and Federal level can demonstrate their intention to improve the circumstances of Aboriginal people in this country. Our recommendations seek to generate outcomes that truly reflect self-determination as it exists for each specific sovereign family from a traditional Aboriginal Law & Culture perspective. For example, there are nine separate families that exist under the banner of Bunuba in the Fitzroy Crossing region. There was never any chief, monarch or king who sat over all of the Bunuba families. Each separate family was always a separate sovereign nation in its own right under the law in regard to social living arrangements and activities that could occur within the land boundaries (country) of that family. This autonomy is a strategic intervention that should be integrated, when requested, into land ownership arrangements, community project development planning & implementation, and enterprise and corporate governance arrangements to prevent arguments between families. Governments are willing to deal with non-Indigenous people as a family or even as individuals but they still seem reluctant to extend this right to Indigenous families when it comes to service delivery arrangements. The Nyirrangu Muay families have over the last seven years argued that Indigenous people should have the same rights of 'freedom of association' that non-Indigenous people enjoy.

Many of those Aboriginal people that have taken advantage of these 'divisive' policies now form the national/state/regional/local Indigenous elite. This is not to say that all people holding elite office are guilty by any means. We refer only to people that are perceived by the grass roots as corrupt that don't consequently have the backing of those they pretend to represent as having sold out. They are seen as being ill-equipped to describe or construct the type of future that many dispossessed Aboriginal families aspire to. Only self-defined groups and properly accountable representative bodies can give value to ancient philosophical systems of law and culture that view the land and its people as sacred and inviolable. Many grass roots Aboriginal activists simultaneously look backwards and forwards to the construction of a future that is socially just and sustainable, and that is in accord with traditional values that honour people irrespective of where they come from. They seek to revive the land that sustains the animals and us.

The governance environment of multi-family corporate entities is one of the major factors preventing the members of the Nyirrangu Muay families from being able to break away from welfare dependence. These families are forced to reside within the federal and state structures that have concentrated power in the hands of a few people. Those elites use this power to inappropriately obtain power and resources. The organisational environment of many multi-family Indigenous grantee organisations & corporations legitimises majority-rule decision-making. This turns families against each other by marginalising some families allowing other families to grab the lion's share of resources.

In our multi family corporation six of the nine families have over time consistently voted as a block to the detriment of the other three families. It is of consequence that the people who lead this corporation have strong affiliations with people that have ended up in positions of power within ATSIC, the Kimberley Land Council and the Indigenous Land Corporation. These people have collectively used their power to

ensure that the three Nyirrangu Muay families and others like them throughout the Kimberley remain without land ownership rights or proximity to the enterprises that operate on community held landholdings. This prevents them from accessing opportunities to break away from welfare dependence.

This type of situation is legally referred to as a tyranny of the minority and there is no pathway that we have been able to discover through which this issue can be addressed. We have previously approached 'The Aboriginal Legal Service'. They said, 'we can't get involved because this is an argument between two groups of Indigenous people'. Mainstream legal aid said, 'we can't get involved because this impinges on native title'. No private law firm that we approached was prepared to deal with this on a pro-bono basis. We also approached the Honourable Joseph Hockey in his capacity as the Minister responsible for the Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC) via the Honourable Philip Ruddock when he was the Federal Minister responsible for Indigenous affairs in the hope that ASIC might intervene. We were informed that ASIC would not initiate an investigation and that we would have to initiate such action ourselves to legally compel ASIC to step in. This all occurred despite the fact that the corporation in question had apparently not properly addressed its statutory financial reporting responsibilities for many years.

During our endeavours we were repeatedly told that the Kimberley Land Council is the only government grantee organisation that is able to receive grants to address the legal issues that lay at the root of our issues. Given the makeup of the board of the Kimberley Land Council it is not hard to argue that it had a huge conflict of interest when it was approached to assist us with overturning this tyranny of the minority that we were suffering under. Many of the people on the council of KLC either run their own enterprises or they directly or indirectly run large multi-family community organisations and benefit from tyrannies of the minority within the setting of their own community organisations. They were thus naturally reluctant to support a move to recognise the concept of the legitimacy or primacy of the family within the setting of a multi-family corporation when it comes to land ownership or fair resource distribution. Thus it was no surprise to us that they as a council followed the recommendation of the KLC legal officer Phillip Hope to reject our request for financial assistance to cover the cost of legal representation.

We thus argue that many, though not all of those that form the elite that run the Kimberley Land Council has corrupted and diverted the organisation from its foundation purpose and that it has become hostile to the underlying values and overarching principles that inform ancient Aboriginal systems of law and that they are acting to deliberately violate the sovereignty of rightful traditional landowners in many places across the Kimberley region.

Both the Australian Securities & Investments Commission and the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations legitimise democratic decision-making processes that legitimise and arguably even encourage tyranny and inequity in many Indigenous-run corporations around Australia. There is a mention that traditional systems of law should be respected under the Aboriginal Councils & Associations Act 1976 but we quickly found out that this lip-service provision is unenforceable. As long as a democratic decision has been made within the context of a properly convened meeting it is legitimate. It does not matter if it violates the traditional sovereignty of a family.

The Australian Government has the Council of Australian Governments as a watchdog to ensure equity, accountability & transparency. These multi-family organisations act as a local government organisation yet there is no equivalent watchdog to ensure accountability, transparency and equity within these Indigenous

organisations. When asked to intervene staff at the then ATSI investigations were simply not interested and over several months moved from a position of being sympathetic to patronising to openly hostile at the repeated calls that we made for action to address the entrenched culture of nepotism, corruption and greed that was so evident to the Nyirrangu Muay families.

We have been battling for the last seven years to get a fair corporate governance environment within which we can operate in order to support self-determined community development & enterprise objectives and we do not feel any closer today than we were seven years ago in achieving this objective. During the duration of this campaign many of the leaders who drove this process forward have died expressing their deep feelings of frustration and despair at not having achieved any progress so that their children could have a better life. The thought that these people died without hope and in such a state of despair should make any person with a capacity for human compassion want to do something to prevent this from being repeated. It would appear that the vast majority of people in positions of power in government and its bureaucracies are either apathetic or are so completely hamstrung by the system that they cannot act to create change even though they might have the best will in the world.

One could just imagine the uproar if non-Indigenous farming families were forced to live under similar governance arrangements as these marginalised Indigenous Australians. One could just imagine the outrage if for example ten neighbouring properties owned by separate families were forced to reside under one land title and a single corporate entity and share resources and profits and allocate jobs within a democratic decision making framework without any legal pathway to ensure tyrannies of the minority did not occur. Exactly the same outcome would manifest and some families would be marginalised. This begs two questions; 'where is the equivalent mechanism to ensure equitable resource and service distribution in Indigenous Australia and why is it that one cultural group has to exist within one framework and the other can have family autonomy?'

Nyirrangu Muay does not pretend that what it suggests here is going to be a solution that will work in every place. To do so would be a violation of its own respect for the correctness of Aboriginal laws that decree that nobody should speak for anyone else's country. Having said this, discussions with Aboriginal people around Australia have revealed similarities of circumstances in relation to the stories of corruption and nepotism recounted by people in every place that the author of this document has been to. This has led us to believe that government policies have been extremely divisive and detrimental to the social fabric and economic life of every Aboriginal group we have had contact with. Historical federal and state Indigenous governance legislation & policy approaches are thus commonly referred to by many disenfranchised members of these Aboriginal communities and the wider non-Indigenous rights activist community as the 'divide and conquer' approach.

The current majority-rules governance policy approach encourages indigenous people to abandon their ancient law principles of mutual consent and mutual aid by rewarding those who engage in the domination and exploitation of others, leaving them a collectively disempowered and colonised people. From a human rights perspective the flow-on effects of despair, substance abuse, violence, and early death for those that are not prepared to compromise is no longer acceptable. Preventable early deaths and cultural loss as a result of government policies that disenfranchise and alienate Aboriginal people is akin to genocide.

Australia is an international disgrace when it comes to its ongoing human rights violations. The violations of human rights that are still being perpetuated here may

have been acceptable 1800 years ago during the process of the colonisation of Europe and even 500 or 200 years ago in subsequent colonial adventures that resulted in the colonisation of the Australia & other places. Yet it is, in historical terms, only a recent phenomenon that the types of human rights objectives described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were adopted as worthy objectives. This is not any excuse however for the type of continued genocidal activities that are going on in this country today. We are a signatory of this and other conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDOHR). Thus it is no longer acceptable to be able to justify the idea that it is acceptable that the weak (those who follow ancient ways and are not prepared to assimilate and exist in a place of despair) should be left to 'fall by the wayside' and become negative statistical outcomes. I refer here to governance arrangements that encourage people to dominate others and isolate them from access to resources.

Certain activities such as these that impact upon indigenous employment are also in contravention of the UDOHR and the anti genocide convention. Specifically:

- The conditions people suffer on many remote communities often results in serious physical and mental harm to members of the group (as described in Article 2 of the Anti Genocide Convention).
- Article eight of the UDOHR endows the individual with fundamental rights granted him by the law. Tyrannies of minorities such as those that exist within the various Bunuba entities are unable to be remedied thus this right is also violated.
- Article sixteen of the UDOHR describes the family as a fundamental group unit of society and describes it as worthy of protection by society and the state. This exists in direct contradiction to multifamily corporations such as Bunuba that even today continues violating the rights of many families.
- Article twenty of the UDOHR says that no person will be forced to belong to an association. Many Aboriginal families want an autonomous relationship with government but they are forced to belong to dysfunctional grantee organisations like Bunuba whom subvert their efforts to achieve better living conditions.

Thus it could be argued that these situations caused by Australian Governments policies are in direct contradiction to these articles of the Anti Genocide convention.

Cultural diversity is exactly the thing that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was meant to protect. Australia has arguably deliberately abrogated its obligation to deliver legislative reform that honours the intent of this UN commitment when it comes to its dealings with Aboriginal people. It would seem that Australia has not proceeded far beyond the point of pre-1967 when Aboriginal people were not recognised as human and still existed under the Flora and Fauna Act.

This author would go one step further and argue that the raft of policies that have contributed to this outcome is deliberately designed to undermine the cultural foundation of the aboriginal people by encouraging Western values that are in direct opposition to Aboriginal ancient law. When Indigenous representative bodies and the legislation that they operate under were formulated strategies could have been easily integrated to ensure that these organisations operated in ways that were accountable, equitable and transparent. This is where the immorality lays, government can not pretend that it 'forgot' to put strategies in place or that it was up to the Aboriginal people themselves to ensure that this happened. It needs to be remembered that Aboriginal people have never had any say over the way that ATSIC and other indigenous representative bodies are structured and run. This has been entirely determined by government legislators and policy makers. When the conceptual framework for ATSIC was being formulated Aboriginal people warned the government that it would fail without the necessary mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability and equity. And this is exactly what has happened.

Many Aboriginal activists around Australia agree that ATSIC was deliberately designed to fail. Many Indigenous people and their supporters further remark that it and other representative bodies were designed to deliberately encourage behaviours of domination, greed and exploitation that turn families against each other and destroy the environment in the process and that these values are entirely contrary to traditional land management practices and values of mutual aid and mutual consent that are the foundation of the laws practised by many Aboriginal people. In this context it can be thus conceived as possible that this practice in this modern time might also be construed as deliberate.

I now refer to the ATSIC Review public discussion paper that was released in 2003 as part of the review of the now defunct ATSIC (section 2.4) as evidence that this idea of 'family autonomy' is a legitimate issue for discussion. The following paragraph (section 2.5) goes on to talk about the 'Indigenous cultural view that "you can only talk for your own country"'.

One of the things that Nyirragu Muay emphasised in its submission to the ATSIC Review and the House of Representatives Capacity Building Inquiry was the importance of recognising the right of families to have autonomy when it comes to land ownership and service delivery arrangements. The as yet untested 'Shared Responsibility Agreements' may potentially be a pathway via which these issues might be resolved. The current problem that there is no type of culturally appropriate land tenure may also be addressed within this policy framework.

Autonomous family ownership and control of land is going to be absolutely essential in many cases as a base for building enterprise opportunities that might enable families to break away from being dependent on welfare and marginalised in multi-family corporations. We are not talking about freehold title either. We are talking about a form of land title that gives traditional owners ownership and control of land including what is on, over and under it within a form of inalienable title that continues as long as there are people who have a right to occupy and use that land in a context of law that coincides with traditional Aboriginal law and culture - land that cannot be bought or sold. Furthermore, that family's full sovereignty over that land should be restored if that is what they want. They should then if they want to have the opportunity to negotiate a treaty with the Australian government as to what proximity the government will have to that land and all that flows from it.

If Indigenous people are to be able to break away from welfare dependence and get to a position where they can have a social and economic existence that is compatible with non-Indigenous Australians then the above problems will need to be remedied.

Families should not be forced to co-exist against their wishes in multifamily corporations. Families should be able to have an autonomous relationship with government. If they do want to operate in conjunction with other families then they should be able to determine what families they are going to cooperate with and the nature of that relationship.

Traditional employment within non-Indigenous companies and organisations may be appropriate for some individuals. However this is clearly not going to be the answer for all Indigenous people seeking to improve their social and economic situation. Much conflict has resulted from welfare-oriented corporate governance environments. This has been contributed to by the ongoing failures of other representative Indigenous bodies such as ATSIC, Land Councils, and the Indigenous Land Corporation. Other factors such as the removal of children, loss of land, cultural disconnection with country, poverty, poor health and early mortality have resulted in a climate of despair that is all pervading. This culminates in a fundamental crisis of self-

esteem, self-confidence and motivation. It often flows through to family violence manifesting as physical & sexual abuse, substance abuse and self-harm, murder and suicide as evidenced by the radically different criminal justice statistics for this cultural group in contrast with the non-Indigenous population.

The employment solution that will work is going to be different for each family throughout Australia. There is perhaps only a few basic commonalities that might be able to be applied everywhere, they being:

1. Aboriginal people should be able to define their own group for the purpose of community development objectives. They should be the ones to determine the people they trust and want to work with.
2. The Aboriginal people concerned in each specific group are the only people who can successfully determine their own community development direction and how they should get there.

In some cases Aboriginal people will want and require assistance to start enterprises. In other cases they won't and they should be left to pursue their objectives as long as they are not usurping the rights of rightful traditional landowners to achieve their objectives. A prime example of this is a corporation, family or individual running a pastoral enterprise in country that does not belong to them where the rightful owners want to derive a benefit from that country and are being prevented from doing so and want to regain ownership and control over that country.

When assistance and partnerships are required that assistance will most probably need to be delivered within a location-specific cultural framework that is informed by post-colonial community development perspectives. In many cases non-Indigenous community development practitioners are already utilising this awareness in their everyday work practice and in the process forging strong relationships with grass roots Indigenous families in their region. These families know the non-Indigenous people that they trust in their area and they will readily identify these people if asked. Indigenous people should have access to the resources they require to facilitate outcomes that will enable them to take each step required to break away from welfare dependence.

The methodology that is being advocated for in this document has come about as a result of the 15 years that the author of this document has spent working with Aboriginal people from the Walmajarri and Bunuba language groups in Fitzroy Crossing. The grass roots consensus ancient law style of community development that is advocated for in this document was the basis for the way that the author of this document operated in the early 1990s when he began working as a volunteer in a community known as Mindi Rardi in Fitzroy Crossing. The community was in a state of severe dilapidation with around 12 old native welfare style shelters and only three elderly residents.

During the time that I lived at the community site and assisted with the creation of a Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) at the community site. It immediately seemed only natural that community development directions should be entirely determined by the community so I began by asking the residents what they would like done. They thought cleaning up the community and fixing houses would be a good start. Some time was spent engaged in renovating some of the houses for a few weeks when a person from a neighbouring community asked if he could help and then another person joined us as well. They then suggested the idea of starting a CDEP.

We went to a neighbouring community called Junjuwa and they agreed to be our grantee organisation. Over the next few years the author worked in conjunction with the residents to do things to make the community a better place to live in, always taking direction from community residents within a paradigm of grass roots consensus decision making to determine and prioritise planning and implementation of community projects. Responsibility for each project task was placed in the hands of the person with the best experience to be able to supervise and direct the project participants. The community steadily grew from just three people to a thriving community of sixty-five people. Over the period the community and the residents went through a period of transformation. People whom had previously been 14 day a week alcoholics gained a new sense of self esteem through work that was having a direct effect on their circumstances and many of these people drastically cut their alcohol consumption many giving it up entirely. The incidences of violence also diminished. The ATSIC staff in the regional office in Derby were deeply impressed by the things the community achieved, informing us that our community was amongst the best in terms of outcomes in the region.

The outcomes described would never have been possible unless the 'power from within' approach of making the community a better place to live in was utilised. Observations of communities where administrators and project coordinators determined community development directions without properly listening to the community has generally led to the failure of community projects and a general breakdown in the social well being of the community.

We offer this as evidence that the approach suggested in this document should inform government policy for those people that express an interest in the types of strategies we advocate for. We once again have to stress that we do not pretend that the approach we support will work for all Indigenous people. The approach that we advocate here is primarily designed to deal with circumstances that are quite specific to our circumstances.

Ancient law principles of mutual aid and mutual consent are practical methodologies that could be a vital component for the success of projects where the target population is still living within an ancient law perspective as is the case with so many communities across the north of Australia. It facilitates goodwill between community members and makes each community member a stakeholder in the future wellbeing of the community. It encourages people to work together to make the community a better place to live in and individual residents are able to boast of the accomplishments that they have been a part of to others, thus restoring dignity and self-pride. These types of experiences are far and few between for many Aboriginal people with whom I have worked in the Kimberley region. The community development decision-making process did not only involve the participants on the CDEP. The handful of family patriarchs and matriarchs were the ones who interpreted the wishes of their respective families. They translated these needs into directions that everyone was happy to follow, thus giving them a role and restoring their kudos as community elders who were loved and respected by all of the younger residents.

In many cases the only financially viable way of transferring knowledge and skills for the purpose of capacity building to progress new businesses will be via engagement with people from the non-Indigenous community in the local area. Organisations such as the various reconciliation groups around Australia are in a strong position to work with Indigenous people to facilitate this form of practical conciliation between Indigenous & non-Indigenous Australians. But caution will be required. All of the good will in the world will come to nothing if that assistance is not provided within a culturally appropriate framework that has an awareness of post-colonial community

development perspectives at its heart. Whole communities are going to have to be raised-up together to prevent jealousy and subversion of individuals. We non-Indigenous people will need to learn to walk in the shoes of Indigenous Australians before all of us as Australians together will be able to even begin to build trust and work towards sustainable, mutually beneficial long-term working relationships for the first time.

Summary of the problem

State and Federal government policy and legislation have created barriers that prevent families from being able to break away from dependence on welfare. Local, state and Federal government policies have resulted in families being turned against each other. This has in turn forced these people to disavow traditional law and culture if they want to get access to land and resources in the process causing cultural meltdown and social devastation leading to violence and the shortening of life for many Indigenous people. The United Nations Anti Genocide convention describes this type of policy environment as genocide.

There is very little evidence to suggest that the Australian Government has any good will whatsoever towards Aboriginal people given the remarkably different and shameful living conditions experienced by Aboriginal people in contrast with non-Aboriginal people as previously articulated. The Australian Government needs to listen and act in ethical and culturally appropriate ways that are formulated and driven by each indigenous self-defined group.

Faith will not be installed unless sustainable significant life changing outcomes are achieved where the capacity of whole communities & families are advanced holistically and simultaneously. It is this faith that is so lacking throughout Australia. There are too many stories of people repeatedly having their hopes built up and then shattered. All that is being asked of non-Indigenous Australians is that we support self-determination objectives without imposing our own agenda's and that we try walking in their shoes so as to understand how they feel. Only then will we be able to begin to realise true conciliation and trust between our two very different cultures.

Recommendations Summary

- Indigenous people should have the same rights of 'freedom of association' that non-Indigenous people enjoy
- Implementation of practical national programs to build the self-esteem and capacity of Aboriginal people so that they might break from welfare dependence and run their own businesses
- Autonomy of separate families is a strategic intervention that should be integrated, where they ask for it, into land ownership arrangements, community project development planning & implementation, enterprise and corporate governance arrangements to prevent arguments between families. Governments are willing to deal with non-Indigenous people as a family or even as individuals but they still seem reluctant to extend this right to Indigenous families when it comes to service delivery arrangements.
- Indigenous representative bodies and the legislation that they operate under need strategies integrated to ensure that these organisations operate in ways that are accountable, equitable and transparent
- To prevent individuals from continuing to pretend to represent and usurp the rights of the families under their jurisdiction, resulting in tyranny of the minority;

the government must ensure that only self-defined groups and properly accountable representative bodies can give value to ancient philosophical systems of law and culture.

- The governance environment of multi-family corporate entities is one of the major factors preventing families from being able to break away from welfare dependence. The organisational environment of many multi-family Indigenous grantee organisations & corporations legitimises majority-rule decision-making. This turns families against each other by marginalising some families allowing other families to grab the lion's share of resources.
- Both the Australian Securities & Investments Commission and the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations legitimise democratic decision-making processes that legitimise and arguably even encourage tyranny and inequity in many Indigenous-run corporations around Australia. There is a mention that traditional systems of law should be respected but these are unenforceable. These multi-family organisations act as a local government organisation yet there is no watchdog to ensure accountability, transparency and equity within these Indigenous organisations.
- Autonomous family ownership and control of land is essential as a base for building enterprise opportunities that might enable families to break away from being dependent on welfare and marginalised in multi-family corporations. This needs to be implemented in a context of law that coincides with traditional Aboriginal law and culture - land that cannot be bought or sold
- Families should not be forced to co-exist against their wishes in multifamily corporations. Families should be able to have an autonomous relationship with government. If they do want to operate in conjunction with other families then they should be able to determine what families they are going to cooperate with and the nature of that relationship.
- Aboriginal people should be able to define their own group for the purpose of community development objectives. They should be the ones to determine the people they trust and want to work with. The Aboriginal people concerned in each specific group are the only people who can successfully determine their own community development direction and how they should get there.
- When assistance and partnerships are required that assistance will need to be delivered within a location-specific cultural framework that is informed by post-colonial community development perspectives.
- A 'power from within' approach of making the community a better place to live in is needed. Observations of communities where administrators and project coordinators determined community development directions without properly listening to the community has generally led to the failure of community projects and a general breakdown in the social well being of the community.
- Ancient law principles of mutual aid and mutual consent are practical methodologies that could be a vital component for the success of projects where the target population is still living within an ancient law perspective as is the case with so many communities across the north of Australia. It facilitates goodwill between community members and makes each community member a stakeholder in the future wellbeing of the community. It encourages people to work together to make the community a better place to live in and individual

residents are able to boast of the accomplishments that they have been a part of to others, thus restoring dignity and self-pride.

- A financially viable way of transferring knowledge and skills for the purpose of capacity building to progress new businesses will be via engagement with people from the non-Indigenous community in the local area in a partnership or mentoring program, within a culturally appropriate framework.