

Submission No...1121.....
Date Received.....

RECEIVED
03 SEP 2005
BY: ATBIA

Submission to Standing Committee on Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Inquiry into Indigenous Employment
by Linda Ballantyne

Creating new job opportunities - valuing selves and
society

No money. No job. No self-esteem. Is sole
destroying.

Employ indigenous and other unemployed people as teacher aides or other support people in schools. Schools need extra adults who can work as aides, grounds people, secretaries, liaison officers/ counsellors, duty/ play officers for bus and playground, community involvement officers, motivators, comforter in times of stress....the list is endless. There is a growing group of workless non- indigenous people also. They too are trapped in the poverty cycle and I would include them in the push to get unskilled and workless people off the street and into employment. These people get the dole and other types of support. By providing additional funding encourage these people to take up employment at schools, maybe hospitals and other government organisations and provide them with training and all the other positives that come from becoming a meaningful part of society.

The advantage of having extra adults in schools:

- another adult in class, to teach and supervise
- an interpreter
- an indigenous role model
- indigenous adults seen valuing education
- indigenous adult understanding education and the aims of schools
- valuable school money spent on resources instead of hiring essential staff

The advantage to Indigenous Communities:

- self confidence of individuals as they are valued
- self confidence spin off to the community
- sense of belonging to society
- developing a sense of work ethics
- getting on the job training and education
- stepping stone to further jobs
- break the poverty cycle
- break the violence, domestic violence and vandalism in indigenous communities in both urban and remote settings
- break the substance abuse in indigenous communities in both urban and remote settings

Why, create job opportunities:

Already in Cairns and remote communities we are seeing the effects that the workless and thus hopeless group has on communities.

Our community at Balaclava suffers through alcohol, substance and drug abuse, physical, sexual and mental abuse, gambling. There is an increase in vandalism and violence, theft and robbery perpetrated more and more by gangs of lawless youth, both on themselves and on society.

The results of these abuses on our students are starving children, under cared for and neglected and unloved students, high absenteeism, abused students, students committing suicide (2004) and very poor literacy rates.

There are a group of people at our school that are second-generation non-workers. We as a society can't afford to carry such a large and growing group.

The government payment for each child born has increased the birth rate in our community. (We have heard reports of women forced, coerced into getting pregnant for a new car! for the extra money!)

My logic/ background:

I have taught for 23 years. For 12 of those years I taught with my husband and family in remote Aboriginal and Islander communities. (Palm Island, Thursday island, Mer Island, Saibai Island, Mabuiag Island) For the last 5 years I have taught in Cairns in schools with high numbers of indigenous students. Balaclava school is my present school and it would have to rate as the most troubled school I have ever taught in. The issues that I see impacting on students in this submission are ALL in evidence here, at Balaclava. Every abuse I speak of is noted from my knowledge of the students at this school. The abuse and violence is here and now and it is escalating.

In the communities I have worked there was always CDEP available. The communities and individuals employed by CDEP were always more progressive, self confident, had purpose in life, had more money and there was less violence and abuse.

At Mabuiag Island our school could hire aides and school workers through the councils CDEP scheme. We took people off the street gave them enough training to be able to begin work. They later received extra training as it became available. For our school it provided us with essential aides, interpreters, tuckshop helpers, groundsmen, a trainee secretary and cleaners. For the people involved the confidence, pride and power they gained through knowing they were valued was evidenced by their dedication to their jobs and to the school.

In very community I worked in the Torres Straits, parents and community members always stated that they wanted their children to be educated so that when they grew up they could get a job either on their island or in Cairns. Every community supported their schools to these ends. In Cairns we do not have that sense of community. The communities are fragmented and it has become a fight for survival.

How to:

Advertise for people and schools/teachers personally target people to train. Many people I know would not apply for a job because they feel their literacy skills are too low or they think they have nothing to offer. The literacy issue is true to an extent but most people have poor literacy skills because they did not have the right conditions for learning when they were young. These people are able to learn.

Schools/ TAFE would need extra funding to bring in trainers eg English Language trainers, teacher aide trainers etc. This might seem a lot of money on top of the 'new' salaries but when weighed up against dole payments, community diversionary programs, community renewal programs, extra policing, violence and vandalism and all the other health and Welfare issues....the cost is not that high. It is also a proactive stance whereas the other programs are knee jerk reactions to the problem.

Using schools as training centres keeps the jobs local to the people as most do not have cars.

Possibly any positions given could attract an interest free loan contingent to pay off a subsidised car to give them immediate success and feedback that they're on the right track and to enable travel to further training. A service to help select good cars would be helpful to keep the sharks from selling bombs.

The salary needs to be adequate to be better than the dole and to compensate for the loss of other benefits available on the dole. I know people who have chosen not to work as they lose their benefits card. They get a bit more money but its not enough to compensate for the loss of the other benefits. The salary needs to help break the poverty cycle. part of the training could involve courses on budgeting.

Flexi days could be built-in for people to meet family commitments and also for health days. Indigenous communities place a lot of emphasis on certain family events. It is important to accept that this happens and work around it.

Many low-income earners have poor diets and poor health. Another course on diet and health could be built in!