

PART IV

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

The Indigenous Welfare Economy and the CDEP Scheme

Abstract for Part IV: Community perspectives

The purpose of this section is to present the views of community representatives who are involved, in various ways, in the CDEP scheme.

The section consists of 14 short papers presented at a conference. One theme which comes through from the community representatives is a plea for a more respectful engagement with CDEP schemes from other government agencies and other programs. This respect takes many forms, but it includes financial support; when CDEP is doing a job, it should be properly paid for the work.

Keywords

Aboriginal community, Aboriginal economic and social development, Aboriginal identity, business, communication skills, community development, elders, enterprise, exclusion, inequality, leaders, local government, mutual obligation, regional development, social empowerment, sustainability, voluntary work, welfare

19. The community game: Aboriginal self definition at the local level

Frances Peters-Little

Introduction

This paper is based on a larger discussion paper (Peters-Little 2000) that I wrote for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). The research I undertook focused on my mother's people, the Uralarai and Kamilaroi people from the north-west of New South Wales. I wanted to raise the question: 'What is an Aboriginal community, what are the boundaries, and how does one identify it?' I had always felt very strongly about the fundamental changes that have taken place in my community since my early childhood and the period I grew up there prior to the 1967 referendum and the introduction of 'government funded' community services.

Although I am an 'out-of-towner' and have lived most of my life in Sydney, I still identify with the north-west of New South Wales, in particular Walgett and Lightning Ridge, as my home and my community. As a Murri living in the inner-city suburbs of Sydney, I was familiar with hearing others talk about 'Redfern' or 'Glebe' or even 'Marrickville' as their Aboriginal community. I remember hearing phrases and even seeing posters sales-pitching 'Community as Unity' at me. This never quite sat right with me. I was particularly interested also in how much government policies and community organisations had impacted upon the shaping of 'who' and 'what' constitutes an Aboriginal community. It had seemed to me that it was the powers-that-be in Canberra that had been deciding who belonged to a community, that were instructing community organisations about who belonged in their communities and what their needs were. Is this problematic? To me, it was fairly evident that it was in my community, for four main reasons:

- most community organisations had boards with representatives from a restricted number of Aboriginal families, and many families were not represented on boards and committees;
- more often than not, the board members on one committee regularly sat on one or more other boards and committees in the town;
- there were fundamental problems and disputes between locals as to who their leaders were; and
- many people clearly felt that definite socio-economic groups had begun to develop in the town over the past 30 years, separating the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

I felt inspired by many to promote the idea for Aboriginal communities to redefine and identify themselves in terms of their own leadership, or eldership, for the purposes of a more effective and appropriate form of representation at the local level.

The 2000 discussion paper raises several questions including: 'What constitutes an Aboriginal community?' It examines how some Aboriginal people identify with communities, and explores how these are represented and conceptualised both internally and externally. I hope that this paper is read only as part of a continuing process of debate about community and identity, and to encourage further discussion about how one identifies and determines one's 'community'. The short-term goal of my research was to encourage Aboriginal people to critique what I believe have become romantic and imaginary notions of the Aboriginal 'community', encapsulated by slogans such as 'community as unity'. I wanted also to ask people to consider how recent historical events have impacted upon the development of our communities, and to question just how much of our contemporary notion of who and what the community is, has in fact been shaped by white government policies, and to ask how we should feel about government policies shaping our communities' identities.

My initial intention was to demonstrate and prompt discussion among community workers and researchers. I argue in the 2000 paper that Aboriginal people historically did not passively accommodate new, imposed, and artificial colonial boundaries, and I refer specifically to settlement history in the north-west of New South Wales. But it is clear, nevertheless, that the missions, reserves, and pastoral stations have since become Aboriginal communities that are fundamental to contemporary notions of Aboriginality. Also, while much of our factionalism, and long standing family and language group divisions existed long before self determination policies and community organisations, they nonetheless resurface in the everyday affairs of community organisations.

While my 2000 paper also requested white readers to challenge their desire to search for an 'authentic' Aboriginal cultural identity within the confines of a colonial framework, I also urged Aboriginal people to reject an uneasiness about what could be described as 'an airing of dirty linen', founded in fear of racial retribution from governments. I asked white readers to embrace Aboriginal people's legitimate claim to express their conflicts, internal disputations, and heterogeneity with the purpose of finding appropriate solutions for their concerns. Finally, I hoped to inspire Aboriginal people to develop their own definitions of Aboriginality at their own local level, and to redefine who and what constitutes an Aboriginal community, its identity, and its possible outcomes for a more accurate and appropriate system of self representation.

Elders

I first asked individual elders and leaders who they thought were Aboriginal elders. Today in many Aboriginal communities definitions of who and what elders or leaders are are extremely diverse. The towns of the north-west are no exception. A most typical concern can be summed up by my own elder June Barker from Lightning Ridge who said she thought she had never heard the word 'elder' used so much as she does now: 'These days you hear people call someone who is only 38 or 40 years old, and they call them elders' (Peters-Little 1998b). While there is much controversy over who and what an elder is, I was generally told that an elder was someone of my grandparents' generation and older. As

June Barker points out however, age alone is insufficient. They also have to be people who are perceived to be intelligent by the group.

Leaders

It was clear that many had strong, and various, points of view on who and what a leader was, and how one achieved this status. One comment, made by Aboriginal elder Harry Hall, clearly stated some of the impossible tasks required of Aboriginal leaders and community workers:

So-called leaders in our communities are just there to answer the questions that the government doesn't want to answer. And those leaders can't win, they can't please blackfellas, they can't please the government. You're enemies with everyone, glory without power. If you had any brains you wouldn't get into the jobs, as window dressers. All the money is taken up by just running the organisations like cars, photocopiers etc. It's just about running the organisations, so they look like they're doing a lot of work but they are spending most of the money on just running the organisation and not the services. So it looks like we are busy doing things, but all we are busy doing is running the organisation. Like I say the glory without the power (Peters-Little 1998a).

Harry Hall, is not alone in his criticism of leadership. In their research for a leadership development program in Indigenous communities, Margaret Cranney and Dale Edwards from AIATSIS found Aboriginal people throughout Australia were frustrated with the ways in which Aboriginal people voluntarily or involuntarily emerged as leaders. The ways in which this happens include:

- someone who is already a 'cultural leader' is groomed or nominated by that community as a leader;
- someone is thrust into the role by peer pressure and expectations;
- someone is seen to be an expert on a subject or issue;
- people are elected to positions within community organisations or as representatives in their local governments;
- someone is perceived as a 'role model', who has gained the respect of the community and qualities of honesty and integrity in accordance to community wishes;
- someone is publicly in the forefront of media promotion;
- governments appoint a person formally or informally as an adviser; and finally
- individuals assert themselves and express opinions in the interest of self promotion (Cranney & Edwards 1998: 15).

There were two main thoughts on the issue of Aboriginal leadership: that Aboriginal people's notions of leadership clash with white concepts of leadership, and that conflict will always arise when Aboriginal people are expected to conform to the latter. Examples of this can be seen in communities like Walgett, where 'experts' in their fields cannot

always act in accordance with the wishes of 'natural leaders' or elders, and vice versa. So they are faced with the impossible task of trying to take everyone's interests into account. Who becomes a leader is a highly vexing question, and being one is a laborious task.

Out-of-towners

The large numbers of Aboriginal people who have left Walgett permanently are referred to by some of the locals as 'out-of-towners'. Many of them still have relatives and elders living back home, but were encouraged by their families to leave the mission and the restrictions of small town life. Their reasons for leaving were either to pursue employment, further their education, or to raise their own young families. Although they may have been away from the area for several decades, when asked, 'Where is home?' they still identify their original town—for example Walgett or Lightning Ridge—as home. Many of them had intended to return equipped with their education and employment skills, but some (not usually their own relatives) feel that they need to familiarise themselves with the local situation before contending with local affairs. It is a limited mindset which rejects the skills of the out-of-towners, especially since an extraordinary number of Walgett's out-of-towners have made great achievements and have much to offer their 'home' community.

Self definition

It seems that the term 'community' became popular by the mid 1970s, after the Whitlam government established the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. It was used to help describe the way in which the government distributed funds for welfare programs and delivered services to Aboriginal people. It was seen as the focus which would automatically be culturally appropriate, democratic, and at the same time politically and socially acceptable to the majority of Australians (Smith 1989: 9). Since that time Aboriginal people across Australia have become so good at playing the 'community game' that many have begun to believe in it (Smith 1989: 3). Aboriginal community organisations have become the 'gate-keepers' of the communities they service, and they are somewhat problematic because the prominent and dominant families in the town tend to run them. They are likely to have an advantage over other Aboriginal families and consciously foster the use of the concept of 'community' for their own benefit and to the disadvantage of less powerful language groups and families (Gerritsen 1982: 21).

Since Aboriginal people have survived centuries of oppression and division, it is unrealistic to expect long-term inequities and cultural and political divisions among them to disappear just because they now have government funded organisations which determine their avenues of self determination. It is particularly unrealistic to expect all loyalties to kin and tribes to disappear if structures of 'community' boards are based on Western notions of 'representativeness' (Tatz 1977). The use of the term 'community' without Aboriginal consultation, self analysis and definition has in fact acted as a barrier to self determination, setting communities up for administrative failure, and thus denying Aboriginal people the opportunity to work through the development process, with specialised professional support, and in their own time (Smith 1989: 4).

The relationship between community workers and those who use the services raises questions of equity and privacy, both of which challenge those who idealise 'community as unity' and notions of 'sharing and caring' within Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people are now not only economically disadvantaged when compared to whites, they are unequal even among themselves. Some families are more financially secure than others, and even within families some members are in a better financial situation than others. These concerns are not specific to and characteristic of the north-west of New South Wales alone. It could be argued that the provision of government funding to community services under the label of 'self determination' is creating further welfare dependency in Aboriginal communities, and widening the socio-economic gap between the people who fund the services, those who work in them, and those who depend upon the services. Many Aboriginal community workers feel that they are being torn between their positions as community workers and the people they service. By servicing their own community (and sometimes even family members) they are being placed in a position where they are actively participating in holding authority over their own families and friends, while relying upon the 'enemy' (government) to fund local self determination programs (these views were expressed by Michael Mansell, see Peters-Little 1987).

Finding a solution to the problem is a far-reaching and complex task. To automatically reject government funds and programs is indeed reckless. It is also naive and neglectful to overlook the tireless efforts of many Aboriginal community workers who are dedicated to Aboriginal self determination. Nevertheless, patterns must be broken if there is going to be a progression towards Aboriginal socio-economic and cultural 'independence', which can only work if its foundation is at a 'community' grass-roots level. I believe that the Aboriginal people of Walgett and the surrounding towns in the north-west can become critical thinkers and leaders towards this vision, for three reasons: Walgett has a long history of political activism; the Aboriginal people form a high proportion of the local population in the area; and there are many professionally skilled Walgett Aboriginal people who currently live and work outside of the town—the out-of-townners.

Conclusion

It is crucial that Aboriginal people themselves identify and define their community, and its distinctive features and history, and that they acknowledge the input they have had in the shaping of their community and identity. I would ask people be fearless in their attempts to raise questions about the impact that white governments and their policies have played in the development of popularised notions of 'community'. I would ask them to examine the cycles and 'rules' of the 'community game' and how it can become a win-win outcome for all Aboriginal people in a particular community.

We need to investigate why there are so many Aboriginal 'suburbs' or 'ghettos' in small rural towns and cities, and why has it become acceptable for poverty-stricken 'black suburbs' across Australia to be viewed romantically as a part of contemporary Aboriginal culture. More importantly I want to highlight the impossible tasks required of community organisations and their workers who are left as the proverbial 'meat in the sandwich'. In

the 2000 paper, I hope to have offered a suggestion as to how the resourcefulness of local Aboriginal community organisations can be tapped. In this paper I have tried to address the various 'introduced and artificial boundaries' in our rural Aboriginal towns. I also want to urge these communities to clarify what and who their elders are, to nominate their leaders and their representatives as they see fit, and not as some outside body or policy would have them. And finally I have tried to acknowledge our 'out-of-towners', and to encourage them to take their skills back to their communities, with a view to tackling our internal issues productively and sensitively, bringing light to the myths of the 'community game', so that all players can be in a win-win situation.

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20. CDEP and the sub-economy: Milking the CDEP cow dry

Phil Bartlett

Background

When I first set about researching material for this paper I searched through extensive reports, reviews, papers, comparisons, and sample budgets—these are CDEP history. For years now strong arguments have been put forward covering almost every angle of CDEP, every convincing argument. These are found in policy papers, analyses of grant conditions, and so on. Apart from these documents we know CDEP has been reviewed, reworked, revamped, changed, enhanced, audited, upgraded, downsized, made to fit, nationalised, regionalised, localised, centralised and decentralised.

What more, then, can be added to the mountain of information that already exists? There is no point in rehashing all the information that is available, explaining the changes, the constraints and the needs. There is no point in repackaging the information to display it with more diplomacy, greater feeling, or force. I do not want to re-tell a well-told story of neglect, retardation, exploitation, lack of funding, lack of training. At the time of writing, another review was taking place to consider vital funding for CDEPs throughout Australia to meet the essential costs of managing this program. No more information is needed, but rather, maybe, an awakening, an honest listening in a way that causes people to hear and to act.

Here are some facts which should be convincing enough to make people hear, to make them see the value of CDEP. First, it has continued as a program for over 20 years. No other initiative like it has survived so long. It provides activities, training and employment to about 33 000 Aboriginal and Islander people throughout Australia. It is far cheaper to run than other government programs that are similar to some degree, such as work for the dole, or Job Network. It has allowed the withdrawal of government services in rural and remote communities and the downsizing of government departments, saving vast amounts of money and allowing the redirection of funding. It provides a community development and infrastructure program and social support programs at isolated locations. These would be expensive for government to establish and support. In one case, the closure by a community of its CDEP led to the collapse of an entire regional network of community organisations and outstations. Without CDEP it was impossible to cover operational costs—vehicles, communications, maintenance, wages, infrastructure, power, and water supply.

Is CDEP worth funding? I would answer, 'yes'. Is there justification for additional operational costs? Again I would answer, 'yes'. Will government provide the money needed to support CDEP? Who knows. If CDEP is wiped out is there anything else to replace it in the diverse locations and circumstances in which it exists? The answer to that is, 'no'.

The main objective of CDEP—and other expectations

The 23-year path that CDEP has travelled down has been a long and hard one. Today the objective of the CDEP program, as defined in the Spicer Review and adopted by ATSIC is:

To provide work for unemployed [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander] persons in community managed activities which assist the individual in acquiring skills which benefit the community develop business enterprises and/or lead to unsubsidised employment (Spicer 1997).

Most CDEP organisations would accept this as the CDEP objective. However, other stakeholders have other objectives which place high expectations and demands on CDEP organisations:

- Centrelink uses CDEP as their unpaid agent to manage the unemployed in locations where others cannot;
- the Federal government sees CDEP as an opportunity to remove 33 000 people from the unemployment figures;
- DEWRSB views CDEP as an avenue to get employment outcomes at a far cheaper rate than from other contractors;
- ATSIC sees CDEP as a way of supporting other community based programs and funded positions that cannot be funded to needed levels;
- business projects see CDEP as a source of subsidised wages where no other avenue exists;
- Job Network agencies use CDEP as a place to park long-term unemployed Aboriginal and Islander people because their success with Intensive Assistance clients is limited;
- State governments (not all) view CDEP as a way to get out of the establishment of expensive community infrastructure and services program in isolated communities;
- local government gains cheap community services and a cheap labour pool.

The list could go on, but it is already sufficient to make clear that other stakeholders make great demands on CDEP and often enlist the support of ATSIC Grant Conditions to do so.

CDEP is a bit like the milking cow that is relied on to deliver nourishment. Initially in the early days of CDEP the cow was fat—it was well fed with only a small number of supply points.

Then as time went by the 'food supply' for the cow was depleted because of the drying up of government funding in other areas that enhanced or supported the CDEP program. However the demand for milk is now far greater. So the cow is now not only badly fed, but has many supply points.

Figure 20.1 The fat CDEP 'cow', as she was

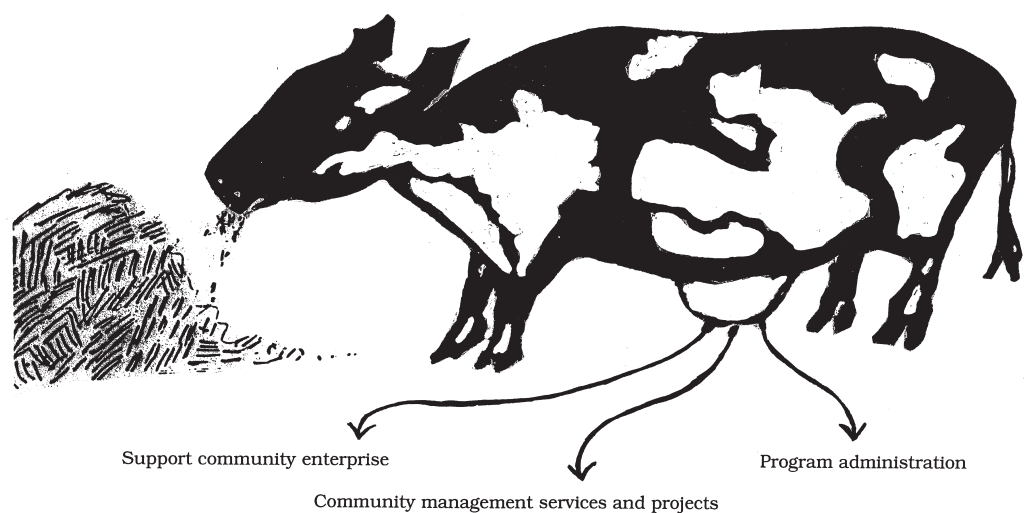


Figure 20.2 The starved CDEP 'cow', as she is now



CDEP: A sub-economy that excludes

I am not arguing that CDEP is worthless or a waste of time and that it should be scrapped. It has been the most stable and reliable program that has supported the Aboriginal economy. However, CDEP operates within a mindset that continues to exist in Australia, that determines where Aboriginal people and their organisations fit within the Australian economy and society.

This mindset views Aboriginal people and their organisations as customers of those engaged in business or service provision. This same mindset excludes Aboriginal people as business owners, proprietors, service providers. It sees them as welfare recipients rather than as dispensers of welfare programs and unemployed non-taxpayers.

Aboriginal people have been excluded from many things in Australian life so it would be surprising if it were different with regard to business and economic prosperity. My own experience has taught me this. I am 43 years of age and have always lived knowing that I am Aboriginal. I have been ever reminded of this fact by many events throughout my life that highlight the exclusion mindset.

- Early in life at school, playing cricket in the playground, I was not excluded from the game—that would be unfair or ‘un-Australian’. However, although I was entitled to field the ball and even bowl, if I took a wicket the batsman would not be out. That was exclusion in the year 1964.
- When the latest Sting-Ray bike landed in our town the local supplier wanted to promote it to the kids. A group of boys gathered near his shop and all were given a test drive on the bike. I was not allowed to ride the bike because I might steal it. That was exclusion in the year 1968.
- When my family moved to live in the city my mother had to find rental accommodation through real estate agents. On the phone things always sounded promising but when we arrived with the deposit the houses were no longer available. That was exclusion in the years 1970 to 1972.
- When I left high school I eagerly sought work and went to many interviews. The employers were very positive over the phone and I would sometimes spend hours preparing and travelling for the interview, only to be told that the job was filled when I arrived. A subsequent phone call would reveal that the position was still available. That was exclusion in the years 1972 to 1973.
- When I turned of the age where you might like to drink a beer, I would often arrive at a pub only to be told: ‘We don’t serve Aboriginal people in this hotel. You have to drink in the black bar.’ That was exclusion in the year 1975.
- When I joined the workforce I was well accepted as one of the workers and got on well with others. That was until I began to be promoted to positions of authority and all of a sudden others found it hard to accept an Aboriginal boss.

That would have been exclusion if I had bent to the pressure and rebellion. That was in the years 1980 to 1992.

- For the last seven years I have been working for Aboriginal corporations, managing CDEP and other development programs. My present organisation is involved in employment and training. Job Network agencies can earn up to \$10 000 per client to do what we are doing for \$2000 per client. This is exclusion, in the year 2001.
- Work for the dole projects get between \$4000 to \$6000 to do far less than we do for \$2800. This is exclusion, in the year 2001.
- Centrelink will only do work in handling welfare clients if it gets paid to do so. Our CDEP organisation has these extra duties added to their Grant Conditions and gets no explanation or training, let alone any money. This is exclusion, in the year 2001.
- Our CDEP organisations are determined as employers for industrial relations purposes, and bear all the legal obligations and costs. Our CDEP participants work for \$350 per fortnight, and when a national or State wage increase is approved to ensure Australian workers get a fair deal and are not living in poverty our CDEP participants do not get the increase. They have to work less hours to fit within the hourly rates of pay. This is exclusion, in the year 2001.

These examples are not presented as some sort of a political statement but rather to make clear the mindset that needs to be broken if Aboriginal people are to become real players and participants in the greater Australian economy. The events I have mentioned are just a small sample of typical events in the lives of Aboriginal people. The existence of an exclusion mentality has perpetuated a view that Aboriginal people and their organisations are the customers, or welfare recipients, and not credible participants in business. To involve Aboriginal people in economic and business side of Australian life we need to exclude the exclusion mentality. We need to fix the inequities that are present, and change the mindset.

The process of milking the CDEP cow dry has taken place over many years. It has not happened through drastic cuts nor by cancelling the program, but by demanding more and more of the program and the community managers of CDEP while at the same time not allowing CDEP to receive the same financial rewards as other agencies involved in management of welfare and community services.

What can we do about it?

I began by stating that all that needs to be said on CDEP has been said. In addition to detailed representations to ATSIC on a wide variety of issues, problems and policy matters by CDEP working groups, there were five national CDEP conferences in the year 2000, two State meetings in the 18 months up to the end of 2000, and three regional conferences. There is more than enough information to make some good decisions for the future good of all stakeholders involved in CDEP.

We now need action instead of talk, at national and regional levels, from ATSIC, DEWRSB, State Departments of Training, Centrelink, and DFACS. CDEP workers and those outside who are supporters of CDEP must give these and other relevant agencies a clear message. We must tell them that the major program in the development of Aboriginal people, that has existed for 23 years providing community development, employment, training, community services and mainstream employment, is starving to death, and that despite the unlimited numbers of papers, reports, reviews and conferences nobody is listening.

We must tell them that more and more expectations are being placed on the CDEP scheme, not through the fair payment for service provision but through non-negotiated Grant Conditions that bind us to the unworkable. There is a continuing inequity in Australia—a sub-economy that constitutes separate development, with far fewer resources than the mainstream economy. Inequality is entrenched, and institutionalised. Nelson Mandela could define this situation in just one word.

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21. Measuring expropriation: Enumeration of opportunity costs imposed on the remote community of Burringurrah, Western Australia

Dan Kean

Development of the economic base necessary for social empowerment requires four factors operating in unison: land, labour, capital, and knowledge. This paper sketches how European settlement in the Gascoyne pastoral region expropriated Aboriginal people from these means of production, how the dispossessed people returned to their lands and implemented development using their knowledge and a capital contribution from the State, and why this development is under threat from the imposition of bureaucratic decisions on the CDEP system. Finally it proposes that the opportunity costs of curtailing this development must be enumerated in order to support arguments in favour of continuing a workable CDEP program.

The Burringurrah Wajarri are the northernmost band of the Wajarri language speakers of the Yamatji nations. They enjoy custodianship of the lands surrounding Burringurrah, the largest rock in the world, named Mt Augustus by the Europeans and measured at over twice the size of Uluru. Springs under their care were the last source of water in the event of severe drought. Burringurrah provided refuge for stricken Yamatji throughout the region at such times. Rock engravings, cultural sites, and lore concerning Mt Augustus survive as reminders of the times before the European invasion.

Brutal land grabs in the Gascoyne from 1880 until 1910 expropriated their traditional lands. Outright killing and massacre and the rounding up and detention of other resisters and victims on the Bernier and Dorre Island VD—Leprosy concentration camps smashed all resistance. Survivors were then permitted to live on their ancestral lands under the European's terms—those of slavery.

Labour was expropriated by this slavery. If anyone doubts that a system of slavery existed they should consider the facts. Runaways, 'cheeky' recalcitrants, or those that refused to labour faced death, jail, or beating at the hands of the police, unofficially sanctioned posses, or overseers (who were often of mixed race, a feature common to many slave regimes). People were given meagre rations and families were punished through the withholding of rations if they bucked the system.

Prominent members of Western Australia's squattocracy owned stations on the Gascoyne and built their wealth on this system. In the 1950s this peaked at a pound sterling for a pound of wool. Most Gascoyne properties were shearing 15 000 to 30 000 head at the time. This expropriated wealth was available for investment in the minerals boom of the 1960s.

The 1967 referendum and the wage determinations of the 1960s resulted in the Yamatji families being thrown off the stations. They ended up as fringe dwellers in the regional towns of Meekatharra and Carnarvon. Knowledge, in the form of caring for each other in strong kinship groups and immutable (unbreakable) relationship to country, was the only thing left to them.

In 1987 there was a return to country by the families descended from the traditional custodians of the Burringurrah Wajarri. They took over the Mt James lease near the ancestral seat of Mt Augustus to escape the social problems of the fringe camps. Everyone lived in bough shelters and used their own funds and labour to survive. ATSIC finally invested heavily in the town, providing housing, power, water sewerage, an airstrip, and sealed roads after 1994. Now we have a fairly well set up town, and maintain our community using the CDEP program. Infrastructure and services that come within the sphere of State Government—health, education, additional housing, and law and order—remain inadequate.

ATSIC's investments might be seen as a form of mutual obligation or compensation by European Australia for the expropriation of land and labour and its manifestations—the very obvious and embarrassing social and economic deprivation suffered by Aboriginal people as a result. Now these services, reliant primary on CDEP, are under threat by those attacking ATSIC programs and demanding 'job outcomes', 'mutual obligation' and accountability. This economic-rationalist zeal for 'making them work' is strongly reminiscent of the ideologically driven activities of the missionaries, and even of labour organisers of the 1960s, who 'knew what was best' and did not listen, or pay attention to the consequences.

Policy makers removed from everyday life demand enumeration of job outcomes and mutual obligations. The CDEPManager computer system counts how many days the CDEP participants work. Even if hunting or social activity is included, as foreshadowed by the McClure Report (1997), how do you measure it and put it on a form? People going shooting on the spur of the moment or sitting on the veranda solving a family problem with Auntie are hardly going to write it down. We have a 'no work, no pay' policy, but take 'notional activity' into account when doing timesheets. It is pretty obvious who is putting in and who is not. We have a good mix of families in the office and among supervisors, so there are checks and balances on kinship obligations.

CDEP is being drawn into the mutual obligation matrix and is losing its thrust as a community program. This will make the program increasingly irrelevant to participants. They will lose ownership, and the forms and bureaucracy will make CDEP participation as onerous as being on Centrelink. Our workers will vote with their feet. Our funding base will shrink as our participant numbers decline. It is doubtful if the town's administration could continue without the core CDEP funding, and our organisation groans under additional bureaucratic imposts.

The bureaucrats—and academics—do not take into account how CDEPs are saving government organs in terms of opportunity costs. An example that springs to mind is the spread of CDEPs across northern Australia. Without CDEP, the coast would be empty and

open to poachers, as well as harder for tourists to access, for example at Kakadu. The defence forces used these populations extensively during World War II. 'Populate or perish' justified post-war migration, but most arrivals settled in urban and regional areas. The continent would contain huge swathes of unoccupied land if it were not for the Aboriginal populations.

We are saving the government a lot of money on CDEP. The following is a partial list of our cost-saving activities.

- 250 members of fairly dysfunctional families are away from Meekatharra and Carnarvon with savings to the cost of social services, the education system, health, patrolling, justice, housing, fixing vandalism, and other such things that marginalised people impose on communities.
- The community by and large polices itself. Little police time is spent in Burringurrah.
- There are savings to the justice system, with less incarceration and the community's willingness to accept and supervise Community Service Orders, parolees and juveniles. Everyone by and large keeps out of trouble on the community.
- The Shire, with a population of only 400, receives substantial funds because of the 250 residents of Burringurrah, through the \$80 000 that is received yearly for public roads.
- By using rangers and labour resident on the community, the recently expanded National Parks in the Gascoyne rangelands will make cost savings.
- Our intellectual property in the promotion of the Burringurrah story around Mt Augustus, and the increasing profile of Burringurrah Artists who are becoming a tourist attraction, promotes regional development in an area that has few prospects now that pastoralism has declined.
- We save Centrelink a lot of time and stress by acting as a go-between for welfare recipients, and taking 100 people off their books and onto the CDEP system. We recently audited ourselves and spent three hours a day liaising with Centrelink on issues outside the CDEP Management process.
- We rescue tourists and respond to other State Emergency Services call-outs, such as tracking lost walkers and car rollovers.
- The community provides a health clinic, swimming pool, and upgraded Telecom facilities to a poorly serviced region, to the benefit of surrounding pastoralists, kangaroo shooters and passing tourists, and service employees.
- CDEP enables the control of feral animals, the culling of kangaroo populations and other matters to do with looking after country such as fire regimes and control.
- CDEP resources the State government responsibility for water, power, sewerage, and environmental health.
- CDEP provides teacher's aides and ancillary staff to the school.

- CDEP provides the postal service.
- The only all-weather airstrip in the district is maintained by CDEP.
- The community store is supported by CDEP and is the only fuel outlet for 300 kilometres.

The scale of these activities is only possible with CDEP. My fear is we cannot enumerate this. CAEPR should extend its research into enumerating these opportunity costs to strengthen our arguments. ATSIC should redouble its efforts to see that community organisations are paid for the services they perform. The Public Affairs Unit should direct a massive publicity campaign highlighting the CDEP scheme to 'mainstream' Australia on our behalf.

The Department of Finance cannot be allowed to get away with the clawbacks that happen every year. The threat of a nationwide withdrawal from CDEP and return to welfare for a month is a tool that would show the present government's poverty of imagination and spirit, and it would only harm the politicians and bureaucrats. The National Working Group should be supported, and we should be prepared to go all the way if we cannot bring the appropriate government investment into our people and organisations through negotiation.

We have unrecognised skills, or intellectual capital, when it comes to dealing with our societies and our land. Give us our investment; let us use our social skills to bring our labour force up to scratch and give us the necessary rights to native title. Then and only then is there any realistic chance of development.

22. A part of the local economy: Junjuwa Community/Bunuba Inc., Western Australia

Rowena Mouda

In the Kimberley, we practice our law and culture right through the year. Our elders are very well respected and play a big part in decision making in the Fitzroy Valley.

Junjuwa Community receives funding from ATSIC for two programs. One is the Community Housing and Infrastructure program, and the other is CDEP. Junjuwa is further supported by the collection of contributions from the participants, or 'chuck-ins' as we call them. For example all CDEP participants have to chuck in from their CDEP wages for fuel and stores for their outstations, to help develop their communities. This is necessary because the money that we get from ATSIC is not enough to fund us right through the year. Therefore, because communities want to get their outstations developed, the community members chuck in for their fuel to get to and from their outstations.

In addition to looking after Junjuwa Community, Junjuwa looks after six outstations with the funding it receives from ATSIC. One of these is town-based, and there are five others out between 50 and 100 kilometres from Fitzroy Crossing, on dirt tracks that get closed during the wet season.

There are over 1000 CDEP positions in Fitzroy Crossing and outlying communities. This means that CDEP alone brings in just under \$14 million each year to Fitzroy Valley. It is estimated that a total of \$20 million in government funding is directed towards the Aboriginal communities in the area, so CDEP funding is a huge contribution to the economy of the area. Fitzroy Valley is very dependent on CDEP: if it were not for the 1000 CDEP positions, the official unemployment rate of Fitzroy Crossing would easily exceed 50 per cent.

As a community, Junjuwa has been in existence for 25 years. Its main purpose has been to provide housing and accommodation to Aboriginal people who have been relocated to the Fitzroy Crossing area. At Junjuwa, CDEP is used to deliver social services in the community. It provides services to youth and the old age pensioners, money management, construction training, office skills development, meals on wheels, and community administration. It also provides housing maintenance and construction to the community infrastructure. Some of our projects would be defined as self motivated or self supporting community service enterprises. Examples of such enterprises are the occasional care program—that is a CDEP-supported project that the women have asked for in our community—the housing and accommodation service, and meals on wheels.

CDEP gives the push needed to establish and maintain these programs, generating a high employment level that would be impossible otherwise. There is a social benefit from CDEP in communities like Junjuwa. Work projects in the community enhance the community, and there is also support for the administration of the community.

Participation in the CDEP is voluntary, but Junjuwa has set minimum hours that must be performed to obtain the full CDEP wage. CDEP encourages people to work together. Whereas social security payments are made to individuals, CDEP on-cost payments are made to groups. This encourages people to join together in family groups, to work together. Some family groups are in the process of establishing outstations, which takes some pressure off our town community housing, as well as giving people the opportunity to develop on their homelands. These smaller groups can join together under an umbrella group like Junjuwa, which creates the optimum size for achieving the best economies of scale. Pooling resources in this way allows for major capital projects to be undertaken.

It is not intended that CDEP be used to develop subsidised enterprises to compete with existing mainstream businesses. This goes against the CDEP spirit. However, where CDEP can be used to enhance an individual's skills, so that they may obtain unsubsidised employment, that is another matter. There is a potential for businesses to enter partnerships with Junjuwa, so that Junjuwa provides subsidy wages for the businesses, and the businesses provide skills, work experience and employment for the participants. For example we have a company called Leedal which has ownership of the local pub in Fitzroy Crossing, and the local supermarket. Junjuwa owns 40 per cent of Leedal. Indeed the long-term survival of the community hinges on developing partnerships with small businesses, industries, and government organisations, which will lead to a greater participation by Aboriginal people in the non-welfare sectors of the local economy. These partnerships can extend beyond wage subsidy to joint ventures in major projects.

Junjuwa has recently undertaken a major restructuring process, to establish a more stable community management structure. This will result in an emphasis on extended family groups as the foundation of the Bunuba language group. The community itself, as a place, is still known as Junjuwa, but from November 2000 our administrative and economic arm has been known as Bunuba Inc., that is by the name of the language group. Each family group will have permanent representation on the Bunuba Inc. Council. The long-term ambition for this community is, essentially, to establish a long-term economy, with sustainable social and commercial enterprises. Bunuba Inc. has the potential to achieve a high degree of economic independence. The community is aware of the many hurdles that it needs to overcome to achieve this, and initiatives have commenced to address some of these.

We see the health and success of Bunuba Inc. as being totally linked with the health and success of the economy of the wider Fitzroy Valley community. So we believe that it is in our interests to work together and support each other for our mutual benefit. With open communication, mutual encouragement and support we, as a united community, can achieve a more sustainable future for the Fitzroy Crossing area.

23. Self determination and CDEP: Tjurma Homelands Council, South Australia

Katalin Mindszenty

I would like to put Tjurma's situation in the context of self determination. Tjurma is a small, remote homelands community in the Musgrave Ranges, 500 kilometres south-east of Alice Springs. The community members want to keep a traditional homelands lifestyle. Most of our people are artists, and they also have other skills, which they put to full use. We have 45 people on our CDEP program. Prior to my arrival there had been about six or seven CDEP managers who came and went because of the uncertain situation and the local politics of the time. We have built up our CDEP from nothing, and hopefully the next move is to build up the homelands, which have been eroded.

To be viable, the homelands lifestyle requires a communications system, which means telephones at all the homelands. It requires access to transport, and it requires commitment by those who administer the funds, and also by people like myself, who are on the ground, working. It requires a commitment to teach the people any skills that we have as workers in the field so that they can take over on their own behalf. Putting this into practice, teaching the communications skills—and also to learning them—this is what self determination involves.

Self determination means, in part, 'giving the people a chance to give'. It is not just taking, but acknowledging and appreciating those gifts given in sharing their culture, knowledge and wisdom. That means we have to listen, it means we have to hone our communication skills, to sit down and take the time to understand what people who are from a different culture are saying.

People in Tjurma Homelands have to be empowered with resources, management skills, and money management skills. They face all the problems that prevail on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands—substance abuse problems, and all sorts of other social issues, such as parenting, income levels, lack of opportunity for higher income levels and skills enhancement. These are all big problems, and perhaps bigger because of the remoteness of the community.

Tjurma Homelands is Honey Ant Dreaming. We operate from Amata. The Tjurma people are the people who have come from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands, and they are the traditional owners. There has been talk of merging with Amata, starting with our art centre. The Tjurma people do not want to merge with Amata, which is a larger community with a lot of problems. They want to keep their homelands lifestyle.

We have turned our art centre back into a community centre where everyone is welcome, not just artists. We are going to put back the kitchen for the aged, so people can work with other people coming and going, in the way that they are used to. Most of our people, and most of our councillors, are artists, for example Vera Bryan is a painter and Muna Kulyuru, is a batik artist. They are incredibly gifted in so many ways, and art is one of these. It is impressive that these talented artists are also active in community affairs.

24. Job creation and 'mutual obligation': Tapatjatjaka Community Government Council, Northern Territory

Harry Scott

My comments are directed at the policy makers. I want to challenge the notions of job creation and mutual obligation. Titjikala is 120 kilometres south of Alice Springs, in central Australia. It has a community of between 275 and 290 people, distributed between the main community of Titjikala and four or five outstations. We have 90 people on our CDEP program. We are at the limit, and we do not have, and probably do not intend to have, any jobs for them.

I will first list the various jobs that we do at Titjikala that are focused on service delivery for government organisations. We have CDEP people working in the administration, doing the work of local government, collecting rubbish for the council, and doing other local council work. We provide a vehicle to take patients in and out of town for appointments, to help out Territory Health. We manage the whole postal delivery service at Titjikala and the outstations. We provide assistance to the Education Department in the classrooms. We run our own night patrol, in the absence of a police presence. We organise the paperwork for births, deaths and marriages in the community. We deliver the aged-care program. We deliver the Jobs, Education and Training program for the creche. We provide the interface with Centrelink, and we do some work for Transport and Works.

The community budget is some \$3.5 million. Of that, 68 per cent comes from ATSIC. CDEP funding is 42 per cent of that 68 per cent. In a remote community environment it is unrealistic to attempt to meet any of the 'outcomes' related to the concept of starting people on CDEP, moving them into top-up arrangements and then into full-time work. The only employment available is there because of government department funding. The closest connection with the 'real' economy in a lot of remote communities, including ours, is with the nearest major city, in this case Alice Springs. There are many diverse organisations, activities and enterprises possible under CDEP, but there needs to be a clear delineation for remote CDEP communities. They exist in part to ease the embarrassment of the unemployment rate but, more importantly, they exist because the local people are determined to build their community, and to protect their culture, their language, and their families.

We have people who work far in excess of the hours that are allowed under the rules, and they work because of the community. They work because of their families. The whole concept of mutual obligation is really a white-man's concept. As in the case in a lot of remote communities, for 93 per cent of the people at Titjikala, English is a second language. They have a significant and well-founded distrust of any white person coming onto the community because of what they have experienced. I can say only that I am sorry to have heard about it, and can only offer apologies for the degradation and insults, rapes,

shootings and abuses that they have had to put up with. So when we get some fantastic gentlemen in suits coming in to tell us about a magnificent one-year program that is going to create employment, it is a long way from reality.

I would like to give an idea of some of the things that remote communities need. We are hamstrung by the rules that government places on ATSIC, in terms of the wage rates. We need some flexibility, to be able to acknowledge the extra work that various people in the community put in. I would strongly urge that the government acknowledge the benefit that they receive from the CDEP program, and consciously pay a CDEP remote rate greater than the unemployment rate.

The concept of 'one in, all in' should be supported in remote communities. CDEP is not about employment. CDEP is about community development. If anything is to come out of CDEP in terms of employment we have to start with community development. There is no mainstream employment, and the only real prospect for employment comes from enterprises. The biggest danger there is that the whitefella comes in and gets all excited and sets up an enterprise, then the whitefella leaves, and it all goes back down again.

CDEP on the remote communities is about self determination. It's about people establishing their own culture. We talk very freely about jobs, about work, about enterprise activities, and we carry a lot of cultural assumptions under those terms. We tend to forget that the Indigenous people had a very well organised economy—and an exceptionally well organised community. They had never experienced anything like the Protestant work ethic, they had no concept at all of nine-to-five work. They do what needs to be done, in the minimum time that it takes to do it. They are probably one of the most efficient groups of people that you could ever meet. They refuse to organise for something three weeks in advance; they organise it just before it is necessary.

We need to put the concept of community development back in front of the concept of employment for CDEP. Any employment that will come out of a remote community will only come because the Indigenous people have developed their community to a point where an enterprise would be able to subsist. What is more, any remote community that wants to seriously look at enterprise really has to address a three-year planning program, which requires a three-year funding program.

Finally, there should be an effort to stop stripping programs and dollars out of ATSIC. That little list of things given earlier is simply one of the service delivery areas that we do for government. There are a lot of other areas that CDEP is involved in, and we are hamstrung because when we go to ATSIC for funds we find that they just do not have the money. The training budget should be pulled out of DEWRSB and put back into ATSIC. Many of the programs which have been stripped from ATSIC need to go back in there.

25. Regional development and CDEP: Tjuwanpa Outstation Resource Centre, Northern Territory

John Nicholas

My topic is regional development. I want to put forward the proposition that within States and Territories where there are regions or sub-regions that are marginal economically, the CDEP has at least the potential to become important to State and Territory governments in terms of actually putting regional development policy on the ground.

The Northern Territory government has created a document called *Foundations for the Future*. And I am told by senior Northern Territory public servants that their jobs will basically be accounted according to how they succeed in laying those foundations. One of those foundations is regional development, and that is an important plank of that particular set of policies. A second one that they all say is extremely important is Aboriginal economic and social development. That this is important to the Northern Territory government is hardly surprising when you consider that, at the 1996 Census, 24 per cent of the Territory's population were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and that proportion is more or less represented in the electorate. Perhaps this is an advantage that Aboriginal people in other part of Australia do not have.

For both of these policies, the Northern Territory government, and perhaps this applies to other governments as well, will find it very difficult to get their runs on the board without CDEP. Because in many of the areas that they are looking at in terms of regional development, it is CDEP that has the potential to be, and is, the engine of development.

We at Tjuwanpa have seen this as an opportunity to move towards practical results. Our committee has defined itself in terms of a region that covers the language and country associated with the Western Arranda people. This region of about 25 000 square kilometres has three local government organisations: one at Wallace Rockhole, one at Hermannsburg—or Ntaria—and one out at Areyonga. It has three CDEPs: one at Wallace Rockhole, one at Ntaria, and the last is Tjuwanpa, near Ntaria. We are the outstation resource centre rather than a local government organisation, although we have local government functions. In the region there are two gas fields and a pipeline, and there are busy gazetted roads, full of tourists going to King's Canyon, Glen Helen, and Palm Valley. There are the 40 outstations and about 300 kilometres of outstation roads. The region is fairly well defined geographically by ranges of mountains and a valley as well as being culturally bounded to the extent it is largely Western Arranda country.

We wanted to see if we could develop what happened in our organisation with regard to men who have an interest in yellow machinery—our roads and earth-moving gang. We have been talking to the Northern Territory government's Transport and Works Department not only with regard to what we need to do to look after our own roads, but

also to get contracts for gazetted roads in the region. In order to do that we had to work with the government in terms of the two planks of government policy outlined above. We were told to talk about regional development: 'Talk regional, and we'll listen. Talk on your own and we won't.' The second plank, of course, was Aboriginal development policy. So we negotiated with the Northern Territory government, and have reached the point where the Minister has made an offer along the lines that if we come up with some sort of memorandum of understanding between the three CDEPs and the Areyonga community—an agreement between those four organisations which combines their skills and pools their machinery—and come back with a firm proposal, then they will give us what is called a Certificate of Expediency for as much roads maintenance work as we want on those hundreds of kilometres of gazetted roads. So in that way we were able to fit in with local regional development policy, to start thinking a bit regionally and co-operating in order to align ourselves with government policy, so that we could get the work.

We have just finished the first round of negotiations between those three CDEPs and Areyonga. It has gone well, and we all seem to be thinking together. We now need to go back, draw up the formal plan, and then put the proposal. We have also pretty well secured an offer from DEWRSB to provide us with a full-time dirt boss and trainer, whose job it will be to ensure that the quality of accredited training and dirt management is such that we can fulfil those bits of the contract that we choose to build on.

I can make a more general point from this local example. There is a potential for people to think a little bit sideways, about how CDEP can fit in with other things that governments do. If State and Territory governments have policies that CDEP can help to fulfil, then think hard about how to go for it. Because if you help them, they will help you. The Northern Territory government could not do this sort of thing without CDEP, and it would be nice if the Federal government realised that.

26. Catering for mobility and diversity: Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation CDEP, Northern Territory

Rupert Manners

We have a large CDEP at Bawinanga, with about 350 people on outstations and 160 in Maningrida itself. As a result we probably see a lot of the problems which are found generally in CDEP schemes. The CDEP is a very multifaceted organisation: it is income support to some people, it is work to other people, to some of the other organisations in the community it is wages subsidy, and it is long-term employment for a lot of people. We should accept that this is the situation and we should not try to push CDEP in ways that it is not designed to go.

People are very mobile in the Maningrida area. They move to and from the outstations and Maningrida. Sometimes they work in the conventional way, and at other times they move out to their outstations and occupy themselves with hunting and gathering. We need a system which provides adequate rewards for the variety of activities people are engaged in. CDEP as it was originally run did not do that, so in Maningrida we are proposing to put in place a three-tiered system. People who are living on their outstations would get paid for 3.6 hours a day; those who are working in town, when they do the standard sort of morning, would get paid for 4.6 hours a day; and those who were sitting down would get paid for 2 hours a day, basically just to keep them going. Within that framework too, if people wanted to work full-time we would try to find them full-time work within one of our ongoing projects, or on one of the projects which the other agencies in Maningrida are running.

This framework suits the local people because it caters for mobility. At one time they might be at ceremony, and so they would get their 3.6 hours. Then they might come back and do some work for a while and they would get the 4.6 hours. Then they might take a break for some reason, and they would get the 2 hours. The outstation people like the concept because it means that people are encouraged to go out bush and look after their country. The town people like the concept because they get a better payment for working and get a reward for their effort. The only people who probably dislike it are those who are sitting down.

The framework gives people choice. We should not be telling people what to do, we should rather be giving them a choice as to what they want to do. If they have the choice between living out bush or working in town, then they can make their choice and get the rewards for that activity.

There is a risk for the CDEP organisation in running a program like this because if we ended up with 350 people on the outstations and 150 people all working like Trojans on 4.6 hours, we would not get funded enough by ATSIC to cover the bill. That is one reason

why the \$20.00 that is distributed to CDEP workers through Centrelink should actually be distributed by CDEP organisations, so that we can use it to provide top-ups. The CDEP in a place like Maningrida needs to be seen as a giant labour pool for everybody to draw on, and the businesses which are subsidised through CDEP wages should use those subsidies to create more enterprises, as we ourselves have done. That would provide a much fairer and equitable system for running CDEP within the context of a place like Maningrida.

27. Resourcing CDEP: The case of East Gippsland Aboriginal CDEP Co-operative, Victoria

Lionel Dukakis

I want to start off with a point, probably a political one, that was raised by my brother John Martin from Goulburn Valley CDEP. Victoria does not get the same recognition as the rest of Australia. For example it was said that the Chair of ATSIC would never come from Victoria because we were not black enough, or had no culture. So all credit to Geoff Clarke, he has done a great job. I am not saying that our needs are greater or less than those of our brothers and sisters in other parts of Australia. I just wanted to make that point that Victoria has the same problems—social, economic, housing, health and unemployment—as the rest of Australia.

I would like to concentrate here on the positive things that we are doing down in Bairnsdale. I am not so much focused on the negative things. Many of those are brought upon us—they are negative in that sense.

We are a CDEP with 97 participants from a wide range of age groups. We are 300 kilometres east of Melbourne, in a rural situation. In a range of about 200 kilometres there are three CDEP organisations working very well. About 50 of our participants work on CDEP within the organisation in administrative roles, and within the co-operative. I myself am on CDEP, because we do not have that money for administration from ATSIC. They only fund the CEO, and a couple of other things. It is not a bad thing to be on CDEP in itself, but if someone in my position has to go on CDEP then it is depriving someone less fortunate, who needs to acquire skills, of the chance to go on CDEP.

It has been reiterated time and time again that Aboriginal organisations have to use CDEP for administrative staff because the funding is being milked. Phil Bartlett's paper in this volume (Ch. 20) provides an excellent chronology of what is happening to CDEP generally.

We are a registered building company with three building crews, and we tender on the open market for contracts. We won a tender for the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria, which we are in the process of completing. The sad thing is that we are being scrutinised so much by the bureaucrats above us because we are blackfellas doing a job. That is very frustrating.

We also have a fencing crew who are working flat out. They have tendered and won quotes, and are actually knocking back work. We have 39 houses with East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative, and we do the maintenance work for the Co-operative. We have women's programs, including sewing, and practical skills around the home such as budgeting, cooking, and parenting.

As an ATSIC Councillor for the Binjirru region of Victoria I find it very frustrating that we could do more things and employ more people, if we had the resources. We have a waiting list of 70. One thing that we as Councillors have got to do is push our Commissioners to get those resources down our way. We are not an isolated instance, this is probably the case right across Australia. Some people put CDEP down, but there are people out there who can't wait to get on CDEP to get some skills.

In summary, the sooner the bureaucrats realise that the participants *are* the CDEP, and let them do things the way they think they should be done, the better things will be. Equity is a key issue. Equity is only a word to us Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of today. What we get feels more like exclusion. We want the bureaucrats to make the change from a word, to reality for our people. I would like to think the concerns expressed in this volume will be looked at seriously, and actions taken for a better CDEP scheme. I would not like to think that my children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren will have to sit down in the future talking about the same issues.

Although I have been critical of ATSIC, I am not pinpointing the staff. I know that in Victoria ATSIC is under-resourced, and the structure of the organisation has hurt their State office. I do not know if this is true throughout Australia, but certainly the morale of the staff in ATSIC in Victoria State office is so bad that we cannot get the full use of our support staff.

We have to think of the positive things that CDEPs are doing around Australia and go with them, but we should not forget the negative things. Hopefully in years to come the many positive things that we are doing, to better our people and to give our children a better future, will come to fruition.

28. Adequate funding as a question of equity: Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust CDEP, Victoria

Siva Nalliah

The CDEP program is vital for the life of the Lake Tyers community. We have 73 participants in our community program. In 1998–99 the program was suspended for nine months, and we saw a marked increase in domestic violence, alcohol-related violence, and a general unrest in the community. This is also reflected in the police statistics. On the recommencement of the CDEP program we saw a marked decline in most of these social problems.

However, there are numerous inequities in the way that the CDEP program operates. Many of these arise from the heavy burden that is placed on CDEP programs by other essential services, namely Commonwealth and the local government services. We are in a remote community, so we are responsible for the municipal services, including garbage collection, road and path maintenance, sewerage pond maintenance, and water distribution. But we are not adequately funded, so we have to rely on CDEP participants to perform all these services. Most of the CDEP participants who deliver the services have gone through all the accredited training programs that are available. Unfortunately we cannot pay them award wages. If the CDEP participants who provide the services in our community went 35 kilometres to Lakes Entrance and provided the same labour, they would be paid about 300 per cent of what we pay them. And the irony is that Lake Tyers pays council rates and water rates, but we receive no service from the Shire. That is the reality.

The Commonwealth funds us to run a health clinic, and also after-hours patient transport services. Because we are in a remote area, there is no public transport. There are very few private vehicles available to transport patients. So we run a transport service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Now what does the Commonwealth government give us? They give us money to buy two vehicles—and wages a for part-time driver. I cannot comprehend their logic. They give us capital money for two vehicles, but recurrent funding is only for a part-time driver. Our medical driver has got the First Aid Certificate, but I still pay him minimum wages. If he worked at Lakes Entrance, he would get a much higher income. Because we have inadequate funding, I ask CDEP participants to work the weekday night-shift, from five in the evening till seven o'clock in the morning, for \$20. On Saturday and Sunday they get \$50 per day, for a 24-hour shift. That is the reality. They do not even fund us for administration.

We run a day-care centre. There are three CDEP participants who are completing a two-year course. They will be getting their certificates shortly, but I cannot put them on permanency or full award. Because we have no funding. So they will complete their two-year course—and come back to CDEP wages. As an accountant, I am happy to keep them on CDEP wages because then I cannot be sued. Because, fortunately, CDEP wages do not have an award. So I can afford to pay them the minimum, even though they are qualified, and delivering the same service as qualified staff. That is another reality.

In addition to these commercial services we also provide social and welfare programs. We provide aged-care services and we provide meals on wheels to the elders. For the latter we are paid the grand sum of \$1.10 for each meal delivered. It is possible to run the service only because we use CDEP staff to prepare the meals, we use the CDEP buildings, and we use the CDEP staff to transport them. We also provide the home care and home maintenance. All this is done by CDEP participants.

We have been successful in moving into income-generating activities. We have started a plant nursery. There are 15 participants in that, all of them undergoing accredited training. Training is delivered on-site, where the trainers sit and work with the participants. There is no classroom training, they work with the participants, and it has been very effective. Within the last three months we have sold about 40 000 seedlings, and we are really targeting to expand. We have also received some grants for revegetation projects. But the bottom line is whether this can be independently run and commercially viable. I have my doubts. We do not have the economies of scale to run a commercially independent operation.

We have started the production of pallets. We buy and saw the timber, and then we market those pallets. We have been reasonably successful, we have sold between \$20 000 and \$30 000-worth of pallets, but the enterprise cannot be commercially viable. We have to rely on, fall back on, CDEP subsidy that provides wages, electricity and everything. To be commercially viable, we would have to look at alternative arrangements like capital input, where we would be funded so that we could buy into already operating businesses, or network with other CDEP schemes and pool our resources to acquire businesses. We are too small to run a commercially viable business independently. There were a lot of incentives given for us to employ permanent staff out of the CDEP. I transferred four CDEP participants into full-time work, and at the end of the 26th week I took them back to CDEP. I had no money to pay them full-time wages. We do not generate that kind of money.

29. Supporting employment inside and outside the community: Woorabinda CDEP, Queensland

Elizabeth Young

Woorabinda is a community situated 200 kilometres south-west of Rockhampton, with a population of around about 1000 people. The largest group in the population is children up to 15 years old. The average age of death five or 10 years ago was 46 years of age, and it is probably lower now. The land at Woorabinda is in the form of a Deed of Grant in Trust lease. The community is situated near the Mimosa Creek and is surrounded by the Woorabinda property, an area of 40 000 acres.

Within this community there are a number of organisations and government agencies that operate, along with the local council, for the benefit of the whole community. Woorabinda CDEP is a public limited company that serves the community in a number of ways. We have 191 people employed in the Woorabinda Community Development Program, with the majority of those working within Woorabinda itself. This includes participants who are provided with the standard two days of employment and others who receive top-up wages on a regular basis. About 50 participants are employed outside of the community, mostly in Rockhampton or the surrounding areas such as Mt Morgan, Yeppoon, and Benaraby. At the moment Woorabinda CDEP is in the process of a name change to the Capricornia CDEP Ltd. This reflects the growth of our CDEP, which re-commenced in April 1997 with 101 participants.

Woorabinda CDEP operates in two ways. There is the normal CDEP operation where participants are supervised directly by supervisors and team leaders in their daily tasks. Then there are participants working with other organisations, companies, or government agencies outside the community, whose work is set by the host employers. This second option gives participants the opportunity to work in mainstream society. The normal CDEP operation in Woorabinda, which is a relatively closed and remote community, places less importance on improving work ethics. This is not only because of limited job opportunities but also takes account of the historical facts of the forced removal of Aboriginal people from traditional lands, and the destruction of Aboriginal societies throughout the State of Queensland.

In our community many of our people have a bleak outlook for the future. Lack of education, and alcohol and health problems are fairly well prevalent. There is still a welfare mentality in the community, and so there is a need to question whether CDEPs in remote communities should be regarded only as a stepping stone to mainstream society. If they are, this leaves a problem. In our case for example, if someone wanted to leave Woorabinda and make the move to Rockhampton there is no support system in place for them. As a result, people just become another statistic in areas such as the prison system, suicide, and unemployment. And for young girls the only way out is to have more babies to sustain

a larger income. We have been working for the past three and a half years since the recommencement of the CDEP to bring about changes in attitudes, with some success. Unfortunately, again due to lack of jobs within the community, some of the success stories have been forced to leave Woorabinda.

Things have been made more difficult because of the poor financial situation of the past and present councils. Woorabinda CDEP has at present over 20 activities. These can be separated into two groups—basically the profitable and the non-profitable. The latter are administered directly by the Woorabinda CDEP Ltd, and the profitable activities come out under a subsidiary company called Yoogarnunni Yakah. This was set up to protect the not-for-profit status of Woorabinda CDEP Ltd.

We employ 12 workers in our administration activities. The positions include coordinator, assistant coordinators, accountant, administrative workers, newsletter editor and work supervisors. We are building an extension to our office, which finally will give everyone their own workplace. In the community care program there are a number of sub-activities. These include workers in a retail store, butcher's shop, women's shelter, aged care, primary and high schools, Woorabinda Council, and the Black Boy youth facility. In all more than \$200 000 in CDEP wages is a direct saving to the Woorabinda Council. Other activities of benefit to the community are in the health areas, where we have workers in the health clinics, Health and Community Care buildings, and the hospital. A sewing group produces curtains for community members.

We have an active workforce in land care. Work performed includes the mowing of private yards, for which we charge a fee of about \$20.00, through to the maintenance of public areas, airports and cemeteries, at no charge to the local council. Pastoral and fencing activities include the provision of a yard-fencing service which provides low-cost timber and chain-wire fences. Other crews carry out contract work, mainly for the Woorabinda pastoral company, but also for local property owners.

Our masonry plant produces masonry blocks which have been tested and meet Australian standards. These have been used in our office extensions and in a number of small jobs within the community. The wood products activity produces timber, tables, chairs, beds and other furniture items that are sent to Rockhampton for sale through our retail outlet, Murri Arts and Crafts. Aboriginal and Islander paintings and artefacts are also sold along with other lines through this shop.

Another activity of vital importance to our operation is that of the security workers who carry out a night patrol to minimise damage and loss to CDEP property. Our Undoonoo hardware store, which operates out of Woorabinda, is part of the 'Key Hardware' chain. It is well supported by community members as well as the nearby Duaringa shire, and government agencies. Locals are carrying out repairs and maintenance to the council-owned houses in which they live, because of the service we now provide.

We have people working for Woorabinda Pastoral Company, at Foley Vale, one of their properties near Duaringa. All types of fencing and cattle work are undertaken there by our workers. In Rockhampton we have a number of workers in a large range of different

activities. These include the Christian Outreach Centre, Fitzroy Shire Council's Brothers Club Darumbul, and Darumbul youth services. We also have workers at local vehicle repairers, the Dreamtime Centre, and the university.

In conclusion I would note that large amounts are being spent to try and fix the problem of Indigenous unemployment, but nothing much seems to come of it. It must be understood there is a need to spend more at the grassroots level, with easier access to funding and less money being chewed up by bureaucracy and consultants.

30. Creating opportunities for training and employment: Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council CDEP, Western Sydney

Wendy Ann Lewis

Tharawal Land Council, along with five other organisations, took on the CDEP approximately nine years ago. Our aim was to create opportunities for training and employment for Aboriginal people. We have grown with that CDEP program, but we are going to be discussing whether or not we continue it. This is not because it has not been successful, but because a bureaucratic stranglehold has been put on something that was really for communities to develop and evolve—their CDEP program to suit their needs, and their aspirations. Those are different things, but they can be woven into one to create real benefits for Aboriginal people, no matter what community they live in and whatever that community's circumstances might be.

We have had our battles with ATSIC staff, we have had our battles with some elected people. We have our own elected representative on ATSIC Regional Council who goes to bat for us, but when the voting comes he has to leave the room. So he is of no direct benefit to us when funding is being allocated. We work on a policy where the Land Council's business is set by the members, and the CDEP carries out and works with them and their program to achieve the wishes of the Land Council. The other four organisations that I mentioned abdicated their responsibility to the programs seven or eight years ago. We are prepared to put outreach stations with them if they are prepared to acknowledge that the participants have a say in the direction of the type of work and the type of training that they do.

We are very big on training. We have a partnership with TAFE, which provides us with additional equipment and particularly with very good skills and a TAFE place for the supervisor, who is the teacher. We also have people attending university. We have people attending courses that have got nothing to do with our programs, because that is what they want to do. And all of our programs have been successful. One of the girls in the office recently got a job at University of Western Sydney because she has been doing her BA in social welfare. She is now working at that university and has achieved a real job. We will not be putting in for the \$2000 exit payment with DEWRSB, because the form is a terrible little thing that would involve a lot of time and effort, and we do not have the time. And from what I have heard, another organisation that did put in claims only got 12 out of 39. We placed 35 people last year in real jobs, and we have a turnover in participants. People stay for nine months on average, and the longest we have had a participant in CDEP is four years.

Our management changes as well. I took leave from TAFE to work for the CDEP as the coordinator when someone left in a hurry. I then left TAFE to stay on there, and I see my role in the next year or so as moving on. We have developed people as well. Our

bookkeeper is almost a trained accountant, and she was originally a CDEP participant. Our new bookkeeper in training will be running our hospitality area and our conferencing. She has got six bookings for conferences in 2001, which will cost \$60 000 to put on. We will probably make \$2000 on each conference, so that's about \$12 000 profit for us in that year.

So we have now got the year's planner up, and it's really good because things start to move. But we are still going to have the debate about whether we continue. What we have to do is say to DEWRSB and ATSIC, and to Centrelink: 'You are not going to load us with any more work.' We as Aboriginal people are entitled to the same health, welfare, education and housing as every other Australian. We pay the same taxes, including GST—our programs are now paying that as well, and we used to be exempt. We are entitled to those services, and just because we use the CDEP to provide a service to our community, does not allow government agencies to abdicate their responsibility for providing them.

That is the philosophy we have taken on board. We tendered on the market with everyone else to do the meals on wheels delivery, and we were successful. Through that we got some more equipment for our CDEP, which is totally under-resourced with respect to its capital budget. We tendered to Homecare to mow the lawns, just of the Aboriginal clients at first. We did it so well that we were asked to tender for the mainstream. We got that, so we now do 120 lawns a month.

We have moved to the position now that we are in business, and if you want our services then we are like every other business person, we are going to tender. We are going to invoice you, and you are going to pay us. Because before we had expectations put on us: 'Oh can you go and do Mrs So-and-so's lawn ...' Homecare are paid to mow her lawn, they get the funding for it, so now we tender. We have also been asked to now tender for Veterans' Affairs because Homecare, who pay for the lawns, have tendered to take on Veterans' Affairs. So they've rung us to say: 'Could you handle another 30 or 40 lawns?' Of course we can, but we will tender, and they will pay. We are not going to run out and suddenly start mowing lawns now for nothing. We cannot even get our own lawns done at our premises because we are so busy with these things!

We continue to want to have control of the CDEP and keep it in the hands of the people that the program belongs to. The exclusion of women—and men—on sole parent, old age pension and disability pensions from the dollar for dollar has debarred around 40 people from our program, and that is something that really needs to be addressed.

We run alcohol-free, and have a no work, no pay rule. However, we are compassionate. We do hear grievances. The participants make the rules, and therefore it always goes back to them. I just administer what the participants say. However I do get my say at a Land Council meeting. Because I am a member I can say something there, as a community member. So we wear different hats through the day.

This leads to the point I will conclude with, just one of the problems that we have faced. The thing that has made our CDEP a success is the thousands and thousands of hours that are put in voluntarily by the members of the Land Council, by our office bearers—we don't call them the executive—and by the committee people of the CDEP. We are

accountable, we have no problem with dealing with accountability. Once again, Aboriginal people are doing voluntary work to set up a program and keep it going. There is no pay for this, and none of us expect it. But the expectation on us is that we can just keep doing those voluntary hours, and there comes a time when we are physically exhausted. We want to achieve things and we are running out of time. We have reached the point where we're going to say, 'enough's enough'.

31. Using the system to our advantage: Redfern Aboriginal Corporation CDEP, Sydney

Bruce Loomes

The topic I want to address is networking, playing the system, and being strong together. Redfern is an urban CDEP in the centre of Sydney. It is a small CDEP with about 80 participants and an annual turnover of about 200 per cent. Our people come from all over Sydney, and some of them commute for an hour and a half to get to work. The CAEPR report by Diane Smith (1995) showed that the people in Redfern suffer as great if not greater levels of poverty than the people around Alice Springs. We have a mix of community goals, of community development and economic development. We have been going just over three years in our present form; just over three years ago we were suspended with massive debts. We have come out of that, worked our way out of it.

We have got three businesses going, providing training and employment for our people. The first of these is a construction company that turned over \$3 million in the last two years, through playing the system. We have accreditation to run our own training for apprentices and trainees. We are now starting joint ventures with Tharawal CDEP in Western Sydney (see Lewis, Ch. 30, this volume). We do town planning out in the general market.

We have a cruise boat on the harbour, which we bought out of project-generated income, by being smart. We have got a screen-printing and sewing department that produced \$60 000-worth of goods for the 2000 Olympics. We have recently shipped off \$6000-worth of goods, bought by the Italian Consulate, to the trade fair at Milan in Italy.

It is really a case of being smart. Government bodies talk about self determination, self management, about triennial funding, but these things are not being put into practice. Every area interprets government policy in a different way. A lot of the staff we are dealing with are straight out of university, are Gubbas (non-Indigenous people), have no experience of culture, and no experience of business. We had 12 project officers in the first 18 months after we started up again. One of those was there for nine months.

In my 15 years around CDEPs, whether in a rural, semi-urban, or urban environment, I've never come across a surplus. The push for demanding that surpluses be returned, and for certificates of compliance to be able to spend any surplus over \$5000, makes it impossible to run business enterprises. How do you run a business if you have no cash flow, if you have to spend all of your budget by the end of the financial year, and if you cannot get triennial funding? We had a case where we had to renew over \$5000-worth of equipment on the boat and we had a cruise running two days later. Spending at the end of the financial year often goes on things that are not a priority, and then

you have no cash flow when you have a breakdown, or if a business opportunity comes up at the start of the financial year.

You need to be able to make instant responses to run a business. The whole talk of 'mutual obligation' is going in two directions at the same time. It seems as if some of the government organisations are trying to say: 'Well, for the sake of the public we want you to go towards enterprise and employment, but on the other hand we want you to be a welfare organisation, because we are not going to let you spend the money that the participants have earned.'

It is a case of using money cleverly. We try to do this as much as we can. We try to network as much as we can. There has been some discussion about losing participants through losing dollar for dollar. Some of our people decide to stay on, earning just under the cut-off point. So they keep their pension benefits and at the same time they are getting an income each week. It is a matter of playing the system.

Marketing support is another important issue. I have probably visited 100 CDEPs over the years, and a lot of them produce great stuff that would really meet the market. But like all of us, they have no money, often have no support. It is worth considering the idea of starting to network to put together forms of marketing on a regional basis for CDEPs. Good enterprises flop because of a lack of marketing. But if we are smart, and work together, we can start to deal with marketing.

It is like the situation with the \$2000 payment for getting people into full-time employment. Unless people get together and support each other, it is not going to work. At the last count, we had 48 per cent of people on full-time wages, on award wages. We put numerous people out into the workforce, but we do not have the money to chase up on that payment. We have people dying every second week, we have people overdosing every week, we have 350 000 needles put onto the block in a year, on top of all the other social problems. The only way CDEP can work is if we all get together and be strong, and start to network and learn from each other how to play the system well.

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32. CDEP: A journey not a destination

Stephen Humphries

Perth Employment and Enterprise Development Aboriginal Corporation

There are two different organisations involved in providing employment and enterprise support within the Perth Metropolitan area, through the use of the CDEP. First there is the Perth Employment and Enterprise Development Aboriginal Corporation (PEEDAC), which was incorporated on 6 July 1997, and is run by an elected 20-member management committee. The PEEDAC management and members are all representatives from the five ATSIC Perth Regional Councils, which are classified as wards. The wards are Bibra in the inner-southern suburbs, Gnangara in the northern suburbs, Walunga in the north-western suburbs, Wungong in the southern suburbs and Yunderup, which encompasses the Peel–Mandurah areas.

The Perth ATSIC office decided that PEEDAC should have a company that ran the business side of the organisation, and in 1997 it started the company which is now called Peedac Pty. Ltd. PEEDAC's chief role is to provide policy guidance to the Peedac Board of Directors and continued development of CDEP. PEEDAC is also the sole shareholder in Peedac Pty. Ltd., but does not have any direct input into the day-to-day operation of the company's enterprises and projects.

Peedac Pty. Ltd.

The second organisation, therefore, is Peedac Pty. Ltd., which is an incorporated body under the corporations law and is directly funded by ATSIC to administer the CDEP to the Perth Metropolitan Region. Peedac Pty. Ltd. is governed by a Board of Directors and is solely responsible for the day-to-day management of its participants, projects and contracts. It actively pursues employment, training, and enterprise development opportunities. Peedac is a company limited by shares. The capital of the company is \$1 million, divided into one million shares. It is solely owned by PEEDAC, the Aboriginal Corporation.

Peedac Pty. Ltd. currently administers a total of 510 CDEP positions, for an area containing approximately 19 000 Aboriginal people. Income that is generated from its enterprises goes directly back into the Perth Aboriginal community, through the incorporated body, to provide and enhance employment opportunities. The general aims of Peedac are to establish or purchase enterprises, provide job placement in private businesses or companies, provide training placements, provide part- and full-time employment, support community-based commercial joint ventures, and strive for economic independence.

The development of business enterprises to provide employment for CDEP participants is the prime focus for Peedac Pty. Ltd. Commercially viable Aboriginal business is seen as a foundation of economic independence for participants. To achieve that goal Peedac will

continue to examine all business opportunities that are presented and where possible assist the person presenting the idea to access the relevant government assistance. Where appropriate, Peedac may enter into a joint venture partnership with mainstream or Aboriginal enterprises.

Presently, Peedac Pty. Ltd. operates a number of independent business units throughout the suburbs of Perth, from its central headquarters at Cannington. The enterprises currently provide approximately 60 full-time employment positions for the Perth Indigenous community, and between 50 and 60 part-time positions and numerous work experience positions. Each business site is structured to accommodate apprenticeships and traineeships which provide a solid training foundation for Indigenous persons moving through the program. Peedac actively pursues New Apprenticeships for participants by developing relationships with Registered Training Organisations and Group Training Companies.

Peedac Pty. Ltd. enterprises

Some of the enterprises include:

- Boola Wongin Nursery (native retail nursery) at Forrestdale;
- Bundi Art & Ceramics (production and design) at Bayswater;
- Karlarak Screenprinting & Graphics (production and design) at Bayswater;
- Midvale Upholstery (new and used) at Midvale;
- Armadale Monumental & Fabrications at Armadale;
- Shapecraft Automotives (mechanical workshop) at Rockingham;
- APEEL Clothing (manufacture and design) at Rockingham;
- Classic Resprays (automotive spray painting) at Maddington;
- Panel Beating Workshop at Malaga;
- Peedac Distributors (wholesale distribution) at Wangara; and
- four local and State government contracts (commercial mowing and maintenance), Metropolitan-wide.

The company continues to work actively with other government bodies to assist some members to buy their work projects as a franchise for later. This makes it possible for them to own their own business, which will increase their and their family's financial security. The company is able to share its management experience, administration and skills to help other Perth-based Aboriginal communities develop new commercial enterprises, so their long-term business enterprises are planned around their families and communities.

Company vision

Peedac Pty. Ltd. is the business partner for government and industry, for Indigenous people, to help meet their equal employment opportunity obligations. We provide practical work skills, employment opportunities and enterprise development for Perth's Indigenous community.

Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the company are the creation of new job opportunities for Aboriginal people within the Perth ATSIC Nyungah Region, the creation of Aboriginal enterprises, and increasing training opportunities linked to regional economic and employment opportunities.

Mission

Peedac Pty. Ltd. is committed to:

- promotion of Indigenous culture within the Perth Metropolitan region;
- providing, opportunities, choice, security and self esteem;
- ensuring a balance of enterprise and employment opportunities for both men and women; and
- encouraging initiative, innovation and team work, from within a safe, learning environment.

Values

Peedac participants and staff are committed to:

- understanding and respecting diversity in the workplace;
- empowerment, self respect, and the rights of individuals;
- honesty, integrity and accountability; and
- loyal, tolerance, harmony and compassion.

Participants are aware that the CDEP is not a destination but a journey to full-time, unsubsidised employment.

Only with a spirit of goodwill and co-operation will more people in the new millennium reap the rewards from participation and being involved (Neil O'Donnell, Managing Director, Peedac Pty. Ltd.).

Postscript

Tim Rowse

In Chapter 9 Terry Whitby poses the question: ‘Who represents CDEP?’ He gives an all-inclusive answer: ‘Everybody represents CDEP’. Yet, competing representations of, or descriptions of, CDEP emerge from this volume, and the resulting diversity makes it a very interesting document. In this Postscript I want to put the emphasis on ‘competing’. The conference on which this book is based, like Parliament or the Press, was a political arena in which people tried out different ways of describing CDEP. Those exchanges of competing representations of CDEP made the conference a political process.

In the current political climate, or in any political climate, there are approved and unapproved ways of stating needs. One of the things that self determination policy is about is teaching Indigenous Australians ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ ways of stating their needs. Some will be rewarded with funding, others will be punished by a lack of funding, and the applicants will be sent back to rewrite their submission. So there is, in self determination policy, a politics of representation—an effort to teach the Indigenous person be a certain kind of political being who articulates Indigenous needs in a language that agrees with the available frameworks approved by the government of the day. The deployment of those frameworks, and the opposition to them from others, were very evident throughout the conference, and are reflected in these pages.

Here is an example. One of the dominant themes in the main government approach to thinking about CDEP at the moment, is to emphasise that there are some kinds of outcome that are more ‘real’ than others; and ‘real’ means ‘more valued’. To quote Terry Whitby again: ‘While the CDEP continues to demonstrate successful social, economic, and community development outcomes, the ATSIC Board does not see it as a substitute for real employment.’ So there is something called real employment—but Terry does not define it. Peter Shergold (Ch. 8) emphasises that the best possible outcome for CDEP is to graduate people into what he calls ‘private sector employment’ which he appears to define very narrowly as employment to which government makes no possible contribution. This is his notion of ‘real’ employment.

In the language of some of my colleagues at CAEPR I have noticed the appearance of the jargon now employed by Noel Pearson. He talks about the ‘real economy’—a term that is very poorly defined in his work, and that researchers would do well not to adopt uncritically. This is a debate that is going on within CAEPR—a friendly debate, I might add. For example, in Chapter 11 John Taylor and Boyd Hunter do not make a distinction between CDEP and other kinds of employment. Their overall analysis is based on the premise that participation in CDEP is no less ‘real’ than any other kind of employment, and that the way to raise Indigenous employment in Australia could therefore include putting a lot of resources into CDEP.

There is nothing that is necessarily second-best about CDEP, and yet this distinction between real and unreal jobs and outcomes puts CDEP and its proponents on the defensive,

as if what they are doing is not good enough unless it leads to participants finding employment in the 'real' economy. The language of the 'real economy' is terribly tendentious, and it should be questioned, not accepted as an unchallengeable description of the 'facts'.

I now turn to a brief summary of some of the main themes that came from the contributions by the community representatives. People were very concerned about equity with another program—that is, 'work for the dole'. If that is getting a certain amount of government support, why should CDEP not receive similar support? Community sector contributors clearly want equity with some programs in the mainstream welfare field.

A second and even more important theme, that is elaborated in almost all of the community contributions, is that CDEP must be recognised for having multiple objectives. It is not just a matter of graduating people into the so-called 'real economy'. CDEP has many objectives, and they should be recognised and properly resourced. This makes it difficult to provide a succinct definition of what CDEP is all about, and it makes it easy for the media to misrepresent CDEP as if it were a one-dimensional program. The struggle for the recognition of the multiple objectives of CDEP is very important.

Another theme that comes through from the community representatives is a plea for a more respectful engagement with CDEP schemes from other government agencies and other programs. This respect takes many forms, but it includes dollars: when CDEP is doing a job it should be properly paid for.

The final theme that I want to highlight is that the CDEP managers and leaders are starting to network on a national basis, as a self conscious political lobby group. This is a very positive development, and the reader of Part IV of this volume cannot fail to be impressed by the consistency and the persuasiveness of the words of people who are obviously amongst the leading activists in that lobby.

At the moment CDEP is in both a strong and a weak position. It is in a very strong position in a practical sense, in that, as a number of contributors point out, if the government decided that the CDEP had to go, what would they put in its place? CDEP is doing so many necessary jobs, in so many different ways, in so many places, that it is quite entrenched in the Australian system of government. It may not be getting the recognition it deserves, but it is going to be very hard to get rid of it. So in this practical sense, CDEP is in a very strong bargaining position.

But CDEP is in a weak position in terms of the politics of representation. That is, the CDEP managers find it difficult to articulate an account of what they think CDEP is. What they are actually doing is not well described by the dominant message about CDEP that comes from the government—that CDEP is a failure if it does not graduate people into mainstream jobs. That is a very strong message coming out of government today, and it is very evident in Peter Shergold's contribution. His remarks and remarks by other people from government, including some from ATSIC, are part of the process of redefining CDEP so that it is all about employment.

CDEP is practically strong but theoretically—or ideologically—a bit weak, in the sense that it is very difficult to get out from underneath the government's representation of CDEP, and to articulate an independent community-based conception of what CDEP is all about. The potential for articulating a community-based view obviously exists, because there are so many community representatives saying the same things, over and over again.

CAEPR could play a good role by helping the CDEP leaders to consolidate, to make persuasive arguments for and to back up with facts the kind of things that they are saying in this volume. CAEPR can help to formulate political and cultural rationales that CDEP managers can present to government, backed by solid research.

The interaction, in my opinion, would also be very good for CAEPR. One of the strengths—but also one of the weaknesses—of CAEPR is its very close proximity to the central agencies of government. That is of great benefit to CAEPR in many ways, but it is also a fault that should be balanced by more exposure to the views and concerns of the people who are delivering services at the community level.

There is a worry that we must not be seen to be other than neutral academics, but it is very hard to identify the neutral ground in this debate. The language and categories of government or the language and categories of the CDEP managers are all that is available. We have to use somebody's language, so we must make some self-conscious choices about what kind of language and frameworks of analysis we use in our future research.

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