



Coopée

A newsletter on Indigenous employment issues

Issue No 6 - July 2004



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Information

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For more information about the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment please visit www.nt.gov.au/ocpe

'Message from Moree' reaches Darwin

On 15 June 2004, the Chamber of Commerce, Northern Territory held a seminar called 'Building Your Business Through Indigenous Engagement'. It was here that Dick Estens and Cathy Duncan spoke to over 65 people from the business community.

Dick, a Moree cotton farmer and Cathy, a young Aboriginal educator, have helped to transform Moree from a town once dubbed the most racist in Australia, to a powerful model for Indigenous economic and social engagement. It is a model that has been successfully applied to Tamworth and Dubbo.



Dick Estens and Cathy Duncan

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES) in Moree, Tamworth and Dubbo is empowering both non-Indigenous and Indigenous people to engage together in business. A vital ingredient in this success is the building of pride, self-esteem and confidence in the Indigenous community.

Most who heard Dick and Cathy speak will agree that much can be learned from their story. Here

are some of Dick and Cathy's comments:

Dick Estens: "What you've got to do is roll out the red carpet for Aboriginal people into a main street. And what I mean by that is plenty of flags. Get the flag up, get the flag flying."

"The important part of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy process is building partnerships. We use the word all the time.

We have young Aboriginal employment coordinators/mentors that visit businesses and build relationships, they don't go to businesses asking for jobs, they go to build

relationships - to get an understanding of how business works, who's employing."

"When you are moving 50 Aboriginal people that weren't getting jobs into jobs each month, that'll empower you – it empowers me."

Cathy Duncan: "We get to know our communities and we build bridges and we light fires out at communities and we burn each community, Dick and I, until we get them to dance, work

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Kigaruk Indigenous Men's Leadership Development Program graduation

Pilot program a success!

Twenty five Indigenous men, representing eight NTPS agencies, commenced the Kigaruk Indigenous Men's Leadership Development Pilot Program in June 2003.

The program consisted of seven academic course modules including eleven written assignments, delivered through the Faculty of Business at Charles Darwin University (CDU) and an action learning component consisting of personal learning discussions and group project presentations to agency Chief Executives. The program was coordinated and delivered through the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.



The Kigaruk participants with program manager Roz Angeles

On 21 May 2004, all twenty five Kigaruk participants graduated with a Diploma of Business (Frontline Management). For those Kigaruk graduates who wish to futher their studies, successful completion of the diploma has provided eighty credit points, or one study year towards a Bachelor degree in Business. This means that they will attain their degree in Business in just two years full-time study.

The Kigaruk Indigenous Men's Leadership Development Program is currently under evaluation.

Following the outcomes from this, a leadership development program for Indigenous women will be established in the NTPS.

Indigenous employment forum

Due to circumstances beyond our control the Nhulunbuy forum, which had been scheduled for 28 & 29 June, was deferred. The Nhulunbuy forum, "Recruitment and retention: getting it right the first time!", will now be held in mid-September.

The Nhulunbuy forum will be followed by the final forum in the series, "Drawing it all together", which will be held in Darwin in November 2004.

Indigenous Employment Toolkit

Outcomes from all the forums will inform the draft Indigenous Employment Toolkit which will also be presented for workshop and comment at the final forum.

On 28 June 2004 a Planning Day was held designed to:

- establish the purpose, scope and outcomes of the draft Indigenous Employment Toolkit
- workshop the key issues to date

- develop the next phase of the forum series following the conclusion of Phase II in November
- progress the official launch of the Indigenous Employment Toolkit in Darwin, scheduled for March 2005.

Information and program flyers for the Nhulunbuy forum will be distributed via email soon.

For further information on the forums please phone 8999 4118 or visit the IPAA website at: <http://www.nt.ipaa.org.au/>



WA Public Sector wins Premier's award for MATES program

An Aboriginal employment and mentoring program run by Western Australia's Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) has won the WA Premier's Award.

The Mentored Aboriginal Employment and Training Program (MATES) has been years in the making.

From humble beginnings, CALM now has a scheme which is the envy of organisations everywhere, offering long-term employment to Aboriginal people.

CALM's People Services Manager Cliff Gillam said the Department started negotiating with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) in 1998.

"The MATES program is the linchpin for a policy commitment to the very significant expansion of Indigenous employment in CALM associated with a desire for co-management arrangements," Cliff said.

"It's a measure of if you persist, *it will happen*. As a business case, it is clearly in CALM's interest to create stronger relationships with Indigenous people."

"There's also clearly a benefit for visitors who have interaction with Aboriginal rangers and Aboriginal people."

Cliff said the problem with the MATES' predecessor, a one-year traineeship, was that when completed, the trainee did not have the entry level qualifications for CALM.

"The minimum educational entry to work at CALM is a Certificate 4 in Land Management but most of the trainees did not have this. We wanted to create a training program that could build opportunities for Indigenous people," Cliff said.

He went to DEWR with a request that CALM wanted to train a significant number of Aboriginal people.

"We wanted Indigenous people to be able to reach the Level 4 entry level to become a ranger or field officer," Cliff said.

MATES is being recognised as a successful role model for the employment of Aboriginal people everywhere.

"It is a world-class example of true leadership in cultural change," WA Premier Dr Geoff Gallop said.



WA Premier Geoff Gallop (front, second from right), WA Environment Minister Judy Edwards (front, third from left) and CALM Executive Director Kairan McNamara (front right) with CALM staff (front row left to right) Tania Donovan, Keedah Cornwall and Alex Rogers, (middle row, left to right), Maria Duthie, Sue McKenna, Cliff Gillam, Mitzi Vance, Alan Byrne, Chontaria Pitulele and Robert Narrier (back row left to right) Marissa Maher, Wayne Dekker, Ron Kewallak, Peter Sharp and Laura Sinclair. Photo by Keating Photographer.

Dr Gallop added CALM's bold approach to achieving just and equitable Aboriginal employment outcomes meant it had embarked on a ten-year plan to have an Indigenous workforce of ten to fifteen per cent.

He said the Department's adopted phrase Dan-joo Dabacaan – 'together, steady, steady' – echoed CALM's approach to ensuring Indigenous people were strongly represented and involved in, conservation and land management employment.

"The Department recognises the unique role and expertise that Aboriginal people have as both 'traditional owners' with cultural responsibility to care for country and as managers of conservation lands and waters for the State."

Fair Trading

National Indigenous Consumer Strategy

State, Commonwealth and Territory fair trading and consumer affairs officials have agreed to work together to address problems experienced by Indigenous consumers.

The Ministerial Council for Consumer Affairs (MCCA) which includes ministers responsible for the nation's major fair trading and consumer protection agencies have agreed to set up a working party to prepare a National Strategy for Indigenous Consumers.

Agencies will now share information and education materials and take joint compliance and enforcement action where appropriate.

By establishing a working party, MCCA seeks to identify current programs that meet the need of Indigenous consumers and catch rogue traders and implement successful programs nationally through the State agencies that make up the Standing Committee of Officials of Consumer Affairs (SCOCA).

Indigenous Consumers are included in this initiative," Ms Ross said.

"There is a strong link between the work and outcomes of the National Indigenous Consumer Strategy and the National Consumer and Financial Literacy Taskforce," she said.

Ms Ross will consult with Indigenous people, groups and communities across Australia over coming months. If you have any information or stories relating to Indigenous consumers please contact Christine.

The strategy will have a five-year life span and is expected to be implemented by all SCOCA members as part of ongoing operations.

For more information contact:
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Christine Ross

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together, talk together, interact in some way."

"Our mentors are on 24-7, they're on mobile phones, they act like a family for a lot of people in our community that don't have families or don't have family support or someone in their family that understands the world of work. We can be mentored in our cultural, physical, emotional wellbeing, but the mentoring of the world of work

has got to come from people that have been exposed to work."

"And I think it's through people power, I believe, that Australia will change in its Indigenous affairs. I don't believe it's through Government policy. I think it will come from the grass roots up. It will come from people and it will come from people working together to find quality solutions."



Cathy and Dick with some Indigenous employees

If you would like a full transcript of the seminar 'Building Your Business Through Indigenous Engagement', a special discount on the ABC video of 'Message from Moree' or the who, what and where of Indigenous employment in the private sector contact the Indigenous Adviser at the Chamber of Commerce on 8936 3113.

DBIRD meeting on Indigenous employment and career development

The inaugural conference of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD) was held recently at Lake Bennett, eighty kilometres south of Darwin.

Indigenous staff came from across the Northern Territory to discuss and develop the DBIRD Indigenous Staff Employment and Career Development Strategy (IECDS). The conference recognises the importance of its Indigenous workforce and their contribution to the delivery of culturally appropriate services to the Indigenous community.

The four-day workshop enabled DBIRD's Indigenous staff to network, learn more about government and to plan the staged implementation of employment strategies to encourage Indigenous applicants and to position DBIRD as the employer of choice for Indigenous people.

For many of the participants, the forum was an opportunity to provide real input into their own

professional future. The forum also raised a number of hurdles faced by Indigenous people in the public sector - issues including training, professional progression, personal, cultural and professional isolation and exposure to other areas within the department.

Speakers at the conference included Mike Burgess, Chief Executive Officer, DBIRD, John Carroll, General Manager, Mines and Energy Group DBIRD, Roger Smith, Commercial Services DBIRD, Gayle De La Cruz, Family and Community Services, Wendy Ah Chin, OCPE and Michelle Adams, ATSI.

The report from the forum will be presented to the DBIRD Board of Management meeting in August and will play a critical role in the DBIRD People Plan. A general presentation will be made on the workshop on 24 August 2004 to which everyone is invited.

A full report and recommendations will be in a future edition of *Cooee!*.

For more details contact Trish Kenny on 8984 3026.

Indigenous employment Special Interest Group (SIG) launch

The executive director of the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI), Jo Mithen and AHRI Northern Territory president, Graham Brennan, joined John Kirwan, Commissioner for Public Employment on 1 July 2004 to launch the inaugural AHRI Special Interest Group (SIG) on Indigenous employment.

The SIG is being established to provide a forum for Indigenous and non-Indigenous HR staff to work together to ensure sound practice in the recruitment, training and retention of Indigenous employees.

AHRI operates a number of SIGs among its members in all Australian States and Territories. The Northern Territory SIG is the first to be set up with a focus on Indigenous employment.

If you have any questions regarding this, or if you wish to join AHRI, please contact Anne-Marie Dolan by phoning 9918 9227 or via email at: annemarie.dolan@ahri.com.au



Know your Ombudsman

Role of the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman provides an independent, impartial free service to people who want to make a complaint about government practice. The Ombudsman may examine the administrative actions of most Northern Territory Government agencies and statutory authorities including local government councils, police and correctional services.

If you have concerns about whether a Northern Territory Government agency has acted fairly, you may contact the Ombudsman. He will consider your complaint and where possible, assist you.

Talk to the agency

You should first try and resolve your concerns directly with the agency. The Ombudsman may be able to assist you in finding a suitable agency contact person. Tell them your point of view and why you are dissatisfied. Ask the agency for a clear explanation of its actions and whether it will reconsider its original decision. If you are dissatisfied with the response, you can contact the Ombudsman.

How to contact the Ombudsman

Approaching the Ombudsman is simple. The Ombudsman provides a free service. You may telephone to discuss your concerns, make an appointment to meet with a staff member or write a letter, facsimile or e-mail.

What will happen?

The Ombudsman will listen to you and provide guidance on how to best address your complaint. In most cases, the Ombudsman will try to resolve matters as quickly as possible with the cooperation of the agency.

Initially, the Ombudsman may make informal inquiries on your behalf to obtain further information from the agency. The Ombudsman may also examine the agency's files and records relating to your matter.

The Ombudsman is impartial. After considering both viewpoints, the Ombudsman may make recommendations to the agency to address the

problem, he may consider that your complaint has been adequately addressed or may suggest other options available to you.

In serious matters the Ombudsman may conduct an investigation, which might require the Ombudsman to provide a report to Parliament.

The Ombudsman and his staff are committed to the following values:

- Fairness
- Independence
- Professionalism
- Accountability
- Accessibility
- Timeliness

Sometimes the Ombudsman can't assist

The Ombudsman's role and powers are set by Parliament, and there are some matters in which he cannot become involved.

For example, the Ombudsman is unable to provide legal advice, or assist with complaints about politicians, employment disputes or decisions of a court. The Ombudsman cannot investigate complaints about Commonwealth Government agencies, private individuals or businesses.

If your problem is outside of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, then his staff will advise you of the appropriate body to contact in relation to your complaint. An interpreter service is available on request.

If you would like further information about this office or if you wish to discuss a specific concern you can visit our website at:
www.ombhccsc.nt.gov.au

or contact us:

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12th Floor, NT House
22 Mitchell Street
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Alice Springs Office
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