

# TANGENTYERE COUNCIL

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Mr Barry Wakelin MP  
Chairperson  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Wakelin,

Thank you for providing my Council with an opportunity to provide a submission to the Standing Committee's Inquiry into Indigenous Employment.

Enclosed herewith are initiatives that have improved employment experiences for Aboriginal people in Central Australia lead by Tangentyere Council.

Should a Public Hearing be held in Alice Springs, the Council invites the Standing Committee to visit Tangentyere to see first hand the initiatives that are described in this submission.

Yours sincerely

William Tilmouth  
**Executive Director**

# **Inquiry into Indigenous Employment**

## **Standing Committee on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs**

### **1. Introduction**

Tangentyere Council is the resource and advocacy body for 18 Town Camps in Alice Springs and provides a wide range of services to these Town Camps, the wider Alice Springs community and to a number of remote communities in the Central Australian region. In the area of Employment and Training, these services currently include the following programs:

- A Job Network Service
- Personal Support Program (PSP)
- A Builder Trainer Program
- Involvement in the STEP program.

Tangentyere Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Inquiry into Indigenous Employment. Tangentyere Council has been involved in the provision of employment and training services to Indigenous people in Central Australia since it commenced operating nearly 30 years ago.

While many employment programs and policies have made a valuable contribution to the lives of Aboriginal people, there is a great deal more that needs to be done. There have been some wonderful success stories, and from these come lessons we can learn from, both in terms of the factors which have contributed to improving lives and the successes there might be with the right processes and resources in place.

We would recommend to the Committee the previous extensive studies undertaken of Employment and Training programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as they contain many insights and recommendations that remain relevant today. These include:

- Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs (the Miller Report), 1985
- Review of the Training for Aboriginals Program (the Elliott Johnston report), 1991.

The Miller Report in Chapter 3 provides one of the first and most detailed analyses of the Indigenous labour market, income levels and the reasons why government intervention is essential if things are going to change for the better.

## 2. Outline of Submission

This submission draws on this experience in assisting Aboriginal people in Central Australia into employment and training over the last 30 years. It refers mostly to initiatives run directly by Tangentyere Council, sometimes in partnership with other organisations. It attempts to provide information about those initiatives with which we are most familiar and know to have had a positive influence on improving employment experiences. It should not be assumed that the factors outlined here that have been important in Central Australia are those that will be most relevant in other areas of Australia.

No outcome statistics are provided in relation to federally funded programs run by Tangentyere Council such as Job Network and PSP, as it is assumed that the Committee will have access to such statistics through the relevant Department. This submission seeks to tell the story behind positive initiatives and draws out a number of individual case studies to identify the factors that have contributed to constructive experiences. Given the focus of the Inquiry on informing future policy development, comments are included here on some changes that would assist more such positive experiences in the future.

This submission does not identify the contribution that practical reconciliation has made to instances of improved employment outcomes. The funding that is provided for services and programs to Indigenous people are very largely essential services and it is not clear how practical reconciliation has added to these essential services and programs.

The following initiatives are described in some detail:

1. The Builder Trainer Program (also known as the IHANT Training and Employment project) is an excellent positive case study.
2. The Job Shop (operates a Job Network service and the Personal Support Program) is a very positive story. Several case studies and an overview of factors which assist Job Shop to operate successfully are provided.
3. CDEP – Tangentyere operates a large CDEP program and this has led to a substantial number of improved employment outcomes.

The Committee may also wish to follow up other initiatives in Central Australia that have resulted in improved employment experiences for Aboriginal people. In particular:

- Footprints Forward is another Alice Springs good news story.
- The CLC Mining Employment Unit has been successfully assisting Indigenous people, including community based people, into the mining industry since 1995. The model is a very positive one to explore.
- Tangentyere is exploring the possibility of setting up an enterprise, in consultation with the mining industry, that would act as employer for a pool of Aboriginal people who would be trained and placed in the mining industry as appropriate. This project is in the development stage and will be explored in talks with the mining industry over the next few months.

### **3. Positive initiatives from Tangentyere Council's experience**

#### **3.1. The Builder Trainer Program**

##### **3.1.1 Background**

It is widely known that Indigenous people in Australia face a range of difficulties when seeking employment. This is especially so in remote Aboriginal communities, where the labour market is very limited. The few jobs that are available on remote communities include those available with the community council, in the local store, school or health centre. Other work within communities is usually undertaken through CDEP projects.

This means that most people residing in remote Aboriginal communities are reliant upon Centrelink for their main or only source of income. There are also many people not registered with Centrelink who are supported by family members who themselves may be surviving on Centrelink payments only.

##### **3.1.2. Development of the Builder Trainer program**

The Central Remote Regional Council (CRRRC) of ATSIC recognised that, while levels of employment are very low in the remote communities, significant amounts of Federal and Territory Government funding was being expended in the communities on housing. All of the work involved in these programs was being undertaken by contractors from Alice Springs.

The CRRRC asked why this work, or at least some of it, could not be undertaken by local Aboriginal people. This was the basis of the Builder Trainer Program which commenced in 2002.

Initially it was auspiced by the Tangentyere Job Shop, and later became the responsibility of Tangentyere Constructions, a wholly owned Associate Company of Tangentyere Council. Tangentyere Constructions has the ability to supervise the building of homes and to ensure that standards of construction are maintained at a high level.

##### **3.1.3. Operation of the Builder Trainer Program**

The Program operates in the following manner.

- The Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory (IHANT) contracts Tangentyere Constructions as project manager to oversee the construction of houses by the apprentices and builder trainer.
- The communities which participate in the Program employ up to four apprentices, who are signed up with the New Apprenticeships Centre under STEP.
- Tangentyere Constructions employs builder trainers, who are people qualified and experienced in general building.
- The builder trainers supervise the apprentices and together they construct two homes per year, which become the property of the community.
- In addition to the allowance paid under the Apprenticeship scheme the apprentices also receive CDEP "top-up", and therefore receive a better wage each week than they would if they were simply on CDEP. This is an incentive to encourage the apprentices to stay at work.

- Under the Apprenticeship scheme the participants enrol in a course entitled Certificate 3 in General Construction at the Charles Darwin University (CDU) Alice Springs Campus and this gives them a formal qualification in construction. The apprentices travel to Alice Springs for “block training” at the CDU, and technical instructors from the CDU also travel to the communities and undertake further instruction work with the apprentices.
- Approximately 70% of the housing construction is undertaken by the apprentices, with the remainder being undertaken by various tradespeople. With the design of a house by Tangentyere Construction using more trainer friendly materials, this will increase to 90%.

At present there are five participating communities. These are Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Santa Teresa, Papunya, Laramba and Ampilatwatja.

### **3.1.3. Aims and Achievements**

This Program has achieved the following:

- It employs 20 apprentices and provides accredited training with all apprentices due to complete Certificate 2 or Certificate 3 (fully qualified) by the end of the current contract in September 2006.
- It allows employment and income to remain in the community.
- It provides apprentices with some choices for their future and the potential to gain employment for many years to come.
- It provides “ownership” of the homes by the community because members of the community have constructed them. By September 2006, 30 houses will be completed. Of those completed to date, none have been subject to damage.

The Program is designed to provide employment in a community in the longer term. The apprentices who are gaining experience in the construction of homes will be well placed to undertake contracts for the maintenance of government assets in their communities. These could be for assets belonging to Government Departments such as schools and health centres, as well the on-going housing construction and maintenance contracts.

While there has been some turnover of apprentices in some communities, the Program is robust and it is understood that it is to be introduced in the Top End of the Northern Territory. Where there are difficulties in relation to regular attendance at work, the Builder Trainers and Tangentyere Constructions staff talk with members of the Community Council to address any problems the apprentices may be having. Tangentyere Constructions will shortly employ Mr Clarry Robinya, the Chairperson of the ATSIC Central Remote Regional Council, as a Field Officer/Mentor whose brief will be to support and motivate both the apprentices and the members of the Community Councils to maintain a commitment to the Program. Mr Robinya commands a high level of respect in the Aboriginal community and is highly suited to this role.

To address the low level of literacy and numeracy among the apprentices, Tangentyere Constructions has located a trade-based course through the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) in Alice Springs. Under this course a tutor will be employed by IAD to travel to the relevant communities and undertake literacy and numeracy training. In addition IAD will contract other educational staff to provide additional tuition to the apprentices in the communities.

The Builder Trainer Program is seen as a great innovation and source of employment and training that enables local Aboriginal people to undertake real work on their own communities. The construction of the "Training Houses" costs no more than those constructed under the Capital Works Program.

#### **3.1.4. Factors influencing the success of the Builder Trainer Program**

- Strong support of the communities that are participating in the Program;
- Strong support of the ATSIC Regional Council, with the Chairperson taking an active role in visiting communities, talking to apprentices in their own language, and providing motivation, support and leadership to apprentices;
- The ability of Tangentyere Constructions to form long term constructive relationships with communities;
- Motivated apprentices and provision of a structured training program;
- Strong support by IHANT and the confidence to leave decision making and running of the program to Tangentyere Constructions;
- The continuity of a three year contract with capacity for apprentices to become qualified in that time;
- Ongoing, professional and structured support to community members to undertake their own community's work for the benefit of both the individual apprentices and the community.

### **3.2. Tangentyere Job Shop**

#### **3.2.1. Background**

The Job Shop is one of four not-for-profit enterprise arms of Tangentyere Council. The Job Shop has been operating for 5 years and:

- has 2 contracts it operates, through a national not for profit organisation known as *JOB futures*,
  - Job Network and
  - the Personal Support Program;
- had a turnover of \$1m in 2003/2004, which is likely to be higher in 2004/2005;
- has 13 staff, 11 of them Indigenous;

The Job Shop's Job Network business is a specialist contract, with the focus on Indigenous job seekers only. The Job Shop has been allocated 23.9% share of the market in the town of Alice Springs, and that means a potential case load of 501 unemployed people. At the moment there are 311 people on the books, and nearly 90% of them have been assessed by Centrelink as highly disadvantaged (figures as at April 2005).

The Personal Support Program is administered by the Commonwealth Department Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). It is targeted at people with major social barriers to employment. The Job Shop has a maximum case load of 53 people. The most common issues faced by these people are:

- transience/homelessness;
- the impact of very long-term unemployment;
- English as a second language, generally coupled with literacy and numeracy difficulties;
- relationship/emotional trauma, including dealing with grief;
- alcohol;
- other health issues.

### **3.2.3. Strategies to achieve successes for Job Shop as a service organisation**

There are three main strategies employed by Tangentyere Job Shop that have provided a good basis for its overall approach to providing a quality service:

- The first is the partnership with JOB *futures*. This gives the Job Shop a national delivery framework, support for policy change and management and staff development expertise.
- The second strategy is the way the team aims to work with the individual job seekers. In the words of one of our employment consultants: "You don't have to walk the road of progress on your own". We don't want to set people up to fail, rather we aim to make job seeking easy.
- The third strategy is to keep an eye out for potential partnerships in projects or contracts, where there is equal status.

In addition, there have been a number of factors that have contributed to the ongoing viability of Job Shop as a not for profit enterprise. The Job Shop is set up as a Charitable Trust company for Tangentyere Council. It has its own management board and was established at arms length from Tangentyere Council, so that if Job Shop hit the wall, the organisation as a whole won't suffer.

The key factors in our ongoing operating viability as a not for profit enterprise have been:

- excellent business advice from consultants Mike Harrison and Street Ryan and Associates on cash flow management;
- a strong financial support structure from Tangentyere Council;
- some excellent advice from accounting firm Deloitte to help staff understand the dynamics of running a successful business;
- leadership from the management board on directions;
- joining JOB *futures* in the lead up to the second Job Network contract, so that Job Shop was not competing as a small, stand alone enterprise with only limited success in the earlier contract. Job Shop has found that collaborating, rather than competing, has contributed to success.

A major factor in the success of Job Shop in assisting unemployed people has been its connection with a larger Aboriginal organisation which is a focal point for many services to Aboriginal people, especially those living on Town Camps in Alice Springs, and its staffing by Aboriginal people. The Job Shop aims to be a small business that is a model for Indigenous employment in our community. As stated above, of the 13 staff we have, 11 are Indigenous, including the assistant manager.

The strength this brings to the business includes:

- cultural understanding and communication skills;
- the ability to work with people who have been through hard times, because most of our team have had similar life experience;
- local knowledge, for instance, a staff member was able to tell us the reason a job seeker was not where we thought is that the job seeker was getting away from payback, and then he has to go out to bush camp;
- limited turnover, because the staff are locals, we pay reasonably well, and there is a strong commitment to the service being provided.

In summary, the predominantly Indigenous staffing of Job Shop is not a preference or merely an advantage, it is a necessity.

The struggles still faced by Job Shop are:

- covering costs with the current Job Network contract in a climate where other providers have folded;
- meeting the costs of payroll tax, despite being a not for profit organisation;
- finding people willing to be directors in a climate where directors liability is felt to be a real risk, despite every effort to make informed, responsible decisions;
- challenging the notion that Indigenous enterprises are less important than “pure” private sector enterprises.

#### ***3.2.4. Case studies of factors influencing positive outcomes for unemployed clients***

The following case studies provide information about the factors that influenced the positive outcome for some Job shop clients, apart from the perseverance and capacity of the person themselves. These case studies are by no means the norm, as the barriers which many people face are very great. However they may be useful in identifying policy action and provision of resources that can assist unemployed Indigenous people in employment and training.

##### *Person 1*

A traditional young man had been on Newstart Allowance for four years and had little familiarity with the world of work. After being provided with information about services provided by Job Shop he expressed interest in the mining industry. He was placed in a mining job in 2001 and is still there.

##### *Factors influencing the outcome:*

- A lot of information about work, the expectations, obligations and rewards and rights was provided initially.
- The Jobseeker Account was used to pay for work related licences, a first aid certificate, travel assistance and drug checks required by the employer.
- The client was “buddied” to other Indigenous workers at the mine.
- The job shop case worker maintained contact and support regularly with both the clients and the employer.

##### *Person 2*

A long term unemployed young person expressed interest in working in the aviation industry but as positions were scarce in that area, started looking for jobs in other areas. The Employment Consultant found an aero skills certificate course in Queensland, and although they were reluctant to take interstate trainees, they were persuaded by the Consultant to take on this person. The person has now graduated and is earmarked for employment with Qantas or Jet Star.

##### *Factors influencing the outcome:*

- Persistent research by the Employment Consultant for appropriate training opportunities
- Strong advocacy by the Employment Consultant for acceptance to the course
- The Jobseeker Account was used to pay for travel assistance and course fees.

##### *Person 3*

A semi traditional woman who was very long term unemployed was assisted with a computer course and placed in an organisation where she has had two promotions and over a four year period has progressed into middle management.

*Factors influencing the outcome:*

- Jobseeker account assistance with pre work computer training and placement in traineeship with a culturally friendly organisation
- Good relationship with employment counsellor with a lot of encouragement and support provided
- Ongoing support and advice once in employment.

*Person 4*

A young person had been on the Personal Support Program and had been extremely depressed, potentially suicidal, and had been subject to domestic violence. The person was referred to Tangentyere's Family Well-being counsellors and after some time was placed in an Indigenous organisation and has now maintained that employment for more than 13 weeks.

*Factors influencing the outcome:*

- Supportive relationship with the Employment Consultant
- Jobseeker account assistance with accommodation, some taxi vouchers for specific purposes and a uniform for work.
- Ability to refer to culturally appropriate counselling assistance.

### ***3.2.5. Factors found by Job Shop to be a positive influence on employment outcomes***

While the above case studies provide examples of how assistance can work in practice, there are a number of ways in which Job Shop staff have been able to provide assistance to unemployed people that have benefited their employment experiences:

#### *Job Search Training*

Job Shop provides a "Ready to Roll" job search course for job ready clients to boost their confidence and skills in looking for jobs

#### *Working Life Program*

This is for long term unemployed people who are usually not job ready and covers modules on "why work", healthy living, and what to expect in the workplace. Job Shop is also looking at a Family Well-being course for clients.

#### *Role of Employment Consultants*

Employment Consultants are able to advocate on behalf of clients on a range of factors affecting their employment chances. They also provide valuable post placement support and develop relationships with employers that facilitate sorting out of issues that might arise with people placed in their jobs. There is also an educative role for employers in this process in increasing their own level of cultural awareness and working through cultural differences.

#### *Use of Technology*

Unemployed people become accustomed to use of unfamiliar technology through use of Job Shop's touch screens and computers.

### *Job Seeker Account*

The flexible use of the Jobseeker Account has been of invaluable assistance, including for training courses, travel assistance, clothes, purchase of bicycles for transport, emergency hostel accommodation, rental bonds, mobile phones, car registration and licences. The ability to use some of these items is now restricted but Job Shop found that the judicious use of such assistance could make the difference in a person being able to look for work or of being able to stay at work. For instance a person who had commenced work might no longer be eligible for a Housing Commission subsidy, but not have sufficient savings for the bond to move into other rental housing in the early stage of employment. Assistance with car registration meant that people could get to work or a course on time. A pre paid mobile phone meant that clients could receive messages regarding jobs even if they couldn't afford to pre pay for ringing out. The large majority of Town Camp residents do not have a telephone in their residence.

### *Access to appropriate services*

Job Shop assists people to access psychologists, the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service, counselling, and alcohol and drug services and treatment when these services are needed prior to providing employment assistance.

### *Partnerships with other organisations*

- Job shop partnered the Alice Springs Hospital in placing eight people under STEP in training positions at the hospital. Of those, four remain in the NT Public Sector.
- Job Shop partners with CAAMA Aboriginal radio in advertising jobs, providing information on training courses and letting people know when Job Shop will be at certain locations to provide information and sign ups.
- Job Shop partners with Footprints Forward to work with those young people not on benefits to access Centrelink and Job shop where appropriate.
- Job Shop works with many businesses around Alice Springs to purchase services and products where necessary and this has good spin offs for job opportunities for clients.

## **3.3. Tangentyere CDEP**

### **3.3.1. Background**

Tangentyere CDEP has been established for over fifteen years. It provides a mix of work activities involving community services, cultural activities, employment and training and enterprise development. The current Target Employment Level (TEL) is 225 participants.

The demand for CDEP has been growing in recent times. For the past year Tangentyere CDEP has been operating at capacity and has a current wait list of thirty. This reflects two trends in indigenous employment in Alice Springs. One is the movement of people from remote regions into Town seeking employment and other services. The second is a general recognition that Tangentyere is able to provide employment and training opportunities. Participants join our CDEP and have expectations of moving into jobs either through Tangentyere's internal employment policy, via the CDEP enterprise sector or else through Tangentyere's Job Network Agency with CDEP assistance.

Tangentyere Council CDEP has developed creative programs to assist CDEP participants make the transition into mainstream employment. Evidence of this is the forty-eight successful applications in the past two years for the CDEP Participant Employment Placement Incentive Payment for assisting participants to take mainstream employment. Tangentyere has received over \$80,000 in payments from DEWR during that time.

### ***3.3.2. Strategies of Tangentyere CDEP to achieve positive employment and training outcomes***

To achieve the transition into mainstream employment, Tangentyere CDEP has adopted four employment and training strategies.

1. **Host agreements** with potential employers to provide training on the job. Tangentyere provides a participant to the host and provides support throughout the host period. The best example of this is Tangentyere's Memorandum of Understanding with the Alice Springs Centrelink Office. Under this agreement Tangentyere CDEP provides participants and pays a wage during the training period. Centrelink undertake all training including a Certificate 3 in Business. Centrelink also paid a quarterly training fee to Tangentyere to cover part of the trainee's wage. Once Centrelink feels they are trained to a competitive standard, the participants were encouraged to apply for positions. In the past three years Tangentyere has five participants train in the local Centrelink for periods of up to twelve months and have since moved into full time employment with Centrelink.
2. **An employment pathway within Tangentyere Council** is available to all CDEP participants. Tangentyere Council employs over 100 staff in wide range of positions. When positions become available CDEP participants are encouraged to apply and are supported in their applications and during employment. A transition to employment policy exists within the organization with between 60 and 70 CDEP participants working in full time or near full time jobs. Participants start with "top up" positions, are trained on the job and have the opportunity to progress into full time work off CDEP within the organization. Two apprenticeships for mechanics, two in land management and one in carpentry have been filled by participants in the last year. In the past two years more than twenty participants have made this transition via this pathway.
3. **Enterprise contracts** awarded to Tangentyere CDEP provide another component of our indigenous employment program. Tangentyere tenders to do contract works around Alice Springs. Tangentyere recruits participants to form a work gang under the supervision of a foreman / mentor. Income from the contracts is used to employ participants for up 35 hours per week for a fixed period of time needed to complete the contracted work. Participants are trained on the job in specific tasks as well as being able to receive accredited training in Occupational, Health and Safety, trade skills and driver education. Though the employment may be short term (up to 18 months) it helps participants develop good work ethic, reliability, provides self esteem and confidence which equips participants to tackle mainstream employment.

The best example of this was a contract from the Alice Springs Town Council to provide concrete margins along 10 kilometres of roads and two flood-ways in Town Camps. The project was run over 18 months employing up to 25 participants who received training on the job in concrete work, form laying and concrete finishing. The participants were also given the opportunity to obtain driver's licenses or upgrade existing ones. Some participants also received tickets to operate forklifts, skid steer vehicles and medium trucks. At the end of the project 80% of the participants involved took up permanent employment, some within the organization and others at the mines in Central Australia. Examples of other recent contracts include constructing a concrete car park and numerous landscaping projects in Alice Springs and in remote areas.

4. **A personal assistance program** has been developed by Tangentyere CDEP in association with Tangentyere Job Shop (Job Network Agency). It provides assistance to CDEP participants wishing to make the transition into mainstream employment. CDEP employs a coordinator to assist CDEP participants register as job seeker clients of Job Shop which helps them prepare resumes and assistance to interview for jobs. CDEP participants are also able to access a job seeker account which can help them receive special training to assist the process. The coordinator develops relationships with employers and helps place appropriate participants in off CDEP employment. This in turn generates an income flow for CDEP via the placement incentive payments run by DEWR.

By using these strategies, Tangentyere CDEP has successfully increased its transition to employment focus in recent years and has worked closely with the Tangentyere Job Shop (Job Network provider) to do this.

Tangentyere Council believes that many of the jobs carried out by CDEP workers are in fact real jobs that would be funded through state/territory and commonwealth government departments in other areas. Such jobs include waste management, aged services, municipal services and administration. These services are ongoing and CDEP has been used as a way of funding their delivery whereas these same services elsewhere are funded through the relevant programs.

Tangentyere believes that CDEP should be contracted to provide these services with funding from the program areas normally responsible for ensuring delivery of such services. CDEP would employ and train staff to deliver these services, thus providing community benefits and offering real jobs to people. This would build on the contracting work already undertaken by Tangentyere CDEP.

Of the 225 people on CDEP at Tangentyere, about 75 per cent are engaged in working between 20 and 37.5 hours per week in jobs or community activities. These people are job ready or are in transition to being work ready with assistance. Another 25 per cent of people have special needs and require substantial and long term assistance to move to the transition stage. These people face serious barriers to participating in work or community activities due to a range of factors including substance abuse, family violence, poor health, intermittent contact with the criminal justice system, little if any personal or family work history and low levels of formal education.

The needs of this group will not be met with a simple enforcement of rules that assumes that people will automatically comply, or be able to comply, in response to the threat of withdrawal of money. While the concept of “sit down” is not supported by Tangentyere Council, the Council believes that realistic and constructive assistance to current CDEP participants with special needs is a complex and skilled task.

For this group, a case management approach involving flexible assistance appropriate to each individual’s needs is recommended. This would be linked but not funded through CDEP and may be similar to the Personal Support Program currently funded by DEWR. It needs to be acknowledged however, that this is a sizeable group and current services that may assist them are grossly under resourced to do so at present.

It is not Tangentyere’s experience that young people leave school to join CDEP. On the contrary, young people who commence CDEP have usually been out of school for several years, even if they are still teenagers. These young people often have literacy and numeracy problems as a consequence, to the extent that they are likely to be excluded from the wider job market without substantial assistance in this area.

### ***3.3.3. Factors found by Tangentyere CDEP to be a positive influence on employment outcomes***

- The CDEP employment incentive is an excellent initiative
- Linkages between CDEP and Job Shop have worked well to the benefit of clients
- A CDEP award would assist an increased employment focus for CDEP workers
- Gaining contracts for work to be undertaken by CDEP workers is an excellent way to improve employment outcomes for people.
- Built in requirements for Aboriginal employment on major government projects provide excellent opportunities for positive employment outcomes. The building of the Desert Knowledge precinct in Alice springs is a good example.
- CDEP acting as an incubator for enterprise activities is an excellent way of developing meaningful on the job training and employment

## **4. Policy development ideas**

1. Make employment of Indigenous apprentices as cost minimal as possible. This will increase employment numbers, boost the skills level immediately and therefore address a small part of Australia’s economic performance. If this means using the Group Training process, as not for profit organisations, then this is a sensible use of government funding.

2. In the replacement for ATSIC, require that the ICC process maximises Indigenous employment, following the IHANT model as outlined above. Significant long-term contracts must include new Apprenticeships that offer structured accredited training for sufficient time to allow for completion of the qualification.

3. Ensure maximum Indigenous staffing of the ICCs and the Office for Indigenous Policy Coordination, to ensure appropriate service delivery to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

4. All government contracts should include requirements for Indigenous employment and training in proportion to the representation of Indigenous people in the population in that area.

5. There needs to be urgent attention paid to the high marginal tax rates paid by those who cease to be on Newstart and other allowances when commencing employment. This is a major disincentive to work and an unfair penalty for those already disadvantaged financially. The 2005 Federal Budget changes to the income test for Newstart allowance and Parenting Payment are welcome. However the marginal tax rates for people on these allowances who undertake paid employment are still extremely high compared to other workers.