

Journal of Indigenous Policy – Issue 2

Theme: Learning From the Past, Thinking About the Future
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Articles:

Introduction: Learning from the Past, Thinking About the Future.

Olga HAVNEN – is Indigenous Programs Manager, The Fred Hollows Foundation.

The ‘Learning from the Past, Thinking About the Future: Partnerships between Indigenous Australia and the Philanthropic and Corporate Community’ Conference, was held in Sydney, Australia, July 2002. It was jointly hosted by The Fred Hollows Foundation, Reconciliation Australia and the Whitlam Institute and was made possible by the generous support of the Gilbert and Tobin Solicitors, the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Foundation, Westpac and other donors.

The conference drew together philanthropic and corporate donors, Indigenous and non-Indigenous speakers and international experts. It aimed to link these different groups and explore ways in which philanthropic organisations could engage effectively with Indigenous communities. Gilbert & Tobin Solicitors, Westpac, Rio Tinto Aboriginal Foundation and the Lumbu Foundation generously sponsored the conference.

The idea to hold such a conference arose in the period following the end of the formal Reconciliation process in 2000. After a decade of growing awareness of the importance of progressing issues that are fundamental to achieving a reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, the ‘post-Reconciliation’ period has been characterised by confusion as to future directions and a lack of leadership by governments to carry the process further.

The Role of Philanthropic and Corporate Bodies – What the Private Sector Can Do that Government Can’t

Fred CHANEY AO – is Co-Chair Reconciliation Australia.

... The conference has been brought together by three organisations: the Fred Hollows Foundation, Reconciliation Australia, and the Whitlam Institute. Each of these organisations could see that there was a need for a strategic discussion about how the constituencies and sectors represented here can work together cooperatively to achieve tangible outcomes which advance Indigenous interests, a crucial element of reconciliation.

We also saw that, with numerous new bodies emerging over the last few years, there is competition for both attention and support. It would therefore serve everyone’s interests, we thought, to discuss our respective roles and ways of creating constructive cooperation to avoid the pitfalls of destructive competition.

Filling the Gaps and Supporting the Subversives; The Role of Philanthropic and Corporate Organisations in Indigenous Self-Determination

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Larissa BEHRENDT – is Professor of Law and Indigenous Studies and Director of the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney. She is also the Director of Ngilya, the National Institute of Indigenous Law, Policy and Practice.

One way to begin a paper such as this would be to highlight the socio-economic disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It is a familiarity with the problems and statistics and concern over our continuing position as the poorest and most marginalised sector of the Australian community that attracts philanthropic and interested corporations. Rather than rehashing statistical data, this paper will focus on the limitations of the two places that people usually turn to when seeking to change those statistics – ATSI and the government – to deliver long-term and sustained solutions. I then want to talk about the substance of self-determination and then conclude by discussing the role of the philanthropic and corporate sector in achieving this Indigenous self-determination.

Partnerships – A One Way Street? Partnerships Between Indigenous Australia and the Philanthropic and Corporate Community

Mick DODSON – is Chairman, Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre.

... I have been asked to speak to you about partnerships between Indigenous Australia and the philanthropic and corporate community. And I have been posed a question – are these partnerships a one-way street? At first glance the idea of a one-way street sounds a bit negative.

But a one-way street has its advantages. Traffic uses one-way streets every day. These streets are used because they point in the right direction and everyone on them wants to get to the same destination. Once we appreciate this, the main issue becomes how to make the journey – and a partnership is a shared journey – as enjoyable and worthwhile as possible.

No doubt, though, the question “Partnerships – a one-way street?” really queries whether the philanthropic ‘giver’ receives anything in return. I believe they can. To illustrate this, I’d like to tell you about the Australian Indigenous Leaderships Centre (AILC) and the type of partnerships that we’ve formed in order to deliver our programs. The AILC was established about two years ago after Australia-wide consultations showed overwhelmingly that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people felt there was a need to develop our own leadership in order to meet the diverse and increasingly complex issues and challenges facing us. The consultations also showed that our mob wanted Indigenous people in control of the process.

History of Government Policies and Effect on Indigenous Communities ‘Practical Reconciliation’

Murray CHAPMAN – is currently Administrator of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and, at the time this paper was presented, A/CEO, NSW Native Title Services Ltd.

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The purpose of this contribution is to give a quick overview of the history of government policy in Indigenous policy and to give a few personal thoughts thereon as a one time bureaucrat and sometime consultant.

As the theme for this particular session suggests, there are indeed two realities for Aboriginal people in Australia today.

One of the realities for us is the daily fact of being a blackfella. Being Aboriginal and not revelling or wallowing in, or constantly reflecting on that status, but just *being*. As Xolela Mangcu put it: ‘living with our memories and our knowledge of ourselves’.

‘Our Reality’: Why and How Indigenous Communities Relate to the Non-Indigenous World

Alison ANDERSON - is ATSIC Commissioner, Central Zone NT.

... The topic I have been asked to speak on is ‘Our Reality’ and why and how Indigenous communities relate to the non-Indigenous world. The reality for Aboriginal people is that our lives have not only been deeply impacted upon by non-Aboriginal people in the past, but remain severely affected by this ongoing assault. I fear our future remains uncertain should this continue.

The Corporate Sector and Social and Community Commitment

Leon DAVIS – is Trustee Westpac Foundation, Trustee Rio Tinto Aboriginal Foundation.

Ten years ago, mining industry companies were regularly in the news, but not with good news stories. Many of you will recall the very public stoushes with Aboriginal communities and environmentalists. There were seemingly endless demonstrations. Arguments. Court cases. All conducted in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and incomprehension.

At that time a lot of people in the mining industry genuinely believed that this level of conflict with the community was acceptable, even inevitable. After all, they thought, the primary role of the company was to create shareholder value, and nothing should be allowed to deter the company from that role.

The problem with this mindset was that it was simply wrong. The mining industry’s adversarial operating environment was measurably eroding performance and profitability. For example, the development of Hamersley Iron’s Marandoo iron ore mine in the Pilbara in 1994 was delayed by 18 months because of Aboriginal community opposition to development approval, adding to the costs of the project dramatically and delaying returns to investors.

Dilemmas in Sustaining Community Programs in Funding Crisis

Maggie KAVANAGH – is Coordinator, Ngaanyatjarra Pitjanjatjara Women’s Council.

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When we were asked to speak on this topic our initial response was to laugh hysterically as we thought this topic could be the subtitle of the Women's Council. Indeed it is sadly the case for most remote communities and organisations. We have become so used to lurching from one funding crisis to another that it is considered totally normal. I would like to talk about some of the dilemmas we have had in trying to sustain programs, look at the practical problems and, offer some suggestions about how you can better support Indigenous communities and organisations.

Sustaining Community Programs in Funding Crisis: A Women's Council Experience

Mary ANDERSON – Support Project Officer for the Ngaayatjarra Pitjanjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation.

The Ngaanyatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council was formed in 1980. The idea for a women's organisation arose from the South Australian Pitjantjatjara Land Rights struggle in the late 1970s. During consultations over land rights the women felt that their needs were not being addressed so they established their own organisation.

The NPY Women's Council region covers a vast and remote region of Central Australia (350,000 square kilometres) and crosses the borders of South Australia, West Australia and the Northern Territory. Anangu, or Yarnangu (Aboriginal people) from the region, speak a number of dialects known as the Western Desert language group including Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Ngaayatjarra, Ngaatjatjarra, Pintupi and Luritja. For most people, English is a second or third language if it is spoken at all. Anangu living on the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara lands share strong cultural and family affiliations.

Understanding Whitefella Secret Cattle Business

Dr. Stuart PHILLPOT – is Director Special Projects, Indigenous Land Corporation.

Over the last three decades Aborigines have, largely through government-funded purchase under the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission, the Aboriginal Development Commission, ATSIC, and now the Indigenous Land Corporation, acquired about 100 pastoral properties, primarily focusing on extensive cattle grazing in the rangelands. Both social reasons, such as traditional ownership of the land, and economic reasons, such as the viability of commercial pastoralism, were considered in funding agreements. But for most of these properties economic viability has been very marginal. Many were located in extremely remote areas near the 'pastoral frontiers', their land had suffered through years of overgrazing and they were deficient in infrastructure and capital investment. And they have been plagued with financial problems, due both to mismanagement and lack of experience. Neither funding bodies nor Aboriginal cattle station directors have been happy with this situation. The case study presented in this chapter represents one of the attempts to improve the capacity of Aboriginal pastoralists to deal with the complexities that they now face in their participation in the market economy.

Long Term Approach to Capacity Building and Empowerment

Alwyn McKENZIE – Yappala.

... I am of Luritja and Adnyamathanha decent. My mother a Luritja person from central Australia was stolen from her family and country in 1926. She was raised in the Colebrook Children's Home in Quorn.

In her late teens my mother left Colebrook and went to work at Nepabunna Mission, an Aboriginal settlement, run by the United Aboriginal Mission on behalf of the Adnyamathanha people, the traditional owners of the northern Flinders Ranges region.

... Prior to invasion, all of the material and spiritual needs of the Adnyamathanaha could be found in the local environment. Ochre for ceremonial purposes, stone and wood for implements, brush for shelter, skins for clothing and bags, food and water could all be obtained in the North Flinders Ranges. As is the case with Aboriginal peoples around Australia, the invasion of non-Aboriginal people had a horrific and tragic effect on the lives of the Adnyamathanha peoples.

Re-igniting Hope: How Donors can Really Make a Difference

Olga HAVNEN – The Fred Hollow Foundation.

I will succinctly summarise some of the things that we are doing as the Fred Hollows Foundation in partnership with the Jarwin Association in the Katherine region just to give you a bit of overview about some of our work, because I guess for many people you probably remember or think about the Fred Hollows Foundation with respect to eyes and eye programs and that in fact is not what we are doing in those Jarwin communities. The work that we are doing I suppose I could broadly describe as being community development with a health and education focus and to that end, we have been involved with community nutrition programs, a program of financial literacy called the money story.

South Africa and Development

Xolela MANGCU – is Executive Director, Steve Biko Foundation, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Some time in the eighteenth century the Xhosa prophet Ntsikana once predicted that a group of people would come to the land of his people from the sea carrying a gun on the one hand and a book on the other. No more prescient warning was ever issued about the double assault of military and cultural conquest that would be visited on the Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape by the British colonial government throughout the nineteenth century. For literally a hundred years the British hunted the Xhosa up and down the hills and valleys of the Eastern Cape hinterland.

... It is a reflection of an overwhelming sense of despondency that comes from centuries of political oppression, economic exploitation and cultural denigration. Indeed, had

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the white people stayed at the beach instead of walking on the estates the past five hundred years might have been different. We must know the past, and as the title of this conference suggests, learn from it and know how to use it to construct alternative futures. If we do not then we shall be caught up in what sociologists call path dependence – being stuck in a path that was started by others.

Reclaiming History: The Ginsberg Social History Project

Mandisi APLOM – is Coordinator, Ginsberg Youth Council, South Africa.

... development begins with an understanding of one's own achievements, and the achievement of one's own people. People, especially young people, model themselves on the images that they received. If they receive negative images, they play out negative images. The problem of being named in negative terms has long-term consequences, and unless young people intervene, as we have begun to, those negative stereotypes become the basis of self-understanding and distorted identities.

The Ginsberg Youth Council Experience

Thabisa BATA – is Coordinator, Ginsberg Youth Council, South Africa.

... The problems faced by the Ginsberg youth were identified by the youths themselves. Nobody said to them that these were their problems. They were the ones who know that they had the problem and they were the ones who resolved to start the council to address them. The youth council is still operating in Ginsberg and has embarked on a number of projects, namely the HIV AIDS and life skills education programs. We have staged the Youth Religious Conference for the Eastern Cape youth with the Steve Biko Foundation, and have embarked on a number of cultural activities. Some of the tourists who have been to Ginsberg will tell you that we like to boast of our culture and that our tourism and environment desk welcomes tourists with a number of activities.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Partnerships

Dr Paul TORZILLO – Nganampa Health.

... in 1983 I went to the Pitjantjatjara lands and helped establish the health council. I have had an association with them ever since. Most of my association with philanthropic bodies is in the last ten years or so with that organisation.

There are a whole lot of things that are similar in Indigenous communities around the country, but there are also some differences between places that are an important issue for service delivery and for policy development. It's probably important for philanthropic bodies to realise that there will be some differences that will be very important.

Community development and empowerment are things that we all want to happen, but there is another level of stuff that happens that can contribute to development and that is small projects. That is important because one of the things that we really need in the Aboriginal scene is some "wins". We need things to go well and communities need to get a few wins up even if they are not big picture issues. This increases peoples' self-confidence

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and allows them to think that they can actually make change. When you get down to this level, I want to make two points. Firstly, the detail is what matters and secondly, you need technical input into programs. It is appropriate to make that because Fred Hollows is probably the person above all else who managed to utilise technical input to community development and he saw that very clearly as a philosophical and practical objective. It is still an important issue for us today.

Mums and Babies Program – an Example of Successful Collaboration

Rachel ATKINSON – is CEO, Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Services.

At my service we cover a range of services. We have a social unit, dental unit, a psychiatric unit and a mainstream medical unit. We were actually dealing with quite a few of our mums through our mainstream clinic, but there was a huge gap in our service in Townsville. There was an interesting comment that Sir Gustav Nossal said: “prevention of disease is not only better than cure it is much cheaper. Within health nothing ranks higher than maternal and child health.”

It does make sense if we get it right with our babies. Hopefully, in the next generation we are going to have a decreasing rate of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and all the illnesses that my mob suffers quite highly. We have a high rate of black babies dying in Queensland, much higher than non-Indigenous babies. I am pretty confident that you could spread that right across Australia.

Transforming the Aboriginal Welfare Economy

Richard AH MAT – is Executive Director, Cape York Land Council.

The great challenge that we in Cape York Peninsula are confronting: the challenge of transforming the welfare economy which counts for an overwhelming proportion of the economic foundations of our society today. If the late Charles Perkins was right – that welfare dependency is destructive and was not substitute for economic independence and participation – then welfare provisioning by government is truly a dilemma. The welfare that makes us so weak and slack is no good for us – but it is all we have.

If we threw welfare away today – what would our people have? And yet we all know that the late Charles Perkins was right: welfare dependency is no good for us.

Appreciating very keenly this dilemma, we in Cape York have set ourselves in something that currently makes us weak and slack into something that we can use to get fit and strong, so that we can fight for a fairer place in the world for our people.

Power Over Our Lives – Barriers and Opportunities: a Kimberley Perspective

Wayne BERGMANN – is Executive Director, Kimberley Land Council.

... History is a fundamental starting point. I will give you a quick glimpse at our history. Then I will talk about our aspirations, our vision for the future, and what we are trying to achieve in the Kimberley.

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It is in this context that we need your support in achieving equality. I believe that developing partnerships with the wider Australian community, including the philanthropic and corporate communities could be our best investment towards achieving our vision.

The Kimberley Land Council – as a people’s community-based organisation – has taken an important leadership role. Our bosses (Elders) ultimately control the organisation. They have not only struggled to be legally recognised as the traditional land owners in the Kimberley, they have taken a holistic view and continually brought our social and political issues to public attention, and put them in front of governments.

The Indigenous Environment

Geoff SCOTT – is Assistant CEO, ATSIC.

... We all have to be honest about what is happening. We all have to be able to identify where you fit, and assess whether we actually make a difference and if so, where we add value. The focus here is on the philanthropic sector, and that philanthropic sector does add value, and does make a difference. There is a niche that the philanthropic sector can fill, and do it better than others.

Who Bears the Costs of Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) Capacity Building?

Brian STACEY – Manager, Land & Development Group, ATSIC.

Native title services are delivered in cross-cultural settings. This fact immediately points to the complexity of their service delivery. Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) are interface organisations at the cultural nexus between two different systems, cultures and political constituencies. They have diverse constituents to negotiate with the Indigenous polity, as well as corporate and government agencies.

NTRBs are also expected to operate competently while managing in such organisational and political complexity. However, little acknowledgment of these complex tasks is made during either Government allocation of resources or in the manner in which other, better endowed key players in the native title system operate in partnership with NTRBs.

Little understanding of the impact of the intercultural forces NTRBs are expected to manage is made by external agencies such as the Federal Court in its view that NTRBs must comply with its timetables and case management. NTRBs tend to be the ‘poor relation’ in the native title system. They have minimal control over much of their working circumstances and tend to be more reactive, than they might like.

Towards a Treaty that is Acceptable to All and Beneficial for Indigenous Australia

Richard AH MAT – is Executive Director, Cape York Land Council.

... It is important to me that we all acknowledge the survival of the culture and the traditions of Indigenous people from all corners of this country, and pay particular respect to

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the women of all our nations. Without our mothers, grandmothers and wives... and their nurturing, our people would not have survived.

... The notion of a treaty between the Indigenous people of Australia and the Commonwealth Government on behalf of the non-Indigenous people of Australia has become something of a Holy Grail to progressive politics in our country.

... The treaty has become a Holy Grail for a number of reasons. One reason is that the treaty is seen as the ultimate political destination for the Aboriginal rights movement. It is political heaven. It is the place where the meek inherit the earth and all social and economic ills are a thing of the past. Another reason is that the treaty represents the legal and political instrument that will put paid to all ambiguity and argument. It will be a final settlement of all political and legal disputation about the place of Aboriginal people in the Australian nation. It will be the mother of all comprehensive settlements, and it will contain every solution to every conceivable problem – including those things that we cannot now conceive of as issues to resolve.