

8. Reaching out for change

‘Outreach’ or ‘extension’ are words which often seem to be the defining characteristics of Adult Education, but these words keep the focus on a central institution. The Co-operative for Aborigines, although housed at Tranby, had instead always seen itself as belonging in communities. The Tranby building in inner city Glebe was only one part of a much wider network. So for Tranby, ‘outreach’ had many different meanings.

This chapter has been written by drawing on Kevin’s memories in conversation with some of the people who explored and invented and developed those different types of ‘outreach’.

Black Books

Black Books was a Tranby outreach program – but it was really in reverse. It was Tranby – as a community organisation – reaching *into* the educational institutions of the state. As Tranby’s knowledge of the secondary education system deepened, and as Aboriginal Studies entered the mainstream curriculum, it became clear to Kevin and others at Tranby that the resources had to get much better in schools if the existing teachers were to be able to deliver the new curriculum. Many of Tranby’s staff and students were drawn on to develop better resources for school education by reviewing books which could be used as the basis for Aboriginal Studies teaching and learning.

Kevin: This Black Books idea got started with Kathy Campbell. Kathy’d come from Victoria where her father was a union organiser. Her politics clashed with his and so she did her university training at Armidale where she worked on the campaign that successfully got an ALP candidate up for the first time in that electorate. She went back to Victoria and worked in schools where there was a large migrant group and the schools were very progressive in that time. Then she came to Sydney, because her husband worked for a newspaper as an editor and we were looking for teachers, so we grabbed her! She had a lot of great ideas!

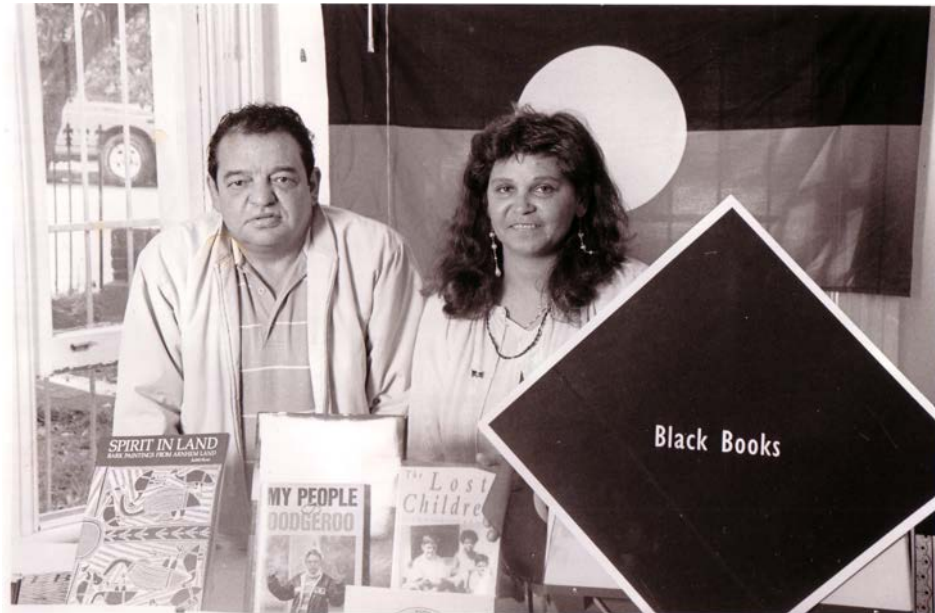


Figure 8.1: Cookie and Black Books staffer, Cathy (another one, not Kathy Campbell).

Courtesy Tranby Archives.

We used to go over to Stanmore where the teachers were doing courses on Aboriginal Studies. That was a Department of Education place where they sent teachers for inservicing. I was a speaker over there and Kathy came over with us. And we started talking to teachers. All the time they were saying to us they were going through their school libraries and there was nothing for them, or they'd been reading through stuff and they didn't think it was right. So we come back and Kathy started working on how we'd set up an information centre. That's what it started out to be really. And the bookshop idea sort of developed from that.

Kathy approached Dave Morrissey, who was an anthropology honours student when he first became involved with Tranby, initially to help in the Land Rights Support Group. In this group, white students and others took some of the organising burden off Aboriginal activists by picking up the jobs like, for example, seeking support for the campaign from non-Indigenous organisations or of publicising Aboriginal rallies. Later the Land Rights Support Group published the early land claims to assist the campaign for further political reform. Having graduated by then, Kevin asked Dave to work with a specific

community, at Nambucca Heads, in their attempt to secure their land, using other legislation. At the same time he was doing anthropological work on land claims for the Central Land Council in the Northern Territory.

Dave: Kathy Campbell came to me in 1981. This was the time when Aboriginal Studies was just getting going in the NSW curriculum, and she wanted Black Books to be able to cater for the school libraries and history programs. What Kathy needed was someone to actually vet the books that Black Books was going to list in its catalogue. The whole premise was that the books that Black Books would have on sale would be *worth* having on sale.

Kevin: So she got Dave to read through the books we wanted to put on the catalogue to come out from this information centre. And the thing was, while Dave was reading the books to make sure they were factual, Kathy'd be on the phone to the communities the books were written about, making sure that it was alright, you know that everything in the book was okay? We said that if it was written about a community or a person, then we'd have to get in touch with that community or person before we'd sell the book. And that's what gave us a really big plus in front of all other bookshops, 'cause people could trust that what they were buying was alright by Aboriginal people.



Figure 8.2: Black Books team: Maria McKell (second from left in Uluru T-shirt) was highly experienced in book management after many years at Gleebooks, with Karen Flick, Matt Davies and a volunteer at Black Books.

Dave: Many of the school libraries had some books but they were all old. Ones like AW Reed's *Legends of Australia* were still around. None of them so totally offensive, but all of them were pretty useless. And a lot of the newer ones were too academic. So you can't give the Year 6 kids the same book you'd give to a university student. But the teachers wouldn't know till they got it on the shelf. So then it's not much use. Kathy asked me to help her by reading the books and putting together the catalogue, while she was putting together the shop. I read all the books she wanted, about 110 in the first catalogue. Went through them and put the catalogue together and it enabled Black Books to start marketing to schools. We were able to tailor orders for them.

That would have been from mid '81. Then I guess about early '82 we started trying to sell books in a more serious way. And Kathy then moved on to do something else, and so I was persuaded to stay. I was only there about a year or so and then I think Maria Mackell came in from Gleebooks and other people came into help run the show and there was a CDP¹ employee in there too and we had students reviewing for us.

Kevin: And there was that great volunteer, Joyce Lambkin, she came every day for years.

Judy Chester: And we used to do the proof reading you know? The women in the NOW program out at Liverpool. Dave Morrissey would come out when he was teaching in the course with all these books and hand them out and say 'read 'em'. So we'd read them and just write what we thought of the book. So we were the reviewers for Black Books! ... It's still really missed, Black Books, I used to go and buy all my presents there for kids.

Tranby conducted far more outreach programs which involved Tranby actively working with communities to create learning environments *in* communities. Here are three examples – the NOW course and urban women's training, the Sites course and National Parks, and the land council training in bookkeeping and management. These were all different but they shared two fundamental principles which grounded all Tranby projects and which were the guiding principles Kevin used to measure what made up *real* education.

The first principle was that each course was established because the communities involved approached Tranby – at no stage did Tranby decide they knew best what was needed. As each example shows, the ways that those connections were made were through the rich networks that Tranby – and in particular Kevin – had fostered.

1 Community Development Program funding for Aboriginal [and other] trainees.

And the other principle was that each course was aimed at empowering individuals and communities to take more active control of their lives, sometimes economically but always politically.

This was the way Kevin (talking about the land council training courses, see below) understood education in the community.

Kevin: People out there with little basic schooling who have got enormous talent to organise in their local area. It could be Little Athletics or local football. ... and they haven't got, in inverted commas, the 'educational background', but they *run* it, you know? If you ask them, and talk to them, they've got no self confidence in themselves to be able to put themselves up as, you know, 'I can do this, I can do that...' but after doing courses at Tranby, they went from strength to strength! And they were involved in a lot of the educational organisations, like the AECGs,² local TAFE courses... Tranby went out to the communities because what we found was that with those sort of people, if you took them away from the community, well the community'd be lost. And so those people were trained in their own environment, and the community people who relied on those people still had access to them...

This meant that for Kevin, Tranby, would be available and accessible for everyone in a community, not only for one faction or family. As he explained.

Kevin: Tranby has been a comfortable place for people to come and just meet up because it's always been neutral. And we've always tried to keep it that way. Any of the Aboriginal groups that come up for support we always give them support. We don't interfere with anybody else. And they don't interfere with us, which is great. Because if you go into an area there's always three to four different groups, and we have to be able to work with the whole lot of them – or you know, the college would fold. So you can't take sides really. And we work with incredible people... you know, the mind boggles. And doing all this, our students who are there they get that knowledge and it makes them far better people.

The first example of Tranby's community-based education is the NOW course for Aboriginal women which ran in western Sydney. Terry Widders (Chapter 6) had remembered this course as the most exciting example of community education he was involved in. There were other Tranby courses like it in country areas but this example is important because it shows the interest Tranby had in thinking about the many Aboriginal people who lived in the city *as* communities, as well as offering courses for those in the bush.

2 Aboriginal Educational Consultative Groups.

The NOW course was also notable because this was when Cookie met Judy Chester, introduced in the previous chapter, who became his lifelong partner and comrade.

Tranby became involved in this program because Robyn Williams – who lived out near Liverpool and had once been a builders labourer – had known Kevin when he was the Aboriginal organiser in the BLF. So she was confident that he actually would listen to what they wanted and respond seriously to the women's request for a course that suited *them*.

The NOW course: Urban outreach

The story is told here by Judy Chester.

Judy: Our course got going at Liverpool because Robyn Williams was doing the outreach programs for TAFE back then and she said, 'Well what do you girls want?' And we all said, 'Well we just want a taste of *education*!' We'd all been locked up with our kids for years, our self-esteem was down around our bootlaces!

And we had to fight tooth and nail with the AECG over that because they said it wasn't accredited! But we got it! It was called the Aboriginal Women's 'NOW' program, we were the pilot course. And now the NOW program is still going, its for migrant women and for other women... its just wonderful! A couple of old girls went and had a demo at Blacktown TAFE because they wanted to go on the second program! They said, 'No. You've *done* it!'

And Kevin was my teacher! Tranby was very involved in it.

Kevin: Robyn come out and asked us could we write up a course. And so we wrote up a course that had Aboriginal Studies in it and Co-operative Studies...

Judy: Terry Widders was our Aboriginal Studies teacher... and he had to wear shorts! That was his uniform. And so you had to get there early 'cause old Myrtle Kinchela, she used to be at the front! That's the only time she never ever went to sleep in class was when Terry was teaching! You ask him! They used to make him wear shorts, even in the winter time. They said, 'We'll shut the door and turn the heaters on!' But he was a good teacher – they loved it!



Figure 8.3: Brian Doolan – an enthusiastic planner of community education.

Courtesy Tranby Archives.

Kevin: Brian Doolan was out there teaching...

Judy: ...And Cookie with his garbage can for an ashtray! They used the local teachers to do the woodwork and metalwork, cause we had to do that, that was part of it... and I think Dave Morrissey did a bit teaching and Chris Milne.

Kevin: It had all sorts of topics, it covered a lot. We taught quite a few parts and my part of the program was the Co-operative movement...

But basically it was a *start* to education for the women out there.

Judy: And most of those women went on and done some fantastic stuff. Nola Woods was on the course, and Helen James – that’s old Tom Williams’ sister from La Per – and there was me and my sister Janny Ely. There was about 15 of us wasn’t there?

Kevin: ...And I think every one of them started furthering their education. One of them was writing a book. Even Janny herself, she got a lot out of it...

Judy: Yeah, look at her now. From the NOW course all those years ago, today she’s got her uni degree and *she’s* running community-based courses out there for TAFE.

The NOW course aimed at catering for the needs of *all* women, of whatever age and pre-existing knowledge, which meant the classes reflected the strong role of older women in families and local Aboriginal communities. Judy used this and other opportunities to stay in close touch with her family, and in particular with Nanna Latham, in Wellington, despite the fact that Judy’s family had moved to the city.

The Sites Course: Jacko Campbell taking on National Parks

The courses for parks rangers and sites protection officers reflect the way community leaders like Jacko Campbell shaped the way Tranby approached teaching. As the land rights movement gathered momentum, the early legislation to protect Aboriginal sites fell under National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) jurisdiction. Some National Parks staff, like Howard Cramer and Sharon Sullivan, were sympathetic to Indigenous interests, but overall the institution had few Aboriginal staff and few links to Aboriginal communities. The NPWS tended to act without any consultation with Aboriginal communities.

Elders like Jacko were incensed that despite Indigenous demands for land rights having finally forced some action to protect sites, the control over their sites’ management and interpretation was still in the hands of white government officials. Jacko seized the opportunity of offering sites training through Tranby, with an anthropologist like Dave Morrissey tutoring, as a chance to push for greater Aboriginal cultural control over significant sites.

Kevin: Jacko Campbell wanted us to train Aboriginal sites officers or rangers. He hated the National Parks didn’t he. He reckoned they were insensitive and basically he wanted Aboriginal people to be able to run things themselves.

Dave: National Parks ran their training at the time out of Goulburn, what was then Goulburn CAE.³ The idea was to put these six blokes, two from Wallaga Lake, two from Jerringa and two from Wreck Bay, through the National Parks and Wildlife Service course at Goulburn. But they needed a bit of a boost to get through it, a bit of tutoring, so I was asked to take that on. There was all those hassles in that sort of model of education where the students had to go down to the Goulburn College for periods and go home and practise it and so on. And they had a lot of schooling required, written assignments and essays. Now they actually did the official course: really all I was doing was a bit of extra back up and tuition on how they get their assignments done so they could get through the proper course. So Tranby didn't get separate accreditation, it was the mainstream accreditation.

That was the first phase and then the second phase was that Jacko wanted to get something both more expansive and more appropriate. So those guys would have late '81 into early '83 and, by then the land councils were being set up, so by '84 or so there were regional land councils being set up and we figured that having sites officers based in the land councils would be a useful thing to do.



Figure 8.4: Sites Course students learn from Guboo Teddy Thomas.

Courtesy Tranby Archives.

³ College of Advanced Education.



Figure 8.5: The class in the Sites Course at Tranby with Dave Morrissey in the back row.

Courtesy Tranby Archives.



Figure 8.6: Site Recorders, Lake Mungo Trip with Wiimpatja elder Alice Kelly, far western NSW.

Courtesy David Morrissey.

Kevin: We worked it out and organised it through Tranby. Jacko was still the driving force behind it because we said that every regional council should have a person employed there who could do the site survey for the region. We wanted to have laws that wouldn't allow the Department of Roads, or Telstra or anyone, to go anywhere without firstly going through the land council to find someone to check that what they wanted to do was alright in terms of protecting sites and important places. So that if there was a road to be dug, well that person would be employed, or the land council would be employed, they send out their sites bloke, and money should go back into the local land council or the regional land council, whoever employed them, so that they can you know cover their wages.

Dave: That was the plan. And the State Land Council which was then an office in the back streets of Redfern, they backed it and put in some dough and so did the then office of Aboriginal Affairs.

Kevin: So they all backed it and we designed a course, so each regional land council employed two people and give them a Toyota and an office to work out of and so on. Some of them were actually working for the local land council like La Perouse for example, where the regional land council wasn't organised enough to do it yet, so La Perouse took it up as a local issue. Some of them worked and some of it didn't.

Dave: I was still doing a bit of work for the CLC⁴ in the Territory, so I went for about six or eight months going up, up for two weeks, back for one, up for two weeks back for one, with site work in the Western Desert, up to three months. So, we put together a course and it probably would have been over '84 and '85 I think we ran that course. It was a separately accredited course, running out of Tranby and in cooperation with the State Land Council. We got it accredited with TAFE. We put together a course with about five modules a year and it was based on recognising sites and what to do to record them and being able to organise yourself to work within management plans, how to write a basic management plan for a site. And some field trips. Lake Mungo was a good trip and another trip up the coast, and another one down the coast, so we did a few regional trips so they could get to look at other types of sites. And we got a lot of cooperation from Sharon Sullivan, who was in charge of National Parks down there on the South Coast. So they organised to get the doors to open up down the coast. And we got Ray Kelly, the Aboriginal sites officer with NPWS to help us. He was up on the North Coast. And Jeanette Hope gave us support out there in the west, where she was running the Willandra Lakes Research stuff.

Kevin: Yeah. But it was a good course wasn't it, incredibly good.

4 Central Land Council.

Dave: Oh yeah, it was good, the problem was, the idea was to have people come down and do some course work, go back and practise it. But they weren't getting the support, because the Aboriginal land councils were actually under such pressure it was hard for them to actually function properly. So some of our students would get back and find their bloody Toyota had gone. Or they'd get back and find their office had been left, and they didn't have enough power at the local level so the land councils didn't have the administrative capacity to actually support them in the work they were doing.

Kevin: But a lot of them did really well. Autry Dennison at Toomelah was one who was doing great for years before he passed away. And some of them are still going.

Dave: Yeah he's alright, and some of the others too. Badger Bates did the sites course too...

Kevin: Yeah, he was a participant, he was the one from the Far Western Regional Council. See they had one person from each regional land council... So they had 13 on the course... A couple of them fell over, but that's to be expected in any course... But the majority of them who did the course went back and they were employed by the regional land councils or the local land councils... and I think a couple of them are still going.

Dave: In fact one bloke who's still running out of that is Barry Moore – still has tours of the Wreck Bay, showing people bush tucker. I think he's their official Aboriginal ranger down there now, so he carried that one forward after he finished the course.

Kevin: Barry went back down to Wreck Bay and he worked as a ranger down there with the land council. And then he set up his own program down there, and he's been going for quite some years now... He's got a program down there where people go down and he takes them all around Wreck Bay, shows them sites, shows them food and resources... And he's doing that now! ... That's after he got trained with Tranby. He'd never have done that before.

Dave: I think the stuff that used to worry them was the writing side of it, because there's a lot of that.

Kevin: Yeah, that killed everybody. But talking to people who were doing the course – and talking to their communities – they said they couldn't believe the improvement in the guys when they went back to work. So I think a lot of people were looking at that course, not only in NSW but interstate, and it could have been taken up interstate. But the money wasn't available to run a second course.

Dave: And, by that stage some of the land councils had started to come unstuck, because they weren't handling their money well...

Land councils training courses

The final example of Tranby's role in developing education *within* communities is the courses run for and with land council members. By 1985 many communities in NSW were in distress as they struggled to cope with implementing the new Land Rights Act⁵ without adequate training in either legal or financial training. Tranby began to run courses which responded to that community concern. The language of the Act had intimidated many people, so Kevin asked John Terry to help put together a 'plain English' version and to design a course that would allow people to understand it and learn how to use it. John was a lawyer who had previously worked for a long time with the Western Aboriginal Legal Service living at Wilcannia and Walgett and was by then working for the NSW State Land Council in Sydney. His skills and experience – and his sense of humour – made him an ideal person to work with people at community level. For other types of support, Kevin was able to draw on younger staff like Chris Milne, who had been teaching mathematics, but also the older accountants like John Short, who had been such stalwart supporters of the co-operative. One of the outstanding results from these courses was showing members of the community how to do the detailed searching of Lands Department maps to identify the land which met the Act's criteria as being available for claim. One of the people who was most effective in using this new skill was Judy Chester's sister, Janny, who with other members of the Gandangara Land Council, was able to identify many hectares of claimable land around Menai which ultimately passed to the land council. (See Chapter 12.)

Judy Chester takes up the story again here because she was involved in these courses as both a local land council member at Gandangara as well as with her growing connections to Tranby as a graduate from the NOW course.

Judy Chester: Those courses that Tranby got going after the Land Rights Act came out were really important. There was no training and everyone's going, 'Oh this one's ripping off that one'. So Tranby went out and did the plain English version of the Land Rights Act, and they did the Uniform Accounting System. Janny was only talking about it the other day... about the skills that people on the ground got from Tranby. ... She said Tranby used to pick up that role but now, she said it's getting harder and harder to do community education these days...

5 Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (NSW).

Dave: I think two things were happening in parallel: we were discovering that the site curators in our training course were getting mucked around because their land councils were falling apart. In some of them, people were running off with the money and they were spending it as if it was private cash because they'd never had any private cash. And at the same time the land council were aware of the problems and trying to put a better system in. So somehow there must have been a conversation about putting our heads together and doing something about it.

Kevin: Yeah, people were getting into trouble because some communities didn't have any organisation, they only had the land council, so it had the only black-controlled money that was going in the community. So people would die and their relations'd say, 'Oh the land council can help us bury them' and they didn't understand what the money was to be used for.

Dave: There were certainly categories of spending outside the Act which were inherently worthwhile doing, which made it hard for the land councils not to respond to that type of appeal.

Kevin: And then the government was jumping up and down about people thieving and stuff like that, they just didn't understand what their role was, you know, that's why those courses were really, really good. Really good.

Dave: There were also some of the land councils of course had been seized by one family or one side of town, and the other side wants to know how to knock them off. So, although we didn't go in with that intention, we were often training the second generation to knock off the first.

Kevin: But what we said was, 'When you go out there, don't get involved!' Because one day they'd be fighting with one another and you take sides, next minute they'd all be together, and they blame you, you know. So we said no one could take sides of anything like that.

Dave: A lot of the workshops would end up with someone coming in and saying, 'So-and-so did this or that, is that allowed or not?' And often this and this and this were totally *not* allowed! So we have to say 'Well we can't comment on the specifics...', but we'd try and go on and tell them what they could and couldn't do.

Kevin: And we'd try to talk to as many people across land councils as we could, and we'd hold workshops that brought in people from different land councils in the region.

Dave: Yeah, we'd hire a motel and fill it up with people from land councils and ourselves. I guess we really were addressing the local land councils rather than

the regional land councils, under the totally untestable assumption if they were able to do things right at the local level it would work better at the regional level. I don't know if it happened or not.

Kevin: Well I think it did, because there's a lot of good things that have happened, you know. You know people have got land now, that they'd never have had that without the land councils getting better informed about how to find land to claim.

Dave: Yeah, because then there was a mechanism set up to identify what might be claimable land, without logging claims on it. Some of that vacant Crown land that was tucked away in parks and forest reserves and those stock routes are the sort of places that have been identified and could be claimed as land claims once people knew how.

The land council training programs led to new ideas about how to fund community training for development. The idea to create the Action Development Unit is described firstly here by Dave Morrissey in conversation with Kevin. He saw it as an attempt to set up an Aboriginal-controlled consultancy which could tender successfully for funds which were otherwise going to non-Aboriginal consultants. But for Kevin, the fundamental goal was training and community empowerment. The word 'action' in the title echoed the 'action research' approach that Tranby staff embraced – where research of any sort was aimed at making practical changes which would be trialled in communities, evaluated, improved and then used in the next round of development. Then Judy Chester takes up the story. She was employed in a number of the Action Development Unit projects with a commitment to making the training and research translate into change on the ground. Both of the courses she talked about here with Kevin led to these types of changes for individuals or for communities – either across the state or very close to home.

Taking outreach even further: The Action Development Unit

Dave: After the second sites course had wrapped up, we started to do the training with the land councils. And that was the point where we figured if communities could sort out their own development strategies, that sort of third world development idea I guess, it would be a useful thing to do. So we set up a development unit to work towards that. At that stage there was the possibility of government funding to support community projects and to help

get them running. The government was prepared to fund all sorts of white run consultancies to do that work, so we thought we could try and run this as a sort of Tranby owned consultancy that could support communities to work out their own development strategies.

This was a pretty unheard of idea at that stage, around 1986 or '87. One of the motivations was Tranby needed to be able to bring in money to fund its broader education programs. And the only way to get money was to do consultancies, and the only way to do consultancies was to have an entity, and, the idea of the development unit was used to give it some sort of spin or position I guess. We called it the ADU, the Action Development Unit. In retrospect, we went about it in a way that was perhaps too much project by project rather than working first to put in infrastructure and capacity building... What we were saying with the ADU was, 'Okay let's get a little business going that can earn a bit of money, pay for it's own way and in the meantime look for ways to help the community...'.

Kevin: ...Through training.

Dave: ...Exactly – through training. I was really there to do capacity building at the community or say regional levels, so it was more an extension of what had worked or not worked with the land council training.

Kevin: Judy worked with the ADU on the housing work. That was a good training program, wasn't it Jude?

Judy: Yes, the Real Estate Institute used to come in and run it in conjunction with Tranby, and they used to bring people from the housing co-ops from all over the state, and run workshops on how to maintain your houses and how to collect rent and basic stuff like that. I used to do all the arrangement of the travel and accommodation for them. We'd put them up in a motel at Redfern that had conference facilities so they'd all be together. And it was close to the city if anyone wanted to go out. There'd be a talk and they might have to do exercises and some of them brought down materials and books from their co-ops.

I think they'd spend the first day sitting around talking to each other about all their problems! And when you listened to all of them, it was like hearing the same story from every different town. People not paying rent and all that. And they'd just sit down and hash it all out. I think the Real Estate Institute got a lot out of it to tell you the truth, because I don't think they ever had to deal with issues like this! And they stuck with Tranby for years didn't they? Running courses. And they thought it was quite relevant and important, eh? I thought the courses were really good. And the people from the housing co-ops that come down were passionate about doing the right thing, you know? This was why it was so good for them to come together cause they used to network with each other...

Kevin: And that course went all over NSW. It wasn't just held in Sydney. And it wasn't just basic. It enabled people to nearly become a real estate agent. And in the end an Aboriginal woman got her qualifications and ran the course, a woman from the North Coast. She ran the courses instead of the guy from the Real Estate Institute.

And another big project for the ADU was the one about local government that we did with Jenny Onyx from Kuring-gai College. What started all of that was that the local councils were getting into trouble. The Aboriginal people were saying that the councils weren't doing the right thing about the reserves. The local councils were saying that's not for us to do anything about, that's for the federal government. So there were lots of fights between local government, local councils and Aboriginal communities. So that's when the tender went out and we won the tender.

Judy: I was working at the ADU at the time. What they did was they had six communities didn't they Kevin? And they had to look at the way or the amount that Aboriginal people used local government facilities, like the library and the baby health centre... And what Dave did was he employed someone from each community to do the survey and do the work. And Janny was the person employed in the Liverpool area to be the researcher. I forget what communities they used... But there were six of them. Moree was one... Nowra on the South Coast.

Kevin: And in the end, when we finished and drew up the conclusion, it turned out that the local councils did not employ Aboriginal people. And they were the highest employers in country areas! You might get one or two Aboriginal people who were working on the roads or something like that. But that was all!

And so we got onto the local councils to start employing Aboriginal people. And so Tranby come under Leichhardt Council so we said, 'Well, if we're going to ask Moree Local Council to employ Aboriginal people, why not ask Leichhardt Council to employ Aboriginal people?' So we got together with the Italian community reps on the council and we put it up to the council that we wanted them to employ two people and they said yes.

Changing local government

The potential for Tranby to make real changes in the local government area of Leichhardt could only be made a reality because of the strong relationship which Kevin – and Tranby – had built up with local community organisations.

An important one was FILEF,⁶ an organisation built up by Italian Australians who formed a large part of the Leichhardt population. Here Kevin talks with Frank Panucci, the union researcher to whom Serge Serino had introduced him, about their long friendship and the politics on which it was built.

Frank: I met Cookie first through old friends of mine – activists and unionists like Hal Alexander and Serge Serino who talked to me about Kevin and some of the work he was doing, it must have been late '70s early '80s I think. Then after that I started to get involved in FILEF which is an Italian organisation. Most of the people in FILEF were community-based people and a lot of them were workers and members of unions. But what brought them to FILEF was the community-based activities and stuff around issues – it was always a rights based organisation. So we did day-to-day bread-and-butter stuff within the community but also the broader issues. FILEF's basic tenets when it was set up by Carlo Levi in Italy was basically to ensure that Italian migrants overseas were not subjects within their new societies but protagonists of its transformation. It was an organisation that was interested in ensuring that Italians and people of Italian origin, played an active role in the way this country moved forward, towards the more progressive, open, equitable country that we all wanted it to be.

And obviously one of the issues that came up, because it's a progressive, left-wing organisation, was the issue about Indigenous issues in Australia and what the migrant organisation do around those issues and, so we thought about who we could go and talk to about it. So the first port of call basically was Kevin Cook, and we sat down and start talking to Kevin.

Kevin: I got introduced to Frank through Hal. We hit it off pretty well! I just related it to living in Wollongong, and growing up with so many Italians.

But I think that what we were saying is that if we were fair dinkum, then we had to get a broad base, and FILEF was an organisation that was forward thinking, it was out doing things in their community.

Frank: I suppose more than anything, those first meetings were more about us learning what Indigenous issues were about in Australia and I suppose to cut through a lot of mythology about it – mythology both in the sense of what is the public representation of it, but also the mythology of left-wing views of what Indigenous issues were – because that's where our background was, our training. We could see there were similarities between the migrant experience and the Indigenous experience, which were related to issues of racism and structural discrimination and issues like that. But I think it became pretty clear to most of us – and we went through a pretty steep learning curve! – that the similarities between the issues were, in a sense, at the tangent. We went

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through experiences which had the same label in certain aspects in our lives – experiences of racism and structural discrimination. But the fundamental issues about the rights of Indigenous people – as people who suffered colonisation and dispossession – had nothing to do with our experience, in terms of how we moved into this country and participated in this country. It meant there were real differences in the way that the forces that control this country, then and still now, reacted to migrants and Indigenous people.

So if a dispossessed owner of lands in this country turns around and says, 'Well it's easy for you cause you can pack your bags and go but this is my country!' then I suppose it's that kind of stuff that actually changes you. It changed things for me and I think for an organisation like FILEF where it placed the whole issue of Indigenous issues into the broader social struggle within Australia. From the mid '80s we incorporated it into our actions, into the way that we saw Australia: unless you addressed Indigenous issues that you would never actually achieve the transformation of this country that we wanted. So it transcended Indigenous issues for us, because it actually transforms the way that we dealt with community generally.

And I think that at FILEF we did that for a while and to a great extent that was because of having a reference point like Kevin and Tranby. Whenever we felt the need to talk about something, we knew we could pick up a phone to call Kevin at Tranby and the advice we would get, it would be a measured counsel which would not be an imposition on us.

Kevin: But the other thing was that FILEF was working at the council – Vera from FILEF was the Multicultural Officer there. Leichhardt Council had this 'Multicultural Committee' and they were trying to put Aboriginal people in with it. So Vera rang me up and she said, 'You better get up here or you'll be lobbed in with us', I said 'What do you mean?' and she said, 'They're calling you "multicultural"!'

And so I run up there and we sat down had a meeting with the council and we said, 'We are *not* migrants!' And the migrants backed us up 100 per cent. See, we got the support of FILEF and then, that's swayed the other people of the group to see that we'd be one out. So we called for two groups, the Aboriginal group and the rest, the Multicultural group, and we wanted our own separate organisation or advisory committee. And that's how we got the Advisory group and through that was how we got the people employed there.

See at the time, what they were trying to do was to get more people employed on the council but we never had one Aboriginal person employed in it! I hadn't seen one person within the council! So, we went to Hand, Larry Hand and Kate Butler. So we got one person employed as an assistant in their printery, cause

the council did their own printing that time, so we got one person in there. Then they wanted to put another person into the parks. And we said, 'No, we want a position like a trainee town clerk'. And I think at first they laughed! So we said, 'Well, we don't want any position until that's filled'. And so we fought for two years and in the end they gave it to us! It was Larry Hand and a number of other people on the council backed us up and said 'Righto'. So we got people employed then as trainee town clerks. Jeannie Townsend was employed as the community development officer...

And the flag flies next to the Italian flag with the Australian flag at Leichhardt Council, every day. Wonderful, I love driving past there, looking up there...

Judy: and then they got a regular Aboriginal Advisory Committee that used to meet.

Kevin: Yeah it used to meet at Tranby, and I was the chairperson. And it was the only committee of council that was chaired by someone who wasn't a councillor. And I think that was really good in itself. And so that there's a number of councils now that have got Aboriginal Advisory Committees. I don't know if they're chaired by the Aboriginal people or not.

Judy: Now Marrickville Council is... Lester Bostock and Ann Weldon are there... and the City of Sydney and Liverpool... so it's happening, it's happening...

Reaching out into the global community

The international contacts which first Alf Clint and then Kevin brought with them were fostered in the Tranby environment. Such an extraordinary international network allowed teaching to take place with an international perspective as well as ensuring that this global outlook contributed to the political campaigns which drew support from the College. Brian and Kevin talk here about how they saw these international contacts developing.

Tranby was able to build on many different networks – Kevin's own South Coast background and his time in New Zealand had given him many contacts with Maori communities in NZ and in Australia. Then his Builders Labourers' network and his time in the Coady International Institute in Canada had cemented his connections with African activist organisations like the African National Congress (ANC) at the same time as it introduced him to Adivasi and working class movements from India and to South American liberation networks.

Alf Clint had also had long standing friendships and co-operative networks with fellow co-operative members in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific from where students had come to Tranby in the past and had remained

in contact. He was a close friend of Walter Lini, who became the first Prime Minister of independent Vanuatu (and a co-religionist of Alf's) and of Barak Sope, a key minister in Lini's government. Kevin not only carried on Tranby's support for Lini and Sope, who came to stay frequently when he was in Sydney, but went on to build a strong alliance with Hilda Lini, younger sister of Walter and an outspoken advocate for a nuclear free Pacific and with the independence leaders of Kanaky (New Caledonia) and the Free Papua movement among West Papuans.

And finally through the rapidly expanding global education networks of indigenous peoples, Tranby and Kevin in the later 1970s had made connections with First Nations organisations in Canada and the United States. Kevin was to build on these networks outside Tranby for his work with the land rights movement, but as well there were key activists and educators from all these places who were invited in through the doors at Tranby to engage with students and the broader Tranby community.

Kevin: Tranby's international links came about because Walter Lini, the leader of the Vanuatu liberation movement, and Alf Clint were friends. A lot of Aboriginal people in Australia have got links to the mob from Vanuatu because they were the ones kidnapped and 'blackbirded' into Australia as indentured workers. So Barak Sope stayed at Tranby and that allowed a number of people from Vanuatu to come over and talk to him about fundraising for independence. That's how they started to raise money for him.

Brian: So through those old international links, you got people like Barak Sope and Walter Lini.

Kevin: And all across the Pacific. Walter's sister, Hilda Lini was at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji and she used to stay too – only we put her up at your place! Any of the conferences we went to, we always had a very good relationship with the people of Vanuatu.

Brian: And there was Joy Balazo, with the nuclear free mob from the Philippines.

Kevin: And that was through the trade union movement too, not to mention the personal friendship with Joy Balazo who was employed by the Australian Council of Churches. Kevin Tory and me went to a number of meetings with her. She was only new and we took her around and introduced her to all the trade unions. She's a very good speaker. They were having problems with people in Melbourne and they come up to the Tranby camp at Minto and we went out there to speak with trade union people with her, just to see if we could ease the situation a bit. We played roles like that with Joy. And a number of Aboriginal people like Kevin Tory went over to the Philippines. They played really good roles while they were there.



Figure 8.7: Joyce Williams, Judy's aunty from Wellington, had travelled to meet Desmond Tutu.

Courtesy Tranby Archives.



Figure 8.8: Oliver Tambo speaking in Tranby College dining room.

Courtesy Tranby Archives.

Brian: But didn't you end up with the South African ANC leaders, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Oliver Tambo, coming through Tranby too?

Kevin: I'd had contacts with those people going all the way back to my BLF days... and then at Coady in Canada, there had been ANC people there I was really good friends with...

Then when Eddie Funde of the ANC first came to Australia, Meredith Burgmann introduced me to him and he got me on the ANC executive in Sydney. I used to go to meetings and I introduced him to a lot of people. I said to him that everybody that comes out here, doesn't matter who it is, only ever goes to the east coast. They go to Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and no-one else sees them. We're really lucky in Sydney. But people in the Northern Territory, people in Western Australia, people in South Australia, they never get to see international people. So, the ANC brought a dance group out and they went here, there and everywhere, it was a really good program. Aboriginal people got a lot out of it and so did the dancers because the old blokes showed them some traditional dances. So we got to know a lot of the ANC people. It was an incredibly big thing when we hosted Oliver Tambo and Bishop Tutu. When he come, he come to Tranby. Just amazing people. They come in, and five minutes later you're sitting down talking to them as if you knew them for years. We've had incredibly well-known people at Tranby but they've always been treated the same way as anybody else. And, you know, like you've got Judy's aunt, Joycie Williams, going up and saying to Bishop Tutu, and saying, 'My name's Joycie Williams from Wellington, take my photograph'. They responded!

Judy: And the kids! They were in awe of him. He just had a presence about him. And Oliver Tambo too. Just to get the chance to meet those types of people was incredible.

Brian: So those Pacific connections came out of the old co-operative movement. But a whole lot of others came out of your political work, Cookie, like the anti-Apartheid movement, and the Maori. And then your involvement with the ANC and other Africans as well as the Indians – from India – and the South Americans at Coady in Canada? Then later on again though Education with the First Nations mob in the USA and Canada too?

Kevin: Yeah, we had the American Indians, when they come out here. And the Maoris, too, we did a lot of work with them, like with the Building Bridges concerts. Every time we had our Building Bridges concerts, the Maori people were there, they'd be building the scaffolds or they'd be doing food. We had their presence in everything we done.

Judy: What about that big ceremony we had up with the Maori people, all these Maori politicians and kids came over from Bondi and performed dances.

Kevin: There was an art exhibition at the museum. Before they could show it, they had to do their ceremony, and we was up there eating breakfast at five o'clock in the morning.

Judy: These kids lived in Bondi, and they were singing their songs and doing their dances. They were really strong with their culture. And it just blew these old fellows away, didn't it, Cookie? It was amazing. I'm glad we didn't miss out on that.

Kevin: Yeah, it was great.

Judy: The exhibition was fantastic too. They're very good artists and had marvellous carvings.

Brian: With those international connections, with the ANC its political goals and its rights agenda were all clear. But with the Pacific mob, at the heart of the nuclear free demands, was actually an indigenous issue, but a lot of the white fellows involved didn't recognise that. There were common agendas, weren't there, in a lot of these groups, about land rights for indigenous peoples and similar ones. Which is why they could sit down and very quickly identify with us and talk with us.

Kevin: Yeah but with the Fijians it was a really complicated situation when the Coup was on in 1987. It was difficult wasn't it? You had the issue about indigenous people and their rights but at the same time you had the trade unions and the Labour Party issue and the question about democratic organisation for all Fijians, indigenous, Indian or anyone else. The coup wasn't just about indigenous rights but about deeper issues. But the leaders of the coup made that out to be the point of the coup. Other indigenous Fijians who were members of the trade unions, the Labour Party and other organisations, like the churches, were locked out of the decision-making.

Karen Flick came into the Tranby network just as these international links were really building up and she explains how young people like her were affected by this new environment.

Karen: The great thing about being around Tranby was having access to some resources that freed you up to have your discussions that you needed to have and develop those strategies... Tranby has always been a bit more than just a meeting place. It was a place that allowed ideas to grow and develop. Allowed people to say whatever they wanted to say, supported a whole lot of people who would not have access to any other forum. And also opened us young Murris up to meeting a whole range of people, not just other countries, but other ... other

struggles, you know. And for me, that was the Maoris, it was the mob from Vanuatu, the Philippines, from Kanaky, the whole of the South Pacific, and Asia and also Africa of course.

It was just amazing being able to connect with those people like Hilda Lini from Vanuatu and Susan Ounei from Kanaky. I remember the early meetings that we had with all the mob from the South Pacific and, of course, they also had connections with Tranby and with Kevin Cook through the old co-op thing, so there's a link there again. So we could meet with people from other struggles and of course we met all the people involved with the peace movement.



Figure 8.9: Visiting indigenous Philipinos, including Joy Balazo, on left, who organised the international tour.

Courtesy Tranby Archives.

It was the timing too. There were a lot of things happening at that time in the Pacific, about nuclear testing and a nuclear free Pacific. But the focus for indigenous movements, and from my perspective, was that there's no nuclear free Pacific without independence and so it was very much that line of pushing independence because then we would have a say about our own country, and our own situation. And then that was also the peace and justice line, you know you can't have peace without justice in these countries. I ended up being a representative on a forum organised with Bev Symons from the Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific movement and Vivien Abrahams from the Women for Peace and Freedom. Cookie put me onto that committee initially, and I kept

going to it... couldn't stand one or two of the women but they did a lot of solid work, it was just their approach that was a bit hard to take. And so I was at that Peace and Justice conference and that's where I met a whole range of other women from the Pacific, from Kanaky and New Zealand and some women from the Marianas, Tuvalu and those places going under water now. So you could see a range of issues and I always had counsel from Cookie on that too, you know. So it was a really good time for me to be around.

Changes

High pressure and continuing scarce funds meant that most people could only stay at the college as their main employment for a couple of years. But they were invariably strongly influenced by their experiences there, often in ways they did not recognise till later on. In this section, Terry Widders and David Morrissey talk about the points where they decided to move on from Tranby, in 1985 and 1988 respectively. At the same time, new staff were being drawn in who would work with Kevin to take up the ideas circulating in the co-operative and generate new courses in the 1990s, like the Community Development course and the Legal Studies course, as Chris Kerr discusses Tranby in the 1990s with Kevin in Chapter 17. In that final chapter also, Brian Doolan and Terry Widders evaluate the key influences Tranby had on their later lives. But here, Terry and then Dave Morrissey consider the pressures on staff which shaped their decisions to move into work outside Tranby.

Terry Widders: By the end of '84 the course at Macquarie Uni was again about to be run. It had taken an 'off year' in 1984, after running as an experiment in '83. Then they rested it and were going to decide to run it again if it seemed like a good idea, which it did, as it made money by bringing in lots of students!...

For me, on a personal note, it was getting increasingly difficult. We'd had our first child at the end of '83, and the expenses became pretty constant after that, but at Tranby I was still a casual TAFE hourly-paid teacher and that was tricky, because I needed to work elsewhere. I had a few extra hours teaching in the NOW course out in the Western Suburbs, but for our family I needed to have a change and get something a bit firmer as a base, just to be able to cover living costs.

I think Tranby was just on the cusp of three year funding at the end of '84. I was beginning to see a pattern of possibilities for my own pathways in that Tranby and wider context... so what could I do specifically? By the end of '83 we'd had that first TEPC graduation, it had been relatively successful; those small wet

birds had become quite good little flyers... and had taken off! And we were into our second intake. But for me, it was a great idea but I couldn't really keep going at that income rate.

Another sort of thing was if they were going to get firmer funding, that was good, but how would we formalise that? That funding would be for specific positions, and would I fit into that? What sort of structure would emerge? And the third factor was how were decisions being reached? Was an agenda of what *needed to be done*, steering the direction we went in? Were those everyday needs and demands becoming dominant? In retrospect I can see it was what Kevin had to do, just to get things done... It reminded me a bit ... not that I'd had a lot of experience ... but reminded me of union meetings... where you organised the factions... or in this case the Board members ... to get things firmed up, because next day Kevin had to front someone, somewhere, to say 'This is what we've decided to do... and we need to get the funds to do it...'.

Well for me, I took the decision that that wasn't what I wanted to do. I still wanted to stay pretty much 'open weave', to focus on supporting and cultivating the people like Karen Flick who were getting active in the community, to reach further out into community development. I was worried about the centralisation that was going on since the late '70s in particular, the corporatisation of Aboriginal communities, in fact the whole creation of that idea of 'community' and the mushrooming of so many organisations. I saw all that as a problem... It just takes up so much time and energy to attend to that ... Because I still had a left-over from the experience of trying to practise community development up in the northern tablelands, New England area in the last '60s and early '70s. I thought they could do more of that... But there were many practical questions they had to address at Tranby and I'm sure Kevin saw that much more clearly than I.

So there were several factors playing on my mind. And it came to a bit of a crisis at the end of '84 because I was offered a year's contract at Macquarie... so I thought should I follow that up? Could it live alongside the Tranby work? Did I totally agree with what I thought was rather a 'managed outcome' model of how things were working at Tranby? So it was a balance of things, of which directions to go, money, pathways for me and what I wanted to do myself... So like most things it was complicated at the time but it was late '84 when I decided to resign and focus on the Macquarie work.

Dave Morrissey: I think what I really learnt from working in that ADU was that we got used to listening to people. It didn't really show up to me till after I'd left. By 1988, Chris Milne and I had been around for a while and we were really

burning out. So we moved onto setting up our own consultancy business. What we found later on, was that the people we were working with were saying, 'Well you're a bit different from the other people we've dealt with because you actually listening to what we said'. So even though the character of what Chris and I were doing was moving away from Aboriginal Affairs, we found that we still benefited from having learnt in those years that it was vitally important to be *listening* to what people were saying and to let them have enough autonomy over what they're doing so they have some ownership of it. And we actually carried that right through, the business is still running. That realisation of the importance of listening to people was probably the main thing that we picked up from our Tranby ADU work and were able to carry on with. Just knowing that if you impose a regime on the people you're working with, it's not likely to be sustainable, so, you got to sit back and *listen* to what you actually want, actively interpret the way they want to do things.

And overall, you know, what I remember about Tranby was that there were so many schemes going on in that front room at Tranby, keeping up with even ten per cent of them was hard. Half of them died in the bum but the other half came off, with all sorts of odd results!

Kevin: Well, you know like there was always something happening, there was never a dull moment.