PEOPLE WORKING WITH TECHNOLOGY IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

ourplace

NUMBER 41

Building capacity to work

A MATA MATA VOICE // WHAT'S WORKING IN INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS? // MEDIATION: A WAY TO WORK IT OUT
EAST TIMORESE LOCALS TO ACCESS CLEAN WATER // RESHAPING LIVES OF KUKU NYUNGKAL PEOPLE // BECOMING A STAR

BUSH TECHS: GETTING A SATELLITE CONNECTION THROUGH THE NBN CO. // WATER PRESSURE ISSUES

FROM LEFT: Lyndon Frearson, Paul Rodden, Michael Tuckwell, Grant Behrendorff from CAT PROJECTS and Award presenter, Brett Jones from Snowy Hydro Limited.

CAT Projects:
BUSHLIGHT INDIA PROJECT win The Sir William Hudson Award 2011

From a field of 50 finalists, CAT Projects win *The Sir William Hudson Award* 2011 for their BUSHLIGHT INDIA PROJECT. This award recognises the most outstanding engineering project and is the highest accolade for a project-based award that Engineers Australia confers. It represents the very best of the best with the winner celebrated and acknowledged not only here in Australia but around the world. CAT Projects have previously won Engineers Australia awards. CAT Projects is a subsidiary company of CAT Inc.

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COVER PHOTO: Some of the trainee staff at Karen's Kitchen; Deanne Dingo, Faye Mason and Angela Farmer. PHOTO BY JULIANNA OSBOURNE

Centre for Appropriate Technology

ISSN: 1325–7684

Our Place is published three times a year by the Centre for Appropriate Technology, an Indigenous science and technology organisation, which seeks to secure sustainable livelihoods through appropriate technology.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:
Free to people living or working with Indigenous communities.
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Opinions expressed in Our Place are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the CAT Board or staff.

WARNING:
This magazine contains images of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Caution should be exercised while reading this magazine, as some of these images may be of deceased persons.

Our Place Number 41, December 2011

Desert Peoples Centre
Desert Knowledge Precinct
South Stuart Highway
Alice Springs NT 0870
Print Post: 545270/00016

Graphic design: Colleen Danzic
Editing: Hujjat Nadarajah, Metta Young and Peter Taylor.

The production of Our Place is funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

A Mata Mata voice to empower my people

Phyllis Batumbil is a senior Yolngu woman from Mata Mata homeland in north east Arnhem Land. Phyllis is an artist (weaver) and is establishing an arts and crafts business in her community. Phyllis has lived with a Bushlight solar power system since 2005. In October 2011 when a new Bushlight solar power system was installed at the nearby community of Mapuru, Phyllis joined the Bushlight team to deliver training in the local language, Yolngu Matha. Bushlight is part of the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT). Bushlight works with Indigenous communities to sustainably manage and maximise the benefits of energy services.

Interview by: WAYNE BARBOUR and SAL WARD

Can you tell us about yourself and where you live?

My name is Phyllis Batumbil. I was born in Elcho Island and I grew up at Mata Mata which is an isolated area on the coast. It is the place I've always lived with my family, so Mata Mata is my home.

Mata Mata itself is the land of Warramiri people. It is the land of my father's great grandmother and my father established Mata Mata for us to live there. And he told us to look after the land. Later, we set up our organisation, named Marthakal, that's an Indigenous Yolngu organisation.

Changes are happening little by little because we don't want to see something that is coming to us in a rush, so we're going slowly, processing slowly and we have been living there for many many years.

What did you do for power before the Bushlight solar power system was installed?

We used to be living with the fire. We used to set up a fire, for cooking and that's the only lights we have, the fire and sometimes the moon. Then half way through the 1980s we started the fuel supply for the generator power. We used to get diesel from Elcho Island. So with that diesel, we have been struggling through hardship to try to bring that diesel across to Mata Mata. It costs a lot of money, it's too much, too expensive to buy the fuel, and to book the plane to make the charter to bring all that fuel across.

It was a bit risky for us then, because of the old people and having snakes around. Also when there's sick people, especially the old people, they need some fans running. That's why we needed those lights to be on with the generator. >

Mata Mata itself is the land of Warramiri people. It is the land of my father's great grandmother and my father established Mata Mata for us to live there. And he told us to look after the land.

Then all of a sudden there comes a change for us. The people from Bushlight they came to visit us in 2004, they ran a workshop for us and introduced their business, how the solar power will work for us and we just couldn't wait. We couldn't wait because this was something new to us and we're talking among ourselves and we agree to have that solar power. We're so lucky with Bushlight solar power.

What changes have happened for Mata Mata since getting that solar power system?

It's given us a big change at Mata Mata. We're so happy, we're sitting more relaxed, sitting back, because we've got our power that can run and help us through the night and during the day. It runs everything for us. So we're just using diesel, just to back up the power.

So everything works with Bushlight — washing machine, fan, power to watch the television, if you want to play the DVD, anything, you can use that power — solar power. But for the other heavy duty (appliances) like a welder or a grinder you can only use the generator.

We're looking after our solar power. Each person is volunteering, like who's doing that and who's doing this. So what Bushlight taught us is that the responsibility is for us. People living at Mata Mata, we are the people that are looking after everything that Bushlight has done.

We've got the solar power working for us out in the bush so we can concentrate, we're not thinking about travelling back to central communities. Central communities are just too much — too big, too crowded, too much noise and too much rubbish. Our kids don't want to get a model from them. Out in the bush, on homelands, kids are being healthy and strong. People are strong, both adults and children because we're eating fresh, we're not eating frozen stuff.

Can you tell us about the community enterprise you're establishing?

Working with my yapa (sister) Nina Brown (from Bushlight), we sat down and talked about what sort of business we want to have and the first priority for me is to do my artwork, that's why I want to run an artwork business. So we set up a plan last year to open an arts and crafts centre at Mata Mata. That's why I need the support from Bushlight, they are my supportive team. So we're working together, me and Bushlight and we run with that action plan for two years.

My vision is setting up my business at Mata Mata, because the business I want to run belongs to Mata Mata. That's how I see it. We can use computers on the solar power for the internet. So as soon as my arts and crafts are finished I have to put everything onto a website to sell it online.

I have the voice and the confidence to empower myself and my people to do our own business, to stand on our own feet. After opening the arts and crafts business at Mata Mata, I can show those big people that I'm a black woman who can do this and that. Identify that I can do this job by myself. So that's my vision, so every Yolngu has a job to run.

So a Bushlight solar system is being commissioned at Mapuru today, can you tell us how you're involved?

Today I'm at Mapuru, I'm with my team, with Bushlight because they needed me out here to help them to do their job — visiting different homelands to sit down with the Yolngu people to get all that information across. Talking with the Yolngu people here, training them, talking about the history, talking about my experience and how I've been looking after my Bushlight there at Mata Mata.

Thanks for telling us your story

Maynmuk, good! Because some of the people they don't know about the bush. Lot of people living in the big cities don't know about the bush, about Bushlight and how the Yolngu people survive in the bush. Maynmuk! □

This is an edited transcript of a video interview. Phyllis Batumbil was employed by CAT as interpreter and trainer.

NEWS

Walungurru 30 year Celebration: Proud to be Pintupi!

On the weekend of 15 October 2011, Walungurru Council (Kintore, NT) staged a festival to mark 30 years since the Pintupi moved back from Papunya and the surrounding region to establish their own community and homelands in their own Country, some 550km north west of Alice Springs and close to the WA Border. CAT has been involved with Kintore since the beginning, initially helping to establish access to potable water by installing hand water pumps and constructing pit toilets. The festival was an amazing celebration of the community's vision and resilience, attracting more than 700 visitors, including Minister Garrett, Neil Murray and anthropologist Fred Myers, various NGOs and friends from surrounding communities and beyond.

Internet to Go!

CAT's association with appropriate technologies over many years is identified in many people's minds with our enormously popular established products such as drum ovens, VIP toilets and chip heaters. While these products continue to provide reliable service and are still available, we are always experimenting with a range of technologies to test their suitability for use in demanding environments. CAT is no longer just building products 'from the ground up', but as technologies become more complex and sophisticated, selecting devices off the shelf where possible, combining them, adapting them, and testing their performance and usefulness in real situations is increasingly becoming the norm.

One example of this is the implementation phase of our Home Internet project, following on from the study reported on our website in July of this year. With funding from the Aboriginals Benefit Account, CAT has introduced computing facilities in the homes of three central Australian outstation communities, Kwale Kwale, Mungalawurru and Imangara. The computer devices themselves are standard home or office products, but a practical adaptation requested by the residents is protective covers to allow their computers and printers to be locked away when not in use.

Another change has been necessitated by the quite large distances between some of the houses. WiFi technology is being used to link all of the household computers to one or two central shared satellite Internet connections. The standard domestic version of WiFi, where the computer contains an inbuilt 'stick' to communicate with an Internet modem, is inadequate in this situation. Each household participating in the project has been equipped with its own WiFi receiver and a directional antenna pointing back to the central Internet distribution point. This solution is working well over distances up to 1200 metres, and has the potential to be extended.

CAT is working closely with residents and academic researchers over a three year period to support and monitor the performance of the equipment in this real life situation, and even more importantly, to observe how people make use of this increasingly essential communication, learning and social tool.

For more information contact Andrew Crouch on 08 8959 6144 or andrew.crouch@icat.org.au

Nimboi bat picture wins Human Right's photo competition

The Australian Human Rights Commission has selected Sean Spencer's 'Nimboi's bat' picture as the winner in the adult category of its November 2011 photo competiton. Reprinted in Our Place Issue 39, Spencer's illuminating photo, taken at the Alpurrurulam lantern parade in 2010 as part of the Christmas holiday program for the Northern Territory community, took out the top gong over a high calibre of entries. His creative shot highlights the Commission's message to entrants in this year's competition, to capture a broad interpretation of education.

Sean Spencer's Nimboi's Bat photo.

What's working in Indigenous Affairs?

A thirty year perspective

by WILL SANDERS, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Thirty years ago, as a young graduate, I was drawn into working in Indigenous affairs. As an undergraduate at Sydney University, studying politics and philosophy, I had been interested in other issues, like urban development and the environment. I did not seek out my involvement in Indigenous affairs, I was just offered a job — by a senior academic political scientist moving to Darwin who wanted a research assistant and a potential PhD student. In retrospect, taking that job was the most formative decision of my life. I was quickly intrigued by the complex balancing acts of Indigenous affairs practice on the ground in remote Australia, which contrasted somewhat with the more simple, strident moral rhetoric of Indigenous affairs policy at the national political level. Exploring those balancing acts and relationships between policy and practice has, in many ways, become my life's work as an academic political scientist at Australia's national university, as I move constantly between Canberra and the Northern Territory and occasionally into Western Australia and Queensland. I realize, in retrospect, that what I have been drawn into is the great moral challenge of Australian nationhood. How should a developing nation of immigrant settlers relate to the people who were already here and their descendants, who increasingly over time have quite naturally become inter-bred?

One obvious answer is just to treat everyone equally as individuals under a single body of law. This sounds simple, but it is not — and there have been times in Australian history when governments have felt justified in doing quite the opposite ie treating Indigenous people as distinct social groups requiring different treatment in both law and policy. For example, when the Australian social security system was being developed in the early years of the 20th century, 'aboriginal natives' were specifically excluded from its provisions. This remained the case until the 1950s, but was increasingly seen as discriminatory and untenable. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the social security legislation was re-written taking out all references to Aboriginal people. They were thus now legally included in the social security system as equal individuals under one body of law. But this was more the beginning of a story about how they would be included in practice, than the end of story about legislative difference and exclusion. This was particularly so in relation to Aboriginal people in remote areas who had until the 1960s been managed in separate welfare or protection systems with little access to money.

> … at the level of national policy we have vacillated between seeing Indigenous difference rather too positively from the 1970s to the 1990s, and rather too negatively at present.

Initially, in practice in remote areas, pensions were largely paid to third parties on Aboriginal peoples' behalves, except for a small 'pocket money' portion as it was called. From 1968, when Bill Wentworth was the Commonwealth minister for both Social Services and Aboriginal Affairs, there was a push towards paying Aboriginal people their full pension entitlements directly. This was seen as equality of individuals before the law, as too was allowing them equal access to alcohol.

The extent to which these declared policies of equal individual treatment were implemented in practice, is open to debate — and this was arguably not entirely a bad thing. In the early 1980s, when I was first moving around remote Aboriginal communities seeing how the social security system worked for them in practice, I came across numerous instances of social security money still not going direct to Aboriginal people. The most straight-forward way this could happen was that the Aboriginal person could run out of money before the next two-weekly cheque was due. They would approach a local shopkeeper with whom they were interacting and ask for credit to tide them over. The shopkeeper, who often also ran a little community post office, would agree to the credit on the understanding that the person's social security cheque came to their postal address so that the credit could be repaid before the next cheque was used for other expenses. Of course, if the Aboriginal person got much further into credit than just a few dollars, it might not be long before they were not seeing much money in their hand at all and living predominantly on credit. But this could also mean that they were not spending money on alcohol, which many Aboriginal people were themselves realising could be quite helpful. Indeed during the 1980s and 1990s in the Northern Territory there were quite concerted efforts by groups of Aboriginal people in conjunction with the Northern Territory Government Liquor Commission to develop local regimes which restricted access to alcohol — and ironically it was sometimes commercial business interests who used equal rights arguments to defend their right to sell to Aboriginal people. So there were, in practice, some very delicate and tricky balancing acts to be worked through, which had continuities back to the 1960s and before.

Perhaps you can begin to see how I came to be intrigued by the practice of Indigenous affairs policy on the ground in remote areas, rather than just the high moral rhetoric of Indigenous affairs policy in national politics.

Another common practice I came across in the 1980s was Indigenous organisations informally taxing their members' social security payments as they came into the community. This was often called 'chuck in' and it was used to run community vehicles or meet the expenses of running little community offices to assist people in various ways. This too had continuities with the 1960s when missions and pastoralists used the social security income of community members to help sustain their enterprises or endeavours. Indeed in the Kimberley in the early 1980s I found some Catholic missions which were still, in a public document, showing the social security income of their Aboriginal community members as part of the mission income, which was then paid out, after a local tax, as local wages or pensions. This led to the Aboriginal community organisation in the area, the Kimberley Land Council publishing some rather sarcastic cartoons implicitly criticising mission practices (Figure 1, page 8). What was not acknowledged, however, was that emerging Aboriginal organisations in the area were, through their 'chuck in' systems, doing something rather similar. Perhaps this was

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why the Kimberley Land Council cartoonist used irony and sarcasm, rather than direct criticism, in commenting on mission practices.

Missions were generally on the outer in Indigenous affairs in the early 1980s and Indigenous community organisations were on the rise. Thirty years on it is Indigenous community organisations who are on the defensive as they are now being blamed for the supposed lack of progress of the previous thirty years in much the same way as missions were back then. In both cases, I would argue, these are high-handed moral judgments that are far too easy to make divorced from the practical realities of life on the ground in remote areas. Those practical realities have moved on a bit since my first observations, but there are still great continuities. Through the Commonwealth re-inserting itself in Northern Territory affairs four years ago in a way not seen since the 1970s, there has in recent years been a reinvigoration of efforts to manage alcohol in remote areas. Ironically, this was probably more needed and has had more effect in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, than in the Northern Territory where the government has worked hard on alcohol management over many years. Also people now get their social security payment by direct debit into their bank accounts rather than as cheques, which can make chuck in systems and credit arrangements a little harder to sustain. But with new electronic banking technologies Centrelink has become involved in helping people with financial management, such as through having direct deductions from their pay for rent or regular bills. Also some people in the Northern Territory and a few other places, have half their money now going into a special Centrelink bank account which can only be spent at shops which meet certain standards and cannot be spent on alcohol and some other prohibited goods. Reactions to these developments are very polarized, with some Aboriginal people saying they are good and helpful and others saying they are a step backwards to unnecessary government involvement in their daily lives. But underneath there is great continuity, tussling with some very hard balancing acts about equal rights and difference.

Figure 1

In my teaching, I use this triangular figure (Figure 2) with students to get them thinking about the balancing acts of Indigenous affairs. I say that there are at least three interpretations of the dominant equality principle in Indigenous affairs — individual legal equality, equality of economic and social outcomes, and equality of opportunity. I say that debates between these different interpretations of equality at the top of the triangle are difficult enough, but that these are in many ways the easy bit of Indigenous affairs. Where debates really get tricky is when we start to think about Indigenous difference and diversity. To what extent should difference and diversity be seen in positive terms as reflecting autonomy and informed choice, on the bottom left of the triangle? And to what extent should it be seen negatively and as requiring guidance and guardianship at the bottom right of the triangle?

I suspect that at the level of national policy we have vacillated between seeing Indigenous difference rather too positively from

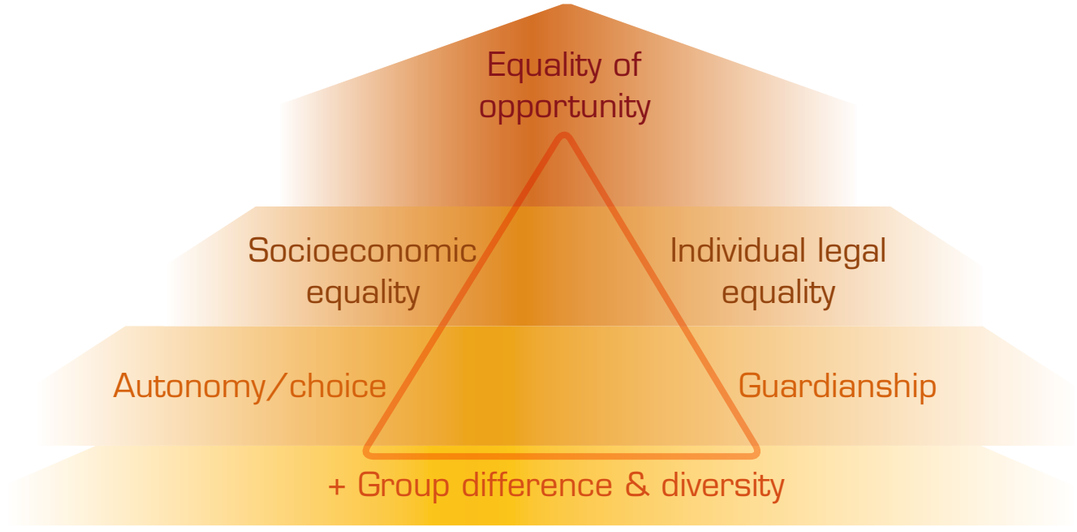

Figure 2

the 1970s to the 1990s, and rather too negatively at present. What is needed is to be able to think about Indigenous difference in both positive and negative terms at once. And that is no easy task. But to start, I think it is useful to return to Indigenous affairs at the ground level.

The old lady in the photo (top of page 6) lives on the edge of a small open highway town in the Northern Territory. Within 500 metres of her camp, or walking distance, she has access to an old peoples' day care centre, a health clinic and a roadhouse which sells food and alcohol — but only beer to 'drink in' and only a couple of hours a day. This old lady's prospects of ever getting accommodation in the town are slight, if non-existent. Houses in the town go to 'whitefellas' who come to work there and to locals who have jobs. Anyway the old lady says she doesn't want accommodation in town because she wants to live with her dogs — and she thinks that anyone who gave her accommodation would not allow her dogs. She likes living in her camp, which perhaps can be seen by its order — water containers lined up, food and other thing stored hanging up out of the reach of dogs. Our old lady could go and live at one of two designated Aboriginal communities, 10 or 17 kilometres out of town. But if she did, she would either end up sharing a house with lots of other people or in a similar camp to this one on the edge of one of those communities — neither of which has a shop, a health clinic, an aged care day centre or a licensed alcohol outlet where she can go for a quiet afternoon tipple — as she has been known to do. Those two outlying communities are nominally 'dry', or alcohol free, but in reality they have intermittent trouble with grog being smuggled in from Alice Springs by some of the less scrupulous 'entrepreneurs' of central Australian society — both Indigenous and non-Indigenous — and binge drinking. So our old lady is not interested in living in those designated communities.

This old lady seems, in her own way, to have worked out a quite good and sustainable way of living, given the constraints of her circumstances. I have been observing her live like this since 2004 and she had already been doing it for quite a long time then. In many ways, her choices are very understandable and deserve respect, given the constraints. But at the local level of government her camp is sometimes seen as blight which should be removed. And at the national policy level, she would be included in government statistics as a homeless person and as part of the justification for building more housing in Indigenous communities. But her prospects of ever accessing such housing, if and when it is built, are non-existent — and she wouldn't want to anyway. She wants to live right here, with her dogs, on public land, paying rent to no-one — getting some help with her water supply and meals on wheels from the aged care day centre 500 metres away. These are the sorts of complexities of Indigenous affairs policy and practice which intrigued me thirty years ago and intrigue me still. They defy easy solutions and easy categorisation into whether what is being done in Indigenous affairs is working or not. All I can really do is tell you what it has been like to work in Indigenous affairs for thirty years and how I have come to think of it in terms of balancing competing principles in both ground-level practice and high moral rhetoric. □

Transcript of a talk given at Killara Uniting Church, 2 October 2011

Working with East Timorese locals to access clean water







For many women and children living in remote areas of East Timor each day begins with a long walk to collect water from the nearest well. It is hard work to access water in some areas and there are significant issues with water quality and reliability.

by JOSH BACKWELL

In 2009, Timor Aid, a local East Timorese NGO initiated the Maudemo Clean Water project in Suai, East Timor's western-most regional centre. The project focussed on improving the health of around 3000 community members through the provision of clean water and improved drainage systems.

For half a landmass of a tiny island, East Timor boasts a surprisingly vast range of contrasting terrain, landscape and climate zones. From tropical coastal fishing villages, to icy-cold coffee growing regions of the mountainous interior, across to the arid, rocky East and the eucalyptus woodlands of the West. Although these places may be stunningly beautiful and idyllic to visit, the reality of living, working and raising a healthy family in a these remote areas is not easy.

East Timor's central government provides most regional centres with essential services including electricity, water, healthcare, communications and law enforcement. However, many remote parts of the country are out of reach when it comes to accessing reliable clean water — one of the most basic of essential services. With many regional families supporting themselves and their communities through subsistence farming, the expensive pumping and boring equipment needed to access a safe and secure water supply is simply too expensive or unattainable without the assistance of aid organisations.

> A number of often life-threatening illnesses are linked to water and sanitation.

A number of often life-threatening illnesses are linked to water and sanitation, the most common being malaria, dysentery, gastritis and diarrhoea. Many of the existing water points in East Timor have no drainage infrastructure and animals often wallow in the surrounding muddy water. Timor Aid identified that better drainage systems for the water points would reduce the risk of bacterial infection of drinking water, and with less stagnant water, there would be a reduction in the malaria-carrying mosquito population.

Through Timor Aid, the project communities were provided with access to management training, health education programs and technical maintenance training, to ensure that the project was driven from within community and that all the necessary tools were in place for long term sustainability.

With an office in Suai, staffed by members of the surrounding communities, Timor Aid was well versed in the immediate issues facing families living in the area and through these strong connections, a thorough consultation and engagement process was under-taken. Community meetings were held involving all members of families, health department representatives and the local village heads. From these meetings, it was evident that the communities' main priority was reliability. Many people had experienced failed pumps with no spare parts or tools, or bores that had simply run dry.

Timor Aid's solution was to use predominantly local materials and a simple design that would allow all Timorese community members the opportunity to be involved in construction and maintenance. It was also decided that the best combination of reliability, serviceability and simplicity was the 'India Mk III' hand pump. This pump was easily operated by people of all ages and strength levels and was familiar to many communities from the era in which East Timor was under Indonesian rule. The Mk III was specifically designed to be serviced on site and even in cases where people do not have specialised tools or training.

Drainage pits were designed to use locally sourced natural materials, with rocks, sand and gravel from the local rivers and beaches and palm fibre lining sourced from local palms. Other materials were purchased from a local merchant to ensure maximum community benefit and a Timorese water boring company was contracted to clean existing bores and drill new ones. All that was missing was manpower labour. It was agreed that the communities themselves would provide the labour and Timor Aid would provide food, drink, materials, tools and professional advice.

As a result of the project, over 3000 people now have access to 43 clean water points with safe drainage systems. The maintenance and safe operation of each water point is overseen by local management groups made up of community members from the surrounding villages.

The Maudemo Clean Water project demonstrates that simple, appropriate technology combined with a well designed, community driven initiative can make a huge difference to peoples day to day lives and ensure a long, sustainable future for people living in remote areas. □

Reshaping lives of Kuku Nyungkal people through NGO and Corporate Partnerships

Since 2008, the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) have been working with Bana Yarralji Bubu (BYB), a local family-run Kuku Nyungkal organisation, to assist in the realisation of a range of on-country 'Sustainable Livelihood' aspirations.

By ANDRE GRANT

September 9 2011 marked the official opening of the Bana Yarralji Ranger Base at Shipton's Flat, one hours drive south of Cooktown in far North Queensland. Shipton's Flat is on country that belongs to the Kuku Nyungkal people. The Ranger Base was constructed to leverage the establishment of a local 'Working on Country Ranger Program' which was a key plank for the Kuku Ngungkal people in realising their social and economic development aspirations.

The journey began in 2008 with participatory planning workshops undertaken by CAT for BYB Inc. The desire to improve infrastructure on a 14 hectare block of Aboriginal freehold land was a key objective that emerged from these planning sessions. CAT began the process of sourcing funds for the project and contacting a range of potential partners that could provide specialist skills to the initiative. An Engineers Without Borders (EWB) partnership for volunteers support was formed, and a corporate sponsor, Aurecon, came to the table, providing engineering and construction management. A number of trade volunteers also worked alongside Indigenous community volunteers. During an extended and complex planning approvals process spanning two years, the partners managed to secure further funding support through state and federal programs. Also in this time BYB successfully gained funding through the 'Working on Country' program, with help from the Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation. Employment on country, for country, was becoming a reality.

Over a four-week period, from July–August 2011, eight of the Bana Yarralji Rangers assisted the team of six volunteers to finally build the ranger base which included securing reliable and safe power and water supplies, an ablutions block, a secure storage shed, a ranger office building and caravan bays for ranger accommodation. CAT project-managed the operation alongside Aurecon staff (Nick Macdonald and Caitlin Pilkington). A large number of other Nyungkal people and BYB staff were involved in supporting the team, from arranging cooking to cultural activities. Local Nyungkal carpenter, Patrick Nandy, was a critical part of the team leading construction alongside site foreman Hamish Banks (an ARUP-sponsored employee) with support from architect Steve Monaghan (an SKM-sponsored employee). A large cast of engineering professionals from Aurecon were involved in the two years of planning approvals and development in the lead up to construction.

This building project showcases corporate social responsibility best practice, where a vision held high by a remote Indigenous community, translated into action with the help of a number of partners. A corporate-community partnership was created (Aurecon and BYB), facilitated by the NGOs (CAT and EWB), and put into place for project planning and implementation of the build. In this case, CAT worked with the Indigenous community, Australian Government and QLD Department of Environment and Research Management (DERM) funders. While this was happening, Engineers Without Borders helped bring on board in-kind and technical staff support from key corporates like Aurecon, ARUP and SKM. Having NGOs to help draw out corporate resources and funding was a great benefit to the Kuku Nyungkal people, in terms of helping people on the ground shape a livelihood vision for their land out at Shiptons Flat. Value for money, in terms of tax payers' dollars being cleverly allocated towards a spectrum of social, environmental and economic returns is a key outcome of this project. With the contributions of volunteers and corporate in-kind support, the team managed to triple the value of the project, over the original funding, from an initial $50,000 budget to close to an estimated $400,000 of added value.

> This building project showcases corporate social responsibility best practice.

The important driver for this project was developing a sense of ownership and pride through involving the Kuku Ngungkal Rangers in the building of their own infrastructure. This was definitely achieved but the actual project development process culminating in the construction was in some ways more important than the finished physical infrastructure. The three years it took to get to ground-breaking stage was valuable time that allowed a lot of capacity building, mentoring, learning and community development to occur all within sight of a tangible goal. Finally the leveraging of the high level technical and engineering assistance through the partnerships in support of a community driven aspiration was an effective model for assisting the creation of a sustainable livelihood opportunity.

Marilyn Wallace, (BYB CEO), is now developing proposals and support for a cultural healing program for drug and alcohol intervention that will expand the use of the facilities in the future. To support this, an ongoing partnership for all parties is being negotiated. There is much still to be done, lets hope this is just the start. 'CAT's Support has given us the opportunity to create a sustainable ranger service business' said Mrs Wallace, CEO of Bana Yarralji Bubu. 'This has reshaped the lives of our rangers and other Nyungkal People. It came at the right time to give us the strength we needed,' she concludes. □

Without realising it we often negotiate our way through life every day by solving problems, making decisions, maintaining relationships with family and entering into agreements with other people about many things that affect our lives and those around us.

Mediation:
a way to work it out

by SONJA PETER

Most the time we are able to find solutions to people's different views and opinions. But what happens if we cannot resolve a disagreement that affects our wellbeing and our relationship with family, community, people at work, neighbours or others?

What is mediation?

Mediation is a process that assists people to negotiate their dispute without having to resort to legal action which can be both expensive, traumatic and take a long time. Mostly, the result is a win/win situation for both parties who are then able to move on with their lives.

Mediation is a voluntary process where people come together in a safe place to speak directly to each other about their concerns and work out what needs to be done to resolve their disputes.

Mediation is guided by trained mediators who don't take sides and don't give advice. They make sure that everyone feels safe, that people speak to each other respectfully and each listens to the other party. Mediation is confidential, so people can speak freely to each other and the mediator.

When to mediate?

Mediation can be between two people, involve an entire family or community members, workplace employees and employers or their representatives or special interest groups.

Mediation is not a 'crisis intervention' but is done when both parties express a desire to voluntarily participate in the mediation process and in good faith want to attempt to resolve the dispute. It is best to resolve a conflict before it escalates into violence.

Disputes maybe about inter and intra-family feuding such as arguing about resources, family members behaviour, money and expected responsibilities. Community or neighbourhood disputes can be over things such as fences, noise, property damage or people's behaviour. Staff of organisations may be in conflict over specific work or communication issues.

Mediation may take one session or several smaller sessions leading up to a big meeting. During this process participants are guided to discuss options that are acceptable to both parties. A high number of mediations result in agreement.

What happens in mediation?

Once mediation has been set up, the mediator's role is to manage how the mediation session is run while the people in dispute decide what is discussed and what is agreed upon.

In general, the process used by the Community Justice Centre (CJC), a free service offered in NT, NSW, Queensland, Victoria and other states, follows these steps:

- Mediators and the people involved introduce themselves and mediators explain the process and 'ground rules' for the mediation.
- Each person in turn outlines their concerns.
- Each person is listened to without interruption.
- Mediators encourage and facilitate discussion between the people involved in the dispute on issues that they themselves have identified.
- Mediators see each person privately, while the other has time to think about their options.
- They are then brought back together and encouraged to negotiate future arrangements.
- If all agree, the mediators write up an agreement and give a copy to each person as a record of what was decided.

How to become a mediator

In the Northern Territory, the Community Justice Centre (CJC) conducts training in Darwin and Alice Springs for people who want to become Nationally Accredited Mediators. You can attend a five day/38 hour training course to meet the requirements for national accreditation. As part of the training, you learn to mediate a 'mock mediation' session, role play people in conflict, learn to listen, be impartial and not jump into 'solving the problem' but assist people to come up with their own solutions.

Once the training has been completed, you are eligible to mediate a 'role play' assessment which, successfully accomplished, results in national accreditation as a mediator.

The CJC also adapts training to suit the diverse sectors of the Northern Territory community. An Indigenous community may have different requirements to, say, an urban workplace. Community mediation processes need to be owned by the community and acknowledge the social, cultural, traditional and contemporary structures of the community,

To date members from the Tennant Creek, Lajamanu, Yuendumu, Borroloola and the Tiwi Islands communities have undertaken the CJC mediation training.

'Ponki' Mediators on the Tiwi Islands

In 2009 the CJC supported by NAAJA (Northern Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency) trained and assessed 15 Tiwi elders (women and men) as mediators based on the Nationally Accredited Mediation Training. In consultation with the Tiwi elders, the CJC's mediation training and practice manual was re-designed and translated to include culturally appropriate role plays for future training.

The graduates were named 'Ponki mediators' as in Tiwi language 'ponki' means 'welcome', 'peace' and 'it's finished'. The participants created an enhanced mediation model and design that incorporates a strong Tiwi tradition. This includes a requirement that representatives of all four of the main skin groups be present as mediators when facilitating all mediations.

This innovative combination of traditional and modern mediation skills is now used by the Ponki mediators in three ways: when long-term prisoners seek to return to the islands upon release, when young people commit crime and when there's general conflict in the community. The types of issues which the Ponki mediators might mediate in the community can include disputes about housing and teasing and tensions from unresolved business that happened a long time ago.

Correctional Centre Conferencing

The Ponki mediators, along with other Indigenous mediators across the NT, are involved in conducting Correctional Centre Conferences with Indigenous offenders imprisoned at Berrimah prison in Darwin. These conferences aim to assist people who have been imprisoned in returning to their home communities. The conferences incorporate language, kinship and other cultural elements to reduce the risk of re-offending.

Correctional Centre Conferences provide an opportunity for mediation between the victims' families and >

> Mediation is guided by trained mediators who don't take sides and don't give advice. They make sure that everyone feels safe …

the offender as well as providing additional support to the victims and families of serious crimes. The victim attends the conference with support members of the community that have been harmed and enters a meaningful discussion about the realities of the offender returning to the community. The participants have a proper talk (often in language) about the crime that was committed and discuss those things that the victims feel they were denied during the court process. Attendance at the conferences is voluntary and all that is said is confidential. Participants at the conference are all encouraged to walk away with one story to take back to their home community about what was agreed at the conference. The Ponki mediators who conduct these conferences sometimes seal the agreement reached by welcoming the offender and the people harmed back to the community with a traditional healing ceremony in their ancestral land. This helps to ensure that any talk or thought of revenge in the community is nullified.

Community Justice Centres

The Northern Territory Community Justice Centre (CJC) was established by the NT Government to provide mediation services and training across the Territory.

It provides a free mediation service which is voluntary, impartial and confidential. Eighty-five percent of mediations result in an agreement and, in most cases, mediations can be arranged quickly at suitable venues across the Territory.

Mediation sessions usually take approximately two to four hours and can be arranged during any part of the day or after hours. Telephone and video conferencing and interpreters can also be arranged on request.

The CJC also delivers Nationally Accredited Mediation Training and Professional Development Workshops tailored to your needs:

Community Justice Centre, NT
www.cjc.nt.gov.au, phone: 1800 000 473 or email cjc.doj@nt.gov.au.

Community Justice Centre, NSW
Phone: 1800 990 777 or email cjcinfo@agd.nsw.gov.au

Queensland Department of Justice & Attorney General
Dispute Resolution Branch
Phone: (07) 3006 2518

Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria
Phone: 1800 658 528 or email dscv@justice.vic.gov.au

Government of Western Australian Department of the Attorney General
Aboriginal Mediation Services
Phone: 1800 045 577

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:
www.aiatsis.gov.au/ifamp.htm

Becoming a star:

Toni builds her capacity to work

Toni McLaughlin

Toni McLaughlin is a trainee at Karen Sheldon Catering's Kwerralye Café. Recognising that some Indigenous jobseekers can attend training course after training course without getting any closer to being able to work in mainstream jobs, Karen Sheldon Catering (KSC) took the initiative and opened a training café in Alice Springs. Here we learn more about how this process helps people like Toni achieve their career aspirations. >

by HUJJAT NADARAJAH

Walking along the footpath, following the dry Todd river bank south from the town centre of Alice Springs, you'll eventually come across buildings decorated with orange and purple signs. If you look closely, they read as ‘Kwerralye Café. Open for breakfast and lunch.’ This is a new training cafe, operating on an incubator model, nestled in the Institute for Aboriginal Development complex.

Inside you'll find Tony McLaughlin, a 23-year old Arrernte woman, busy behind the counter, ready to take your order and make you a cappuccino using the cafe's impressive coffee machine. Today is Graduation Day for the latest intake of 20 participants who have successfully completed the KSC Future Stars Training Program. Crown Plaza Hotel representatives, were there recruiting for positions they're looking to fill. And there are many more organisations around town, especially those with Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs), like the Aurora Hotel Group and Aboriginal Hostels Ltd., who regularly employ KSC Indigenous graduates.

Toni is an Alice Springs local. She’s all smiles and confidence as she serves you and goes about her job. At 7.30am she's up and ready to go to the cafe to begin work. She helps set up the dining area, learns to cook cakes, refills supplies, takes orders, makes coffees, works the till, cleans up and goes home to look after her one and four-year old kids. ‘I love cooking and when I was a child, I’d always play with

toy cash registers’, says Tony. At the end of each shift, she's tired from standing on her feet all day. But she seems happy. ‘I look at our young Chef, Keung, who’s up on her feet at 6am every day, smiling and cooking amazing food every day and this makes me get up and go to work,’ she reflects.

Eight months ago, her cousin told her about the Future Stars Indigenous Employment Program that was gaining a reputation for placing participants into real jobs, and assisting them to maintain them. So she decided to check it out and applied to join the Program. Six weeks later, she graduated from the Pre-employment Course, but family commitments prevented her from taking up immediate employment. Then she was offered a place in the new cafe where she could build her work capability and learn to fit work into her life. ‘I learnt how to make coffees, about customer service, how to use the cash register, and how to make cakes from scratch,’ she says. The most important skill Toni has developed is her own self confidence, and as her skills have increased, so have her hours in the cafe. She is now completing selection criteria for mainstream jobs and both she and her mentor and trainers are confident that she is ready to fly!

There is something different about Toni when you talk to her and I wanted to know why. ‘Its been five years since I had a job and I was getting behind in rent. For me, the best thing about this course is I gained the confidence to get up and go out there. I realized there's nothing to be shame about,’ she reveals.

This culture of ‘shame job’ is something KSC training mentors, Jeff and Chris Callan are keen on talking through with their trainees. ‘I've been working on this with Toni since February’, says Chris. ‘I mean we all go through it, different levels of embarrassment, so we have to learn how to face it, continue and move on,’ she says. A space to reflect on the days challenges and learning is created in the car pick-up, each day after work. ‘Many of our trainees experience difficulty in getting to work, so we take them to work on their first day and stay with them for induction. While we are training them to organise their own transport, (some learn to use public transport, or are provided with a bike by their Job Service Agency), we pick them up and drop them off for the first one or two weeks and this gives us time to talk about daily issues’, says Chris.

> We guide each participant on a journey of self discovery, to set their goals and then we help each person find ways to achieve their goals.

Sometimes trainees spend all their wages rather than save, so Jeff will take them to a bank to open up a savings account. ‘Even saving $20 a week will build up eventually,’ he says. Trainees are given help in filling out various employment and tax forms, and in resume-writing too. ‘We guide each participant on a journey of self discovery, to set their goals and then we help each person find ways to achieve their goals’, says Jeff. ‘During the course, we work on self esteem and practical employability skills, then once they are in jobs, we work with them convert these newfound skills into actions’, he says.

The program works directly with the hiring company to help their trainees build a habit of daily work that is performed with quality. The KSC mentor meets with the employer’s HR or line manager regularly to ask how their trainee is going. They want to know if they were late, if they're improving, how they can help, and they do their best to make this happen. This type of ‘coaching’ approach seems to be working. With funding from the Australian Government, Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), the program is successfully reaching its targets. With four intakes per year, a majority of their 60 Indigenous trainees are graduating and getting into work in a variety of jobs in a range industries. Participants are currently placed as bank tellers, in many hospitality jobs, in mining camps, as rangers or childcare workers throughout the Northern Territory — in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

Kwerralye café continues to generate a strong following, not only for its amazing food and coffees, but also for the opportunity it gives to highly disadvantaged Indigenous jobseekers. As each of the participants are placed into the café they develop their skills, reliability and motivation to work and they are gradually transitioned into suitable jobs in the community. With strong links developed over thirty years of business operations in the Territory, KSC has access to many willing and supportive employers for their graduates. In particular, KSC’s experience of running businesses in remote and regional areas of the NT has enabled the company to respond to the reality that many businesses do not have the resources to adapt their business practices to the special needs of highly disadvantaged jobseekers.

It seems the future of the café training program is bright, and more incubator businesses are planned throughout the Territory. ‘Tourists can come here and see Aboriginal people working and they appreciate their welcoming smiles and their pride in their skills. If we’re seen to succeed in the tourist industry here, then we’re on the right track to being readily accepted into the hospitality industry across the Territory,’ says Jeff. For Toni, this is just the beginning, ‘the days go quicker when you get up and go to work, and at the end of each week, you get a bit of spending money.’ □

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INSTALLING A CAT WICKING BED

Local staff setting up frame of CAT wicking bed at Yuendumu Old Peoples Program Centre

Local staff adding different components that make up CAT wicking bed at Yuendumu Old Peoples Program.

Planting vegie seedlings into CAT wicking bed.

Completed CAT wicking bed, with vegies growing inside for eating, currently being used at Tangentyere Nursery.

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