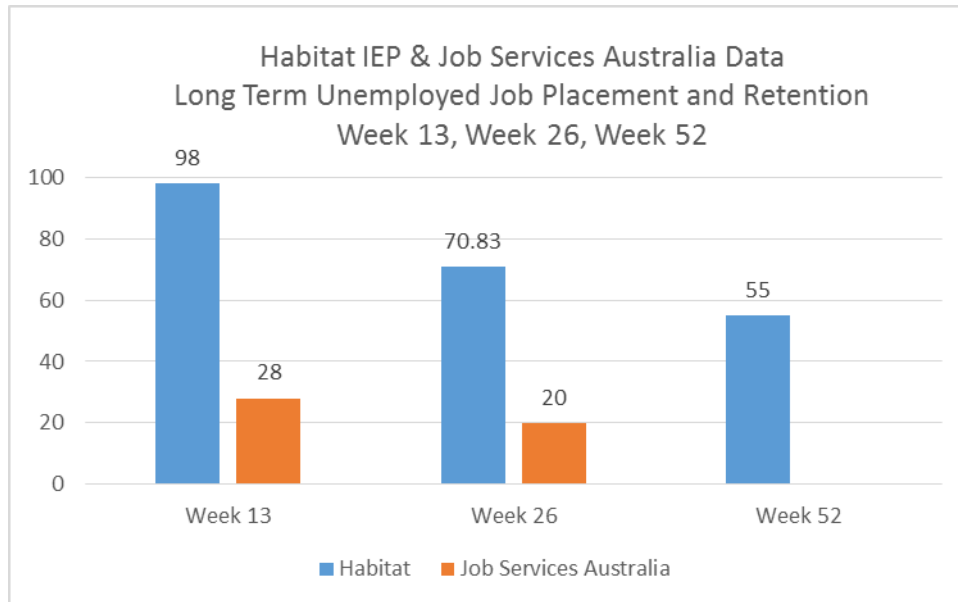


Build on Things that are Working!

Submission to the
Forrest *Indigenous Jobs and Training Review*

Habitat Personnel – Nowra and Canberra

4 December 2013



The big message to the *Indigenous Jobs and Training Review* is that there is a lot of good will to employ Aboriginal people. However, the organisations and people that are capable of turning pledges and plans into real jobs are few and far between and are frustrated by the governmental process around jobs and training. Mainstream job services placement has become so large and disconnected that it has forsaken ‘the practical doers’, in favour of symbolism, bureaucracy and paper shuffling. The most common criticism that members of the Forrest review will have heard is that job seekers are treated as numbers and no one is making the connection between the street reality, the person, training options and an existing job that is available. As a result Indigenous people and job options readily available to them, in many parts of the country, are like ships passing in the night.

In all this there is, thankfully, a shining light, Indigenous Employment Providers which are community based, Aboriginal owned and managed and which combine long-term, experienced and expert employment placement practitioners and local, experienced Indigenous community leaders. As the above graph indicates Habitat, the Nowra based Indigenous Employment Provider or Program, outstrips Job Services Australia agencies exponentially at every point in the job placement process. The above data is based on so-called third and fourth tier job seekers (ie long term unemployed people) seeking work. There is simply no comparison in terms of Habitat’s ability to place Aboriginal people into long term jobs. After 52 weeks over 50 per cent of Habitat’s clients are still in work, none of the job seekers seeking employment through Job Services Australia are still in work.

What’s so good about IEPs? They start from *street reality* and the practical problems confronting Indigenous job seekers which may be lack of a proof of identity, birth certificate, drivers licences, medicare cards, tax file numbers, bank accounts and work up from there. Strong IEPs care about outcomes, they go the extra mile, they are there for the long haul, they customise training and jobs for the individual. They work for the individual and they don’t get fully paid unless they place a person in a job for 52 weeks. Unlike the great paper shuffle, they have to deliver!

To an unschooled ear the responses from the participants in the *Indigenous Job and Training Review* might not have offered much hope. But there was, in many ways, one single voice of hope.

The solution the Forrest Review is looking for is as follows:

- Locally based, securely funded Indigenous Employment Providers already deliver remarkable outcomes.
- Because of their commitment IEPs deliver pre-employment support and training, mentoring and support for 52 weeks of employment and frequently, life-long mentoring and career advice.
- IEPs need to be of their local Aboriginal community not a one size fits all consultancy group. There are learnings that IEPs can share but local Indigenous community ownership and involvement is a vital element of success.
- IEPs are deep-rooted, creative Indigenous intelligence gathering organisations in local communities which government and private industry should more actively partner with and support;
- IEPs are a base for a wide range of *job-creating* activities as well as *job-placing* activities.

The things that the Forrest Review needs to bring about to enable IEPs to conquer Aboriginal unemployment:

- Automatic placement of Indigenous job seekers with IEPs
- Contracts for IEPs based on local Aboriginal unemployment and employment participation figures on a five year basis
- *Employment Pathway Funds* which currently go to Job Service Providers, should automatically go to IEPs for every Indigenous job seeker in their community
- *Set up a partnership fund to bring employers to IEPs so that employers can achieve their RAPs and meet their pledges to employ Aboriginal people.*
- Acknowledgement and reasonable re-numeration for “the extra mile” activities of IEPs
- Allocation of small business grants to Indigenous entrepreneurs through IEPs
- An IEP innovation fund to reward IEPs for coming up with out-of-the-box solutions to unemployment bottlenecks in their community such as lack of driver training and licencing
- Funding for primary and high school based IEP job and life mentoring
- Prison employment strategies that go beyond the one-off current 3 month pre-release employment grants and concentrate on inmates from the moment they are placed in detention with a focus especially on juvenile detention
- IEP night patrol and community service funding that allows a holistic communications program around jobs and employment to evolve with the community
- IEP based alcohol and drug counselling referrals and mentoring programs
- Emergency housing and personal crisis funds allocated to IEP linked services

A larger report called *Conquering Aboriginal Unemployment on the NSW South Coast and the ACT* is being prepared by Habitat for community release in the New Year. For more important information about this current submission and the recommendations above click on the highlighted name links below and listen to the following discussions:

[Kerry-Anne \(KA\) Brookdale's](#) story is about how a Waanyi-Garrawa woman from remote Doomadgee conquered Canberra. KA explains it is sometimes necessary to shift and change to obtain your ideal. With local Aboriginal IEP support anything is possible!

[Gerry Moore](#) has worked in every kind of Aboriginal organisation and made them successful. He started as a painter by trade. As a manager he has worked in health, education, law and housing. Most of all he knows every Indigenous family network in the Shoalhaven. He understands that creating employment for Aboriginal people *is about teaching people to stick in employment*, it also means starting at schools and in families well before there is actually a job on the table.

[Michelle Burke](#) has had 30 plus years of experience, her philosophy is “**There is always a Solution**” if you truly listen to people and focus on their aspirations

[Fran Garbutt](#) has had over 30 years in employment placement she says focusing on an employer's exact needs and the job seekers aspirations and capacity are essential for ensuring Aboriginal employment success.

[Aunty Lyn Peacock](#) is a living, walking, breathing example of an Aboriginal woman who has made the transition from Yarrabah to Canberra and who helps Aboriginal people every day to make similarly impressive jumps that defy cultural stereotypes that Aboriginal people don't want to travel to jobs

[Tina Brown](#) is a representative of the Ngunnawal people in Canberra. It is essential for both local and visiting Aboriginal people to be welcomed and supported by the first peoples of the area. IEPs must be “locally owned” in every sense of the phrase.

[Rob Firebrace](#) talks about the role of IEPs in an area that is of enormous importance for Aboriginal employment and social and economic development, employment and vocational training inside for prisoners and juvenile offenders.

[Geoffrey Johnson](#) plays an important role in his role as a community and youth mentor in the Nowra area. Geoffrey actively links the community with jobs through sport, youth mentoring and active community support.