

**A case study of the Bungala CDEP:  
Economic and social impacts**

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## Foreword

In its Research Plan 2000, the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) identified the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme as a key area for research. This focus was driven by two broad agendas. First, in CAEPR's negotiation of research priorities with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) late in 1999, ATSIC's then Economic Division highlighted the scheme as an important priority area. Not only is the scheme ATSIC's largest program, but it is also coming under increasing government scrutiny. This scrutiny is motivated in part by an emerging view that the scheme is predominantly about employment generation: that is, it is a labour market program. For example, the most recent definition of CDEP program objectives notes that it 'aims to provide employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to gain work experience in community managed activities'. Historically, since its establishment in 1977 and until the 1997 Spicer Review of the scheme, it has also been regarded as a flexible community development, income support, training, and enterprise development program. The scheme is also under some scrutiny by the Department of Finance and Administration which is assessing the efficacy of its associated administrative on-costs.

The McClure Committee's major review of the Australian welfare system, undertaken during 2000, was the second motivating factor. Because the CDEP scheme has a notional financial link with the welfare entitlements of participants, any McClure-based recommendations to reform welfare could have potential ramifications for the scheme. Furthermore, the McClure Committee's emphasis on the principle of mutual obligation for welfare recipients makes the CDEP scheme a potentially important precedent. While there are important differences between the CDEP scheme and the mainstream Work for the Dole Program, in most situations there are requirements that scheme participants work for their wages, and these are notionally linked to welfare entitlements. The CDEP scheme's 23-year history provides an important body of data for empirical research on how mutual obligation might operate in practice.

CAEPR staff undertook a great deal of research on the CDEP scheme in 2000, much of which was reported at the three-day conference 'The Indigenous Welfare Economy and the CDEP Scheme' convened at the Australian National University in early November 2000. The detailed proceedings of that conference are to be separately published in 2001. CAEPR researchers also undertook three detailed case studies dealing with the operation of the CDEP scheme in three very different contexts. These were:

- A case study undertaken by Matthew Gray and Elaine Thacker in the Port Augusta region on the Bungala CDEP organisation, reported in this Discussion Paper (No. 208);
- A case study by Jon Altman and Victoria Johnson undertaken in the Maningrida region, central Arnhem Land on the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) CDEP and reported in Discussion Paper No. 209; and

- A case study undertaken by Ray Madden in urban western Victoria on the operations of the Worn Gundidj CDEP organisation, reported in Discussion Paper No. 210.

Each of these three case studies required careful negotiations to ensure a high level of collaboration with participating CDEP organisations and an appropriate level of transparency and independence in the reporting of the research findings. To varying extents, all three differ from the standard CAEPR Discussion Paper because they address two distinct audiences: the CDEP organisations that are the subjects of the research and a wider constituency that includes other CDEP community organisations, government agencies, policy makers, and academics. Consequently, each paper reads in part like a consultancy report and in part like an academic applied research report. In all three case studies though, the authors have attempted to go beyond the specifics to more general issues for Indigenous affairs policy, while also being conscious of the enormous variation in the particular circumstances of the nearly 300 CDEP schemes Australia-wide. Indeed some of this diversity is represented in these three case studies and it is suggested that CAEPR Discussion Papers 208–10 be regarded, and read, as a set.

Professor Jon Altman  
Director, CAEPR  
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### **Abbreviations and acronyms**

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABSTUDY	Aboriginal Study Assistance Scheme
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
ANU	The Australian National University
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CDEP	Community Development Employment Project(s)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPS	CDEP Participant Supplement
CRN	Customer Reference Number
DEWRSB	Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business
NARU	North Australia Research Unit
TAFE	Technical and Further Education

## **Summary**

### **The economic and social context of Port Augusta**

This section focuses on the economic and social context in which Bungala Aboriginal Corporation operates. A description of the social and historical context of Indigenous people in Port Augusta is provided with particular attention paid to the local economy and the labour force status of Indigenous people.

The Port Augusta economy has been in decline for a number of years with major job losses occurring. The decline in employment in Port Augusta is primarily due to cutbacks in public sector employment and a stagnant private sector. While Port Augusta's rate of unemployment is relatively high, Indigenous people fare much worse with an unemployment rate of 33 per cent.

### **The Bungala Aboriginal Corporation**

Bungala, the largest Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) in South Australia, is based in Port Augusta and has satellite work sites over a range of 450 kilometres. As of July 2000 Bungala had 310 participants working in a diverse range of activities.

Bungala is a corporate CDEP. As well as serving the local community, Bungala also services a number of satellite schemes. Each of these satellite schemes is a pre-existing Aboriginal organisation responsible for providing a variety of services to its respective Indigenous communities.

Bungala has a number of work activities that have been organised into three main programs—the Construction Program, the Works Program and the Expansion Schemes. Participants are provided with employment for two and a half days per week or five days per week depending on the program in which they are employed. Bungala has a 'no work, no-pay' rule that, in principle, applies to all participants in the scheme.

### **Commercial activities and finances**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) has refocused the objectives of CDEP towards business development and commercialisation. This section explores the question of the viability of this policy objective and its benefits using a case study of Bungala CDEP. Bungala is considered to be successful because it developed a commercial model of operation that generates income from business enterprises and for assisting participants in finding unsubsidised employment.

In 1999/2000, Bungala generated \$1.1m in income, however it also incurred at least this amount of debt in doing so. Therefore, Bungala is not profitable according to standard commercial criteria.

In the absence of ATSIC and Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB) funding, Bungala's Construction Program could

not operate satisfactorily in its current capacity. A very different approach to funding may be required in future.

### **Movement of participants to non-CDEP employment**

One of the current objectives of CDEP is to assist participants to acquire skills that lead to unsubsidised employment. Bungala has been successful in having a considerable number of participants leave the scheme for unsubsidised employment each year. They have found employment in a diverse range of industries in Port Augusta.

As well as participants finding unsubsidised employment, a large number of participants have also found subsidised employment with non-CDEP employers, resulting in Bungala subsidising their wages for two days per week with the employer paying their wages for the remaining three days.

### **Evaluating Bungala's business enterprises**

This section evaluates Bungala's business enterprises against a broader set of criteria than that of commercial viability.

Bungala's Construction Program, which is considered to be successful, does not make a profit. This raises the question as to whether it is possible for a CDEP organisation to run profitable business enterprises whilst providing employment to unemployed Indigenous job seekers and at the same time assisting them to find unsubsidised employment.

There are a number of constraints upon the ability of CDEPs to develop commercially viable businesses. For CDEPs in remote locations business development is likely to be severely restricted by the lack of economic activity, and limitations in the number of business opportunities. While there may be a depressed local economy in many regional centres, such as Port Augusta, with constraints to some business opportunities, in general opportunities do exist.

### **Lessons for CDEP enterprise and employment success**

There are now a number of case studies of CDEP schemes in regional centres and urban areas. Studies have been conducted in Port Lincoln (1994) Redfern in Sydney (1995), Yarnteen in Newcastle (1996) Worn Gundidj in Warrnambool (2000) as well as the study of Bungala presented in this paper.

These case studies identify factors that are related to CDEP schemes' developing successful business enterprises, having participants find unsubsidised employment, and building communities. One of the most important factors for the successful operation of CDEPs is a high level of managerial competence and professionalism.

The case studies of Bungala and Yarnteen also illustrate the delicate balance that CDEP organisations in regional centres and urban areas must make when

developing business enterprises—between maintaining the Aboriginalisation of work and providing work activities which make people employable.

### **CDEP enterprise issues for ATSIC**

A number of questions have yet to be systematically addressed by ATSIC. These include whether ATSIC can adequately deal with the enterprise stage of a CDEP scheme and the extent to which ATSIC's policy emphasis on funding equity between communities, across populations, and between States is essentially incompatible with the competition-orientated model that directs mainstream business. With the refocusing of CDEP objectives on business development there are increasing numbers of schemes being placed in regional centres where there are commercial and employment opportunities.

ATSIC also needs to consider whether a formula based funding system is needed in order to reduce uncertainty in the level of funding received by CDEP schemes. The allocation of on-cost funding on basis of need appears to penalise schemes that are relatively successful.

ATSIC should also consider increasing funding to CDEPs that have the types of work programs Bungala provides, to allow them to employ quality supervisors.

### **Conclusions**

This paper uses Bungala CDEP as a case study of how CDEP schemes in regional centres and urban areas can meet their multiple objectives of assisting participants to acquire skills which result in unsubsidised employment, developing business enterprises and providing employment in a community development setting. The focus is on the economic and social impacts of the scheme.

Bungala has been successful in meeting the needs of all its groups of participants. Significant numbers of participants are leaving the scheme for employment or are being placed in subsidised employment with non-CDEP employers. Meaningful employment has been provided to local participants wishing to remain on the scheme. Finally, in the remote satellite work sites, work activities that have been defined by the community as socially or economically useful, have been developed.

Several factors have been critical to Bungala's success. First, it is able to provide participants with the opportunity for promotion to full-time employment. Second, high quality supervisors and tradesmen are employed to educate participants. Third, professional and highly competent managers are employed.

### **Recommendations**

In order for CDEPs to continue to operate successfully several changes to the way in which the scheme is funded and administered are needed. These changes include increasing funding to compensate for the loss of wage surpluses, and a

movement toward triennial funding on a rolling basis contingent on the production of satisfactory business plans.

### **Acknowledgments**

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## Introduction

The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme is currently the most significant program funded by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). Under the CDEP scheme, Indigenous community organisations receive a non-discretionary grant similar in value to the unemployment payment and pension entitlements of all citizens. An additional discretionary component that can total 40 per cent above this 'entitlement' can be provided to fund administration and capital and equipment requirements. Discretion is primarily with ATSIC Regional Councils who make allocative decisions on the basis of community applications; community organisations also have discretion, and a high degree of accountability, about how total allocations are utilised. In general, scheme participants are expected to work part-time for wages, although not all participating organisations insist on a work-for-pay rule. Since its establishment in 1977, the program has been variously described as a labour market program, an alternative income support scheme and a community development initiative.

Historically the scheme was available only to remote communities, but in recent years its geographic coverage has increased and there are now numerous CDEP schemes in regional centres and urban areas (Altman & Hunter 1996; and see location map in ATSIC 1999: 55). The expansion of the scheme in regional centres and urban areas raises a whole series of new policy questions because these schemes operate within an economic and social environment that differs markedly from that of CDEPs in remote areas. In regional centres Indigenous people comprise a minority of the population, there are non-CDEP employment opportunities, and there are significant opportunities for CDEPs to supply services to the market for a fee.

In March 1998 the objectives of the CDEP scheme were altered to place greater emphasis on business development, accredited training and the use of CDEP as a means to jobs in the mainstream labour market. The overall objective of the scheme is as follows:

To provide work for unemployed Indigenous persons in community-managed activities which assist the individual in acquiring skills which benefit the community, develop business enterprises and/or lead to unsubsidised employment (ATSIC 1999:5).

The refocusing of the scheme's objectives follows recommendations made by the Spicer Review (Spicer 1997; and see ATSIC 1999: 60). ATSIC is likely to continue to focus individual CDEP schemes on these objectives. However, little research has been conducted into the viability or benefits of CDEP enterprise development. Nor have elements been identified which increase its effectiveness in assisting individuals to acquire skills that lead to unsubsidised employment.

This paper explores these questions using a case study of the Bungala Aboriginal Corporation (Bungala), a CDEP scheme based in Port Augusta, South Australia. Bungala is a corporate CDEP based in Port Augusta, with work sites in Port Pirie

and in locations throughout the Flinders Ranges. Bungala is a good CDEP with which to explore these questions. It has an impressive record of participants finding unsubsidised employment, in placing participants in subsidised employment and in generating income through its Construction Program.

The focus in this paper is on the economic impacts of the scheme. However, the community development and social impacts are in our opinion at least as important as the economic ones and in many cases will be more important. Therefore this study does not constitute an evaluation of the overall success of Bungala. While there are a number of other studies that have analysed the community development and social impacts of the CDEP scheme (Altman 2000; Madden 2000; Smith 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996), very few have addressed the economic impacts in detail.

A description of the economic and social context of Port Augusta in which Bungala operates is followed by a review of the operation of Bungala and its organisational structure, and the movement of participants to non-CDEP employment. The work cultures that have developed within Bungala are also discussed. The paper then proceeds to evaluate and explore Bungala's business enterprises against a broad set of criteria: commercial viability is considered, but also the linkages between commercial activities and the chances of participants finding unsubsidised employment. The factors critical to Bungala's success are identified and compared with those described in other studies of CDEP schemes in regional centres and urban areas (Madden 2000; Smith 1994, 1995a, 1996). This analysis enables the identification of factors common to success and obstacles that may impede it. Finally, the implications of the Bungala case study for CDEP policy and program directions are canvassed.

### **Case study methodology**

This case study is based upon primary data collected during fieldwork conducted over eight days in July 2000 and secondary data analysis of the 1986, 1991 and 1996 Census and ATSI administrative data. During the fieldwork extensive discussions were held with the management of Bungala and members of the board of management. Questionnaires were administered to participants to ensure that a diversity of views about the organisation were obtained. A number of the work sites in Port Augusta were visited as well as many of the satellite schemes, and discussions were held with work supervisors, and participants interviewed. A follow-up visit to Bungala was made in September 2000 in order to present and discuss a draft copy of the report.

During the initial field visit discussions were also held with other stakeholders in the region including Inglis and Rowe (Bungala's accountants), Centrelink's Port Augusta Manager, Job Network providers (Complete Personnel and Mission Australia), Port Augusta City Council City Manager, and the CEO of the Northern Areas Regional Development Board.

Elaine Thacker is an Indigenous Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), on an inter-agency placement from the ATSIC Northern Areas Regional Office in Port Augusta. She has lived in Port Augusta and is familiar with the Port Augusta Indigenous community. Immediately prior to conducting this research she was the CDEP Project Officer for Bungala, giving her a familiarity both with Bungala and with the practical operation of the CDEP scheme.

## **The economic and social context of Port Augusta**

To understand the operations of Bungala and identify factors related to its success or failure, it is important to describe the economic and social context within which it operates. Here the social and historical context of Indigenous people in Port Augusta is described and the information on the Port Augusta economy is then outlined with particular attention to the labour force status of Indigenous people.

### **Indigenous people in Port Augusta**

Port Augusta has been, and continues to be, a place of significance to Indigenous Australians from various regions throughout South Australia including those areas to the north-west of Port Augusta, the far north of the State, the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands, Flinders Ranges and Eyre Peninsula. Located at the top of the Spencer Gulf 300 km north of Adelaide, Port Augusta lies within the ATSIC Nulla Wimila Kutju Regional Council in Nukunu traditional country. Indigenous people of Port Augusta continue to maintain strong links to Indigenous people living in other regions.

Davenport community is situated within the boundaries of the Port Augusta City Council, approximately 4 km north-east of the central business district. It is considered to be the permanent or semi-permanent home of many Indigenous people and has connections with a number of sociolinguistic groups (Marika 1995: 49). Although Davenport community is recognised as an important home base, the majority of the Indigenous population in Port Augusta live outside of the community, in the township of Port Augusta.

Indigenous people in the Nulla Wimila Kutju Regional Council area have a high level of geographic mobility and it is not uncommon for them to move regularly between Port Augusta, Davenport, and remote communities in the far north and north-west of South Australia. There are many reasons why Indigenous people choose to move between these areas, including attendance at and participation in ceremonies, health reasons including access to medical treatments, and to visit and maintain relationships with family members. Whatever the reason for visiting Port Augusta or Davenport community, it is not uncommon for Indigenous people to extend their stay to remain for longer periods than originally anticipated.

Although the precise Indigenous population of Port Augusta is not known, the 1996 Census data, which are considered to be the most accurate available, show

that of the 14,315 people enumerated in Port Augusta 1,917 (approximately 13.5%) identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Port Augusta's population declined over the period 1986 to 1996 from 15,915 to 14,315. While the overall population of Port Augusta has declined, according to the census there has been an increase in the Indigenous population from 9.1 per cent in 1986 to its current proportion of 13.5 per cent.

The census indicates that the Indigenous population, with a median age of 21 years, is much younger than the non-Indigenous one, which has a median age of 35 years (see Table 1). The census data also indicate that the birth rate amongst the Indigenous population is much higher than that of the non-Indigenous population, suggesting that Indigenous people are likely to comprise a increasing proportion of the Port Augusta population.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1. Demographic and social profile by Indigenous origin and sex, Port Augusta, 1996**

Age (years)	Indigenous (%)			Non-Indigenous (%)		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
0-14	40.6	37.6	39.1	22.5	21.8	22.2
15-44	47.8	49.1	48.5	44.3	44.3	44.3
45-64	9.5	10.4	9.9	22.9	21.4	22.2
65+	2.1	3.0	2.5	10.3	12.4	11.3
Total persons	972	945	1917	6046	5845	11,891
Median age	21	21	21	35	34	35

Note: People who did not answer the question about whether or not they are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander are excluded from this table. The total Port Augusta population was 14,315 at the time of the 1996 Census.

Source: 1996 Census.

### **The Port Augusta economy and Indigenous employment**

Port Augusta is located on the major transport crossroads of both rail and road, making it a transport hub and the centre of commercial and government services for the far north of South Australia. Tourism and related services are also a significant component of the economy of Port Augusta given its location and tourist attractions (particularly the Flinders Ranges).

The Port Augusta economy has been in decline for a number of years with the absolute level of employment falling from 6,276 in 1991 to 5,114 in 1996. This is a job loss of 18.5 per cent, a very substantial decline in employment. At the time of the 1996 Census, the wholesale and retail trade industry was the largest employer with 1,010 employees. Other industries with a large number of employees include health and community services with 750, transport and storage with 648, and education with 484 (Table 2).

**Table 2. Employment by industry, Port Augusta, 1991 and 1996**

	1991		1996	
	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	27	0.50	52	1.06
Mining	13	0.24	19	0.39
Manufacturing	239	4.41	144	2.94
Electricity, gas, and water supply	432	7.97	236	4.82
Construction	313	5.77	276	5.64
Wholesale and retail trade	980	18.08	1010	20.63
Accom., cafes, and restaurants	350	6.46	300	6.13
Transport and storage	1034	19.08	648	13.24
Communication services	60	1.11	64	1.31
Finance and insurance, and property and business services	318	5.87	351	7.17
Govt administration and defence	225	4.15	205	4.19
Education	442	8.15	484	9.89
Health and community services	681	12.56	750	15.32
Cultural and recreational services	67	1.24	102	2.08
Personal and other services	239	4.41	255	5.21
Non-classifiable	19		30	
Not stated	837		188	
Total	6276	100.00	5114	100.0

Source: ABS unpublished data; table from South Australian Centre for Economic Studies (1997).

The major job losses occurred in the transport and storage industry with 386 jobs lost, electricity, gas and water supply with a job loss of 196, and manufacturing with a job loss of 95. The figures are likely to be distorted by the fall in the not-stated category from 837 (or 13.3%) to 188 (3.7%). The relative importance of the transport and storage industry declined from 16.5 per cent of total employment in 1991 to 12.7 per cent in 1996. The importance of the electricity, gas and water industry fell from 6.9 to 4.6 per cent. Industries that increased in relative importance include the wholesale and retail trade which increased from 15.6 to 19.7 per cent of total employment, and health and community services which increased from 10.9 to 14.7 per cent of total employment.

The public sector has traditionally been a major employer in Port Augusta (Table 3). At the time of the 1996 Census there were 2,008 people employed by the various levels of government (Commonwealth, State and local). Major public sector employers include rail, electricity, community and health services, education, and government administration. The decline in employment in Port Augusta is primarily due to cutbacks in public sector employment. Over the

period 1991 to 1996, 588 jobs were lost from the Commonwealth government and 275 from the State government. At the same time there has been a stagnant private sector.

**Table 3. Changes in employment by type of employer, 1991 to 1996**

	1991	1996	Change from 1991 to 1996
Commonwealth government	1207	619	-588
State government	1527	1252	-275
Local government	133	137	4
Private sector	2699	2940	241
Not stated	709	130	-579

Notes: There has been a large fall in the 'not stated' category between the 1991 and 1996 Censuses. This distorts the estimates of the change in employment between 1991 and 1996 since all of those in the not stated category in 1991 were in fact employed in one of the government sectors or the private sector.

Source: ABS unpublished data; table from South Australian Centre for Economic Studies (1997).

Economic decline and the loss of employment are reflected in the labour force statistics. At the time of the 1996 Census the employment to population ratio amongst the non-Indigenous population was 60.3 per cent and the unemployment rate was high at 13 percentage points. While the level of employment in Port Augusta has been in decline and the rate of unemployment is relatively high, Indigenous people fared much worse in the labour market with an employment to population ratio of just 28.1 per cent. The Indigenous population has an unemployment rate of 33.0 per cent, a level that would be unacceptable in the wider community.

The low levels of employment of Indigenous people, low wages and salaries received by the employed, and high levels of dependence on social security payments has resulted in Indigenous persons having a median personal income of just \$196 per week. This is significantly lower than the \$259 per week for the non-Indigenous population.

Bungala CDEP is one of the largest employers in Port Augusta. In 1996, with only 178 employees, it was probably the fifth largest employer in Port Augusta (South Australian Centre for Economic Studies 1998).<sup>2</sup> Since 1996 Bungala has increased its number of employees to a current figure of 310, resulting in the organisation continuing to be a significant local employer and making it by far the largest employer of Indigenous people in Port Augusta, accounting for 6 per cent of the total employment.<sup>3</sup> This gives Bungala some influence in the local economy.

### **The Bungala Aboriginal Corporation**

Bungala is the largest CDEP in South Australia. It is based in Port Augusta, but also has satellite work sites over a range of 450 km, ranging from Port Pirie in the South to Nepabunna in the Northern Flinders Ranges. As of July 2000 Bungala

had 310 participants working in a diverse range of activities. Bungala commenced operations in June 1994 with 100 participants. In its initial years of operation, difficulties were experienced to the extent that in 1996 the point was reached where it was in such serious administrative and financial difficulties that ATSIC appointed a Grant Controller to administer the organisation. During 1997 a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was recruited and the operation of the organisation improved to the point where the Grant Controller was removed. At this point Bungala had 129 CDEP participants and since then the scheme has quickly expanded to its present size of 310 participants.

Bungala is a corporate CDEP, meaning that it has a central office that services a number of satellite schemes. The Port Augusta division of Bungala has the responsibility for administering the satellite schemes (including managing finances and other administrative tasks). Each of the satellite schemes is a pre-existing Aboriginal organisation in which members wished to participate in a CDEP scheme but for various reasons were unable to establish their own scheme. They consequently invited Bungala to set up work sites in their community.

Although Bungala is a dedicated CDEP organisation, the satellite schemes are primarily community organisations which are responsible for providing other services to the local Indigenous community. In some of the communities these services are very wide ranging. They may include the overall administration of a discrete Indigenous community, and the delivery of various municipal services activities. The communities which have this multiple function and are Bungala satellites are Davenport, Nepabunna, Iga Warta, and Beltana. However in other communities, for example Port Pirie and Hawker, the functions of the organisation are much more limited.

Bungala has a board of management that meets once a month to discuss and make major decisions on behalf of the organisation. The board members are CDEP participants who are elected for a term of one year by their fellow participants. Because the board of management is comprised solely of CDEP participants there are no representatives of other agencies or Aboriginal organisations on its board, although participants may of course be involved in other Aboriginal organisations. The lack of formal linkages between Bungala and other Aboriginal organisations may in fact work in Bungala's favour, by allowing it to operate more independently and to make decisions that are not necessarily popular with politically powerful individuals within the local Indigenous community.

### **Bungala's organisational structure and work programs**

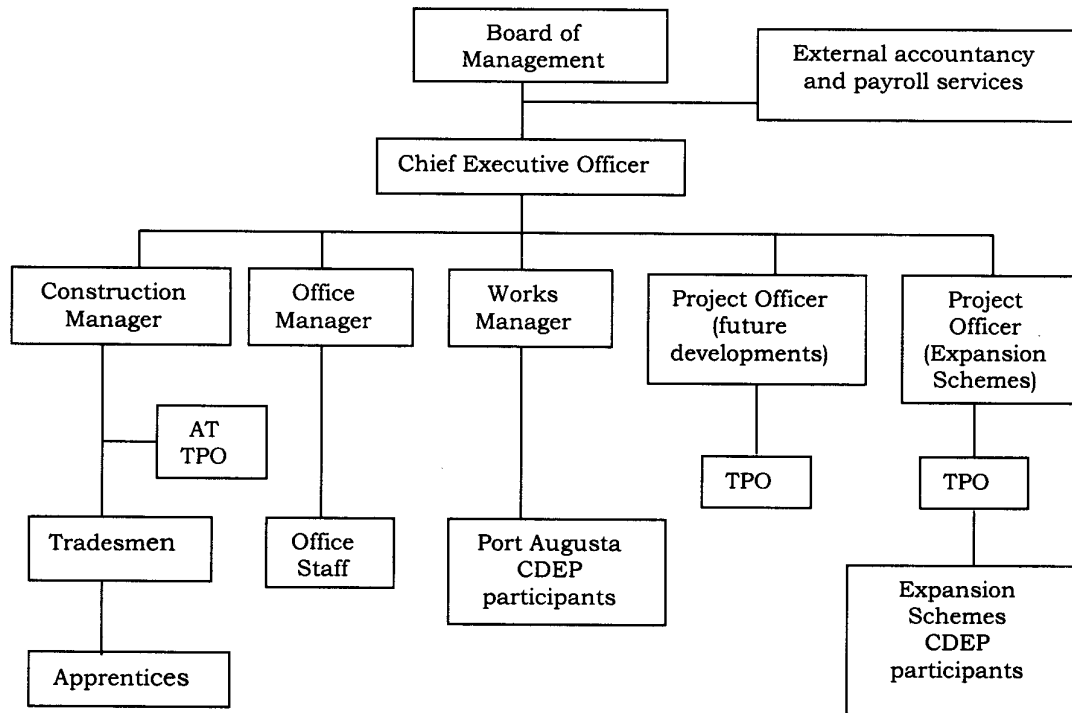
Bungala's organisational structure includes the Board of Management that makes major decisions about the direction of the organisation. The Board appoints a CEO who is responsible for the operation of the scheme and who reports directly to the Board. Beneath the CEO is a management tier (see Fig. 1). Bungala has organised its work activities into three main programs: the Construction Program, the Works Program and the Expansion Schemes. Each of these work programs

has a full-time manager who oversees the activities and running of their respective program. These managers report directly to the CEO. There is an office run by an Office Manager who is responsible for the administrative aspects of Bungala, and finally there is a Project Officer who is responsible for finding and exploring opportunities for new ventures and sources of funding. In addition to these work programs there are a number of CDEP participants who are placed with non-CDEP employers. These participants generally work five days a week for the non-CDEP employer, with Bungala contributing the participant's wages allocation to the costs of employing that person. This arrangement is very much like the traditional wage subsidy labour market program.

Bungala has a 'no work, no pay' rule that applies to all participants in the scheme. However, while this rule is strictly enforced in the Construction and Works Programs, the rule is not as strictly enforced in the Expansion Schemes. This is largely due to the greater autonomy of the Expansion Schemes in determining their work rules. It is also due in part to the difficulty experienced by staff at Port Augusta in monitoring the work efforts of participants in distant locations.

The organisational structure clearly separates the running of the Construction Program, Works Program and Expansion Program. The Construction Manager oversees the activities of the Construction Program to ensure work undertaken meets quality standards and is completed in a timely manner. The Construction Manager is also responsible for preparing quotes and reports directly to the CEO. The Construction Program consists of full-time workers only, and provides a significant amount of training in the form of apprenticeships.

The Works Manager is responsible for the running of work activities that provide two days of work per week to participants in Port Augusta. This program has a number of work activities including the yard gangs, wood gangs, work sites, Emeroo Station, Homestead Park, Arts and Crafts, Kitchen, Brick Making Machine and operating the Child Care Centre at the Spencer Institute of TAFE, Port Augusta Campus (see Appendix A for a more detailed description of the work activities). The majority of two-day-week participants, who live in Davenport, are employed there delivering Municipal Services. Each work group has a full-time supervisor who is also a CDEP participant. These supervisors tend to be older long-standing participants many of whom have prior employment experiences outside of CDEP. This seniority generates respect for the supervisors and provides them with moral authority. The close personal interaction that occurs between participants and the supervisors is an important factor in the personal development of the participants. With the exception of the full-time supervisors, all participants in the Works Program are employed two days per week. The primary objective of the Works Program is to provide meaningful work to participants and allow participants to develop basic work skills.

**Figure 1. Bungala CDEP's organisational structure**

Key: AT = Administrative Trainee; TPO = Trainee Project Officer.

The Expansion Schemes also provide work activities for participants for two days per week. The nature of the work activities and the way in which work is managed is mostly determined by the relevant Aboriginal organisation in the satellite community. The work activities and practices in the Expansion Schemes, in some cases, differ from those of the Works Program in Port Augusta.

The Office Management section provides inputs and support into the activities undertaken by all of the Works Programs. This includes reporting to ATSIC as well as various other administrative tasks. Bungala hires external accountants to manage its payroll, check its financial management, and provide financial reporting.

As of July 2000 the Works Program had the largest number of participants with around 132 people working two days per week and 11 full-time supervisors. The Expansion Schemes also had a large number of participants with approximately 76 people employed two days per week and one full-time tradesman. The Construction Program employed a smaller number of participants, all of whom were full-time. There were 16 apprentices and nine fully qualified tradesmen.

Apprenticeship training will lead to a recognised qualification. The remaining 65 participants were placed in full-time employment with non-CDEP employers.

Bungala provides a considerable amount of training to participants. Much of it is informal and involves participants in gaining basic work skills and routines. In addition, Bungala provides a considerable amount of formal training through both traineeships and apprenticeships, and short courses are undertaken through TAFE. The administrative rules of the Aboriginal Study Assistance Scheme (ABSTUDY—a grant paid by Centrelink to eligible Indigenous students studying approved courses) and of CDEP allow participants undertaking CDEP employment two days per week to enrol as part-time students in accredited courses and receive ABSTUDY payments as well as CDEP participant wages. This enables those participants to receive close to a full-time income. A large number of Bungala's participants take advantage of this arrangement.

Bungala will soon engage 12 participants in pre-vocational training and apprenticeships in Port Pirie. This program involves Bungala establishing a workshop on land attached to the Spencer Institute of TAFE, Port Pirie Campus. The apprentices will be involved in prefabricating houses on this site. The prefabrication of houses will assist in covering the costs associated with the provision of training. In addition, it will provide an alternative to the usual classroom-based training environment in which many Indigenous people feel uncomfortable, yet result in a recognised qualification (Schwab 1997, 1998). The production of real buildings is likely to be critical to the acceptance of the qualification among employers of the region, as the quality of the workmanship will provide proof of the skills of the participants.

### **The work culture**

Interviews with participants on whether they want to move to 'mainstream' employment revealed clear differences.<sup>4</sup> Of the 35 participants interviewed almost half said that they did not wish to leave CDEP for mainstream employment whereas the remainder indicated their wish to do so. Gender or age did not appear to be a determining factor in participants' desire to find mainstream full-time employment. In general, participants wanted to move to mainstream employment either to earn more money or because they became bored on those days on which they were not working on CDEP.

Amongst the participants who did not want to leave CDEP for mainstream employment there were a great variety in the reasons for wishing to remain on the program. Responses included reasons such as that they 'liked the work', 'enjoyed working with Aboriginal people' and 'felt they were setting a good example for younger Aboriginal people'. Participants in the 'remote' Expansion Schemes work sites tended to respond somewhat differently. For many of these participants the question about wanting to move to mainstream employment had little relevance because there is virtually no employment available in their area. Other remote Expansion Scheme participants indicated that they would like to move to

mainstream employment, but they did not consider it a possibility. On the basis of participant interviews, Bungala's participants can be broadly categorised into two groups:

- participants wishing to move into unsubsidised employment and who see CDEP as a stepping stone; and
- participants who wish to remain on CDEP and do not want to move to unsubsidised employment.

In order to balance the different objectives and the diverse needs of these groups of participants, each work program has developed a distinct work culture. In the Works Program, participants work two days per week in what they perceive as a comfortable work environment. While the no work, no pay rule is enforced, the work culture is sympathetic to the fact that many of the participants employed in this group have very limited work skills. The work culture is designed to assist those participants to develop basic work skills. Work supervisors play a critical role in the development of work skills amongst participants.

In the Construction Program all of the participants are employed full-time as apprentices. The work culture more closely reflects the mainstream labour market, with participants expected to be more reliable in their work attendance and to work industriously. In contrast, the work culture in each satellite Scheme is determined by the relevant Aboriginal organisation. For example, in remote Expansion Schemes, the opportunities for unsubsidised employment are very limited therefore these schemes focus on community development objectives. The work culture in these satellite schemes is much more like that typically found on remote CDEPs (Altman 1985, 2000; Altman & Taylor 1989; Miller 1985).

Typically, new participants in Bungala commence work in the two-days-per-week Works Program. Within this program, a strict no work, no pay policy is enforced. Many of these participants have never worked or have not worked for a long period of time and lack basic work skills. Participants who can demonstrate regular attendance are able to apply for any full-time vacancies within Bungala. For example, they may become a work supervisor, trainee, or apprentice, or be placed in subsidised employment with a non-CDEP employer.

For reasons outlined earlier, the work culture of the Expansion Schemes is determined by the relevant Aboriginal organisation. In the remote Expansion Schemes the opportunities for unsubsidised employment are very limited. Furthermore, until very recently the opportunity for promotion within schemes has not existed. However this will change shortly with the establishment of the apprenticeship positions in Port Pirie and opportunities for full-time employment in Nepabunna.

By providing participants with the opportunity for promotion within the schemes, Bungala has developed what economists would call an internal labour market. This may be defined as an organisation within which the pricing and allocation of labour is governed by a set of administrative rules and procedures rather than by market prices and wages (Ehrenberg & Smith 1997). Within Bungala there are job

hierarchies which entail a sequence or progression of jobs which thus form a 'mobility chain' or 'job ladder'. A standard set of CDEP work conditions has been developed, and a more complex set of pay rates than exists in many CDEP schemes has been established.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, the possibility of promotion is a critical component of the scheme as it provides participants with the incentive to work well and enhances their chances of finding employment outside of CDEP.

The clear separation of the different work programs within the organisational structure has allowed the different work practices and cultures to develop. Managers can provide a consistent set of rules and minimise perceptions of unfairness and tensions that might otherwise arise in the face of different work cultures that are being applied to people working side by side.

### **Commercial activities and finances**

As has been outlined above, ATSIC is refocusing the objectives of CDEP on business development and commercialisation. However, little has been said about the viability of this policy objective and the benefits. This section explores these questions using Bungala as an example.

Bungala is generally considered to have been successful in developing a commercial model of operation that allows income to be generated from business enterprises. Bungala is also considered to have been highly successful in having participants find unsubsidised employment. There is a clear relationship between business development and assisting participants to find unsubsidised employment. Spicer (1997: 68–9) writes:

Business enterprises also provide a most effective training ground for participants to enhance their range of skills and learn about business. With CDEP funding as a 'training subsidy' the potential for participants to acquire skills to assist them in seeking employment outside of CDEP is greatly increased.

In the financial year 1999/2000 Bungala CDEP had a total income of \$4.9m (Table 4). The ATSIC funding for CDEP comprises two components, participant wages and on-cost funding. The level of participant wages funding is based on the number of participants engaged in the scheme. There are two participant rates: one for participants in remote areas; the other for participants in non-remote areas. As of 1 July 2000 the remote rate is \$194.58 per week and the non-remote rate is \$175.24 per week. On-cost funding includes recurrent funding which is used for administration and capital funding for the purchase of capital items. Regional Council, which receives an allocation of CDEP on-cost funds for its area of jurisdiction, allocates on-cost funding. Regional Council determines the level of funds allocated for capital and recurrent funds in accordance with own priorities. ATSIC participant wages is the largest funding item, contributing \$2.0m. ATSIC on-cost funding is also important, with recurrent funding contributing \$0.5m and ATSIC Capital funding being \$295,000. Overall, ATSIC funding is \$3.4m, which is around 68 per cent of Bungala's total income.

**Table 4. Sources of income, Bungala CDEP, 1995/96–1999/2000**

	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000
Funding:			\$		
ATSIC recurrent	373,493	329,206	376,894	511,723	496,959
ATSIC capital	213,936	202,088	91,638	438,391	294,868
ATSIC participant wages	1,223,663	1,160,765	1,493,441	2,112,385	2,585,943
Other	398,225	310,893	75,142	339,543	469,274
Project generated income	60,524	96,728	234,624	685,884	1,069,457
Interest received	12,921	13,211	10,375	20,033	50,848
Total income	2,282,762	2,112,891	2,282,114	4,107,959	4,967,349

Source: Adapted from 'Compilation Report to Bungala Aboriginal Corporation 19 July 2000', Inglis and Rowe Certified Practising Accountants.

The allocation of on-cost funding by Regional Council has led to marked fluctuations in Bungala's level of capital funding year to year. For example in 1998/99 14.3 per cent of ATSIC funding to Bungala was capital funding as compared to just 4.7 per cent in 1997/98. Funding of \$500,000 was obtained from other organisations (including DEWRSB). Project-generated income in 1999/2000 amounted to \$1.1m. This was almost entirely generated by the Construction Program.

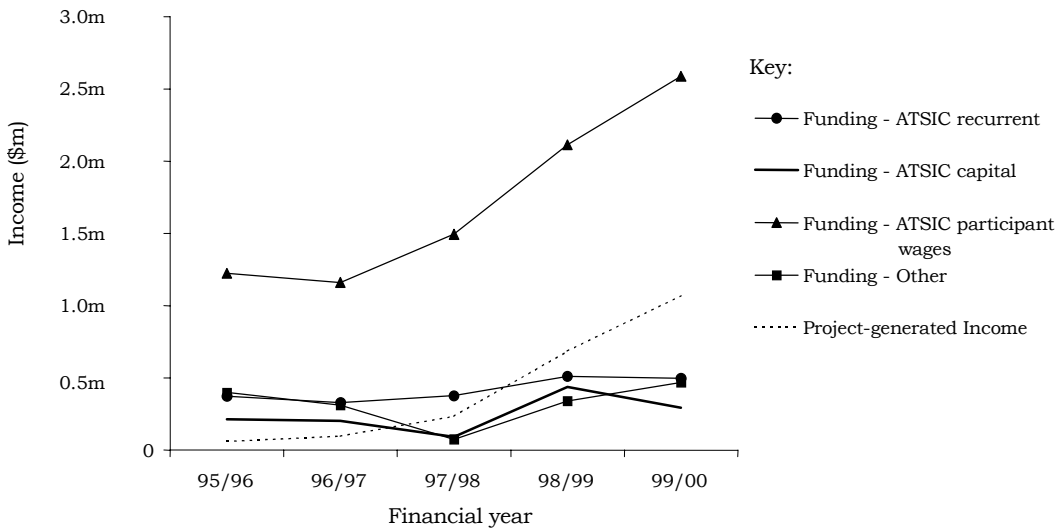
Over the period 1995/96 to 1999/2000 there has been an increase in income from \$2.28m to \$4.97m (Table 4). The trends in income by source of income are presented in Fig. 2. This illustrates that the increase in income is largely due to increases in ATSIC wages funding from \$1.2m to \$2.6m. This increase simply reflects an increase in the number of participants and increases in pay rate of participants.

The other source of income that has shown a dramatic increase is project-generated income, from \$60,524 in 1995/96 to \$1,069,457 in 1999/2000. As the level of project generated income has increased the relative importance of ATSIC funding has declined. For example, in 1995/1996, 79 per cent of total funding was sourced from ATSIC, as compared to 68 per cent in 1999/2000.

The Construction Program generates almost all of the project-generated income. Bungala CDEP currently tenders competitively for construction work; however, initially there was doubt amongst the non-Indigenous population as to Bungala's ability to successfully undertake construction projects. Bungala's successful completion of a number of projects appears to have changed the industry perception of it. Particularly important to improving Bungala's public image has been the successful completion of several very visible jobs for non-Indigenous clients (including Pampas Motel for the Mayor of Port Augusta and the refit of the Job Network provider Mission South Australia and the Northern Regional

Development Board offices). The Construction Program has developed a good reputation resulting in the likelihood of Bungala continuing to find construction work. Thus the level of income generated is likely to continue to increase.

**Figure 2. Bungala CDEP: Income trends by source of income**



Other activities from which Bungala has the potential to generate significant levels of income include the nationally accredited Child Care Centre, located on the campus of the Spencer Institute of TAFE. This is as a result of its administrative expertise as demonstrated by its role as a Grant Controller.

While in 1999/2000, \$1.1m of income was generated, Bungala incurred at least this amount of debt in earning this income. In other words, the Construction Program, Bungala's most commercially successful work group, is not profitable according to standard commercial criteria. In the absence of ATSIC and DEWRB funding the Construction Program could not operate or would do so in a very different way.

The reason for the lack of commercial viability of the Construction Program is two-fold. First, the program provides a great deal of training, with 1.6 apprentices for every tradesman. This is a much higher ratio of apprentices to tradesmen than is found in the construction industry generally. Second, the productivity of employees available to Bungala is relatively low. This is manifest in relatively high rates of absenteeism and turnover of apprenticeships. Of the 16 apprentices who started in 2000 it appears that nine are no longer continuing their apprenticeship. The ultimate success of the apprenticeship program will be determined by the number of apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeships.

## Movement of participants to non-CDEP employment

One of the current objectives of CDEP is to assist participants to acquire skills that lead to unsubsidised employment. Bungala has a considerable number of participants who leave the scheme for unsubsidised employment each year. The number finding unsubsidised employment appears to be between 30 and 40 per year with the exception of 1997/98 when 68 participants left for unsubsidised employment (Table 5). Employment has been found in a diverse range of industries including the Port Augusta City Council, auto-wreckers, golf clubs, mining companies, and construction companies.

**Table 5. Bungala CDEP: Participant movements to unsubsidised employment**

	Participant ceiling	Move to unsubsidised employment
1996/97		33
1997/98	129	68
1998/99	253	39
1999/2000	310	40

Sources: Bungala Annual Report (various years).

It appears that the abnormally large number of participants moving to full-time employment in 1997/98 was due to the Roxby mine expansion, which increased the demand for labour in the region. This is an important point because it implies that the low levels of Indigenous employment in the region and the difficulty Indigenous people have in finding unsubsidised employment is not only due to low levels of productivity amongst the Indigenous population but also to a low level of demand for labour.

In addition to participants finding unsubsidised employment a large number of participants are placed in subsidised employment with non-CDEP employers. For these participants Bungala pays their wages two days per week, with the employer paying their wages for the remaining three days. These participants are employed with a range of employers in a range of industries. Bungala's success with its participants finding unsubsidised employment is particularly impressive when it is considered that the total level of employment in Port Augusta has declined in recent years.

Concerns have been raised (ATSIC 1994; Spicer 1997) that not enough CDEP participants are moving to unsubsidised employment. In response to these concerns DEWRB has set up a CDEP Placement Incentive Scheme that gives CDEP organisations a bonus of \$2,200 for every participant who leaves CDEP for an ongoing job. In order to qualify for the bonus the person must be off CDEP and in ongoing employment for at least 20 hours per week. A payment of \$1,100 is made after 13 weeks of employment, and a further \$1,100 after 26 weeks of employment. The job can be in the private, public, or community sector and can

be subsidised (for example through Wage Assistance). The participant can find their own job—the CDEP does not need to organise the placement.

The relatively low number of CDEP Placement Scheme Incentive payments made to Bungala appears to be reflected in the figures Australia wide. As of May 2000 DEWRSB had made approximately 80 CDEP Placement Incentive payments Australia wide (figure cited by Russell Patterson, DEWRSB, at the National CDEP Organisations Conference 17–19 May 2000). This number appears to be low given the growing body of evidence that on non-remote CDEPs a significant number of participants leave CDEP for non-CDEP employment (Hunter, Gray & Jones 2000; Office of Evaluation and Audit 1997; Spicer 1997).

In spite of having 40 participants leave the scheme for unsubsidised employment in 1999/2000, Bungala has only received 13 CDEP Placement Incentive payments (as of 1 July 2000). There are likely to be two main reasons for the low number of payments. First, employment outcomes may not be sustained for the 13 weeks necessary to qualify for a payment. Secondly, it is difficult for CDEPs to maintain contact with former participants in regional centres and major urban areas where there are large non-Indigenous populations. The low rate of take up of the Placement Incentive Scheme may also be related to the very small size of the payment, which must be weighed against the cost of maintaining that contact.

In summary, a number of the participants who have found employment have not qualified for the incentive payment because either the employment has not lasted for 13 weeks or because Bungala has been unable to maintain contact and this has subsequently precluded them from claiming the incentive payment.

### **Evaluating Bungala's business enterprises**

The fact that Bungala's Construction Program does not make a profit raises the question as to whether it is possible for a CDEP to run profitable business enterprises and at the same time provide employment to unemployed Indigenous job seekers and assist them to find unsubsidised employment. This section evaluates Bungala's business enterprises against a broader set of criteria than commercial viability.

There are a number of constraints upon the ability of CDEPs to develop commercially viable businesses. For CDEPs in remote locations business development is likely to be severely constrained by the lack of economic activity, which limits the number of business opportunities.<sup>6</sup> While the depressed local economy in many regional centres—such as Port Augusta—constrains business opportunities to some extent, in general opportunities do exist.

There is a considerable degree of competition in the construction industry in Port Augusta. ABS figures for 1996 show that there were 65 construction businesses in the Port Augusta region. These were predominantly small to medium sized

businesses with 63 of the 65 having fewer than 20 employees. These 65 businesses employed 313 people, working out at an average of 4.8 employees per business.

For CDEPs in regional centres and urban areas the basic constraints are the generally low levels of work skills and productivity of participants entering the scheme. Most of the participants come from the ranks of the long-term unemployed and some have never had previous employment. The participants need intensive graduated training focusing on basic work skills and routines. This sort of training is very expensive and raises Bungala's cost structure significantly above that of its competitors.

Bungala's costs are also raised by the formal training objectives. As outlined above, it has a much higher ratio of trainees and apprentices to tradesmen than the industry average. Bungala invests large amounts on training and supervision. While it receives funding from DEWRSB as part of an Aboriginal Employment Strategy, this only covers a relatively small part of the costs of the training. The Aboriginal Employment Strategy funding is to employ and train 20 apprentices. The total cost of this is estimated to be \$3,493,380 of which DEWRSB is contributing \$1,055,157. Bungala is required to find the rest of the funding, some of which, but not all, comes from CDEP participant wages funding for two-day-a-week work (information from internal Bungala document).

A further constraint upon CDEPs in the running of commercially viable enterprises is the high rate of turnover of participants. The movement through the scheme occurs for a number of reasons including high rates of geographic mobility, high levels of family responsibility, and the instability of social structures and personal lives that make the routine of CDEP participation difficult to sustain.

The only way for Bungala to reduce its cost structure to that of its competitors would be to drastically reduce the number of participants and apprentices. If this were to occur Bungala's building program might become commercially viable, but Bungala would no longer be meeting its objective of providing employment to unemployed Aboriginal people and assisting them to gain skills which increase their chances of finding unsubsidised employment. It would no longer be a CDEP but rather a mainstream business.<sup>7</sup>

It is conceivable that Bungala's construction enterprise could reach the point where it did not need government subsidy to operate if the construction apprentices stayed in the organisation once they had obtained their qualifications and no new apprentices were taken on. However, once qualified these participants have a very high chance of finding unsubsidised employment and are therefore unlikely to stay on at Bungala, given the objectives of the scheme to assist participants to move into unsubsidised employment. We believe the factors which constrain Bungala's ability to develop commercially viable business enterprises apply equally to most, if not all, CDEPs.

Given that the Construction Program and the ability of CDEPs generally to develop profitable business enterprises is limited, the question must be asked as to whether it is worthwhile for CDEPs to pursue business enterprise development. On the basis of Bungala's experience we argue that there are great benefits to CDEPs developing business enterprises.

There are three main benefits to Bungala and its Indigenous participants from running its business enterprises (the Construction Program). First, it gives Bungala the ability to provide a number of participants with full-time relatively well paid work. This is critical in allowing Bungala to develop an internal labour market and to generate the incentives to motivate participants. In addition it allows Bungala to employ skilled tradesmen and supervisors which is essential to the scheme operating well.

Second, it provides excellent training for participants in the form of traineeships and apprenticeships in areas for which there are employment opportunities in the region. Many Indigenous people find the traditional classroom-based learning difficult and uncomfortable (Schwab 1997, 1998). The training environment created by having apprentices and trainees working on real construction sites and working with other Indigenous people is one in which they are much more socially comfortable and likely to succeed. This is consistent with the findings of Spicer (1997).

Third, the construction work results in a quality finished product which is very visible. Anecdotal evidence from the local business community suggests that this has improved the public perception of Bungala. Public perception of the quality of its work is also important in helping participants find unsubsidised employment, because employers are more likely to view favourably and thus value their work experience with Bungala. Fourth, the visible success of Bungala's Construction Program provides participants and the wider Indigenous community with a sense of pride. It also alters the wider community's perceptions and misconceptions about Indigenous people.

### **Lessons for CDEP enterprise and employment success**

There are now a number of case studies of CDEP schemes in regional centres and urban areas. Studies have been conducted in Port Lincoln (Smith 1994), Redfern in Sydney (Smith 1995), Yarnteen in Newcastle (Smith 1996), Worn Gundidj in Warrnambool (Madden 2000) and the study of Bungala presented in this paper. Amongst these schemes Yarnteen, Bungala, and to a lesser extent Worn Gundidj stand out as the most successful in developing business enterprises and having participants find unsubsidised employment. Combined, these case studies begin to allow us to identify factors that are related to CDEP schemes developing successful business enterprises, having participants find unsubsidised employment, and building communities.

## **Management**

One of the most important factors for the successful operation of CDEPs is a high level of managerial competence and professionalism. In both Bungala and Yarrteen, the CEO primarily drives the success of the organisation. In both cases the CEO has personal networks in the wider business community within the region. These networks assist in securing commercial contracts. In addition this networking is also used to assist participants find placements and unsubsidised employment outside of the scheme. While the importance of having links with local businesses and industry may be obvious, its importance to the success of the CDEP cannot be overstated.

If the CEO were to leave and a suitable replacement was not found, Bungala would be likely to revert to providing employment for two days a week for participants with most if not all of the five-day participants reverting to two-days-a-week work. This situation does not appear to be unique to Bungala CDEP: it may relate to many, if not all, successful CDEPs. The dependence upon having high quality managers also highlights the importance of successful CDEPs having clear succession planning in the event of those positions being vacated.

In order to attract high quality managers it is necessary for CDEPs to pay very competitive wages. High quality management is particularly important for Aboriginal participants who become promoted to supervisory roles, as this tends to make them unpopular with other participants when they are required to enforce the no work, no pay rule.

## **Work cultures**

The case studies of Bungala and Yarrteen illustrate the delicate balance that must be made between maintaining the 'Aboriginalisation' of work and providing work activities which make people employable (Smith 1995b). In both Yarrteen and Bungala the clear separation of the different work programs within the organisational structure has allowed different work practices and cultures to develop.

Establishing different work cultures which cater for differences in the aspirations and backgrounds of participants is a common feature of Yarrteen and Bungala. In both cases the organisational structure is such that the work programs are separated according to the primary objective of each program. The opportunity for promotion is critical to the success of Bungala. While the case study of Yarrteen does not explicitly address this issue, it would appear from the discussion in Smith (1996), that Yarrteen had developed an internal labour market.

The case studies of the Port Lincoln (Smith 1994) and Warnambool (Madden 2000) CDEPs illustrate how schemes in regional centres may provide employment within participants' 'comfort' zones. The case studies of these schemes nevertheless concluded that participant exits to unsubsidised employment would

be slow. In the case of Port Lincoln it was concluded that most of the unsubsidised employment would be via the local Aboriginal Community organisation sector in the town (Smith 1994: 23–4).

### **CDEP enterprise issues for ATSIC**

Smith (1996) in her case study of the Yarnteen Aboriginal Corporation, Newcastle, raised a number of broad questions that ATSIC, as a program administrator, needed to address. These included whether ATSIC can adequately deal with the enterprise stage of a CDEP scheme, and, with businesses seeking to operate in a competitive and rapidly changing market place, to what extent ATSIC's policy emphasis on funding equity between communities, across populations and between States, is essentially incompatible with the competition-orientated model that directs mainstream businesses. These questions have not been addressed by ATSIC in any systematic fashion and remain as valid and important as they were four years ago. Indeed, if anything, the importance of the issues has increased with the refocusing of CDEP objectives on business development and increasing numbers of schemes in regional centres where there are commercial and employment opportunities.

As mentioned, the allocation of on-cost funding is determined by the Regional Council on a needs basis. In the Nulla Wimila Kutju ATSIC region this has resulted in major fluctuations from year to year in the amount of on-cost funding received by Bungala (see Table 4). This makes financial planning difficult and is a real impediment to the development of business enterprises. ATSIC needs to consider whether a formula based funding system is needed in order to reduce uncertainty in the level of funding received by CDEP schemes. The allocation of on-cost funding on the basis of need appears to penalise schemes that are relatively successful. For example, in the financial year 1999/2000 ATSIC notionally allocated \$3,000 per participant, but Bungala received an actual allocation from the Regional Council of \$1,900 per participant.

While ATSIC has the capacity to approve funding for a three-year period for some CDEPs (based on the organisation's business plans and how well the scheme has operated), Bungala's funding has only been approved from year to year. Having funding approved for only one year is a further source of financial uncertainty that impinges upon Bungala's ability to plan financially and undertake contracts for work that will not be completed within the funding year. ATSIC may need to consider developing multi-year rolling funding for CDEPs if they wish them to pursue business development.

There may be some justification for having a lower per participant on-cost funding for larger schemes because of their economies of scale in management. However, in the case of corporate CDEPs with work sites in a number of different locations, a considerable distance apart, such economies of scale do not exist and in fact there may be diseconomies of scale. In other words, there is a fixed cost to

running each work site and there are considerable fixed and variable costs to the central Port Augusta management team in monitoring and visiting sites away from Port Augusta.

A concern that has been raised is that the placement of CDEP participants in subsidised employment with non-CDEP employers may simply displace existing Indigenous part-time or full-time employees. This concern has principally been raised in the context of discrete Aboriginal communities. It does not appear to be as great a problem in a place like Port Augusta as many placements occur with non-Indigenous employers. On the other hand there may well be displacement of some non-Indigenous employees.

As discussed, Bungala receives government subsidy in the form of participant wages and some on-cost funding (and DEWRSB funding). It tenders competitively against other business in Port Augusta for construction work. This raises issues of unfair competition in the sense that Bungala is subsidised by government funding that may appear to give them an unfair advantage. While it is true that it would not be able to operate in the absence of government funding, it is also true that it provides employment opportunities and training to people who would not receive them otherwise. As demonstrated in this paper, this is very expensive and significantly raises Bungala's cost structure above that of its competitors, who provide far less training.

In the past, ATSIC paid participant wages quarterly according to the number of participants registered at the start of the quarter. The size of the participant wages funding was determined by assuming that all participants would work for the full three months (or that participants who left would be immediately replaced). If a CDEP did not meet its participant ceiling for every working day in the quarter then the extra wages funding was not recovered by ATSIC. In practice this has led to Bungala (and many other CDEPs) accumulating a wage surplus that has been used to top up participant wages and supervisors' wages. As of 1 July 2000 ATSIC changed the way in which participant wages funding is calculated, with the wages funding being determined according to the exact number of hours worked by each participant and the number of participants working on each day. If there is total compliance with the new rules, as seems likely given the cross-checking of administrative data sources, this change will entirely eliminate the generation of wage surpluses by CDEPs.

The use of any wage surplus to top up participants' wages and to pay supervisors' wages has been critical to Bungala's ability to operate in its current form. This is because supervisors' wages are not included in the organisation's ATSIC recurrent funding.<sup>8</sup> The loss of the wage surplus means that if Bungala is to continue employing supervisors then it will need to find funds from other sources. As outlined above, the supervisors play a critical role in the personal development of participants. While project generated income from the Construction Program is considerable, Bungala's costs are such that it cannot meet the costs of supervisors' wages out of this income.

We have argued that employing high quality supervisors is critical to Bungala's success in increased participants' works skills and in assisting participants to find unsubsidised employment. ATSIC should consider increasing funding to CDEPs that have the types of work programs Bungala provides to allow them to employ quality supervisors. While this is expensive, it should be recognised by ATSIC that they have, by default, allowed CDEPs to pay the wages of supervisors out of wage surpluses, and this is no longer possible.

ATSIC only provides funding for two days a week of work for each participant. If a CDEP is unable either to generate surpluses from its wages bill, or to obtain income from other sources, it is unable to provide participants with work for more than two days a week. However, as we have argued, the success of Bungala in motivating employees to work and attain skills is critically dependent upon Bungala being able to offer promotion within the scheme. In addition, the extra income generated allows fully qualified tradesmen to be employed. This is important for two reasons. First, it allows Bungala to employ tradesmen as participants who can thus provide training to apprentices. Second it allows Bungala to successfully complete its building contracts.

## **Conclusions**

This paper uses Bungala CDEP as a case study of how CDEP schemes in regional centres and urban areas can meet their multiple objectives of assisting participants to acquire skills which result in unsubsidised employment, developing business enterprises and providing employment in a community development setting.

The focus is on the economic and social impacts of the scheme. Bungala has had success in meeting the needs of all groups of participants. Significant numbers of participants are leaving the scheme for employment or are being placed in subsidised employment with non-CDEP employers. Meaningful employment has been provided to participants living in a non-remote area who wish to remain on the scheme. Finally, in the remote satellite work sites, work activities have been developed that the community defines as socially or economically useful.

Bungala's participants can be categorised into two broad groups: participants aspiring to move into unsubsidised employment for whom CDEP is a stepping stone, and participants who wish to remain with the program and prefer not to avail themselves of unsubsidised employment. In order to meet the different needs of participants Bungala has developed several work cultures. In the Works Program participants work two days per week in a work environment in which they are comfortable. While the no work, no pay rule is strictly enforced, the work culture is sympathetic to the fact that many of the participants in this work group have very limited work skills. In the Construction Program, all the CDEP participants are employed full-time as apprentices in a work culture that reflects

the mainstream labour market. The work culture in each satellite scheme is determined by the relevant Aboriginal organisation and is more likely to mirror the activities typical of remote CDEPs.

Several factors are critical to Bungala's success. First, it is able to provide participants with the opportunity for promotion to full-time employment. This is critical to giving participants an incentive to work well. Second, high quality supervisors and tradesmen are employed. This is important in assisting participants to develop work skills. Third, professional and highly competent managers, and this applies particularly the CEO, are employed.

ATSIC funds to Bungala do not cover all the costs of supervisors and tradesmen. Nor do they provide participants with work for more than two days per week. Bungala is required to meet those costs from three main sources: income generated by construction work; funding from DEWRSB; and, in the past, wage surpluses.

In addition to generating income, Bungala's business enterprise (the Construction Program) has a number of benefits for the organisation and its participants. First, it provides excellent training for participants in the form of traineeships and apprenticeships. The training environment created by having apprentices and trainees working on real construction sites and working with other Indigenous people creates an environment in which they are much more socially comfortable and thus more likely to succeed. Second, the construction work results in a high quality finished product which improves the public perception of Bungala. This is important in helping participants find unsubsidised employment and alters the wider community's perceptions and misconceptions about Indigenous people. Work undertaken by Bungala's tradesmen and apprentices is not only a source for pride in their workmanship but has helped workers to become more confident in their ability to produce quality work and tradesmen in their ability to pass on their skills.

One of the fundamental differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in regional centres experiencing economic decline is that many members of the non-Indigenous population move to areas with better economic prospects, whereas the Indigenous population remains in situ. This means that the Indigenous population comprises an increasing proportion of the population in many declining regional centres, as is the case in Port Augusta, raising the question of how governments can provide a framework in which Indigenous people in these areas have an opportunity to participate actively in the labour market. CDEP provides an avenue to assist people who wish to find unsubsidised employment at the same time as providing meaningful work to people who do not wish to find such employment (Hunter, Gray & Jones 2000; Office of Evaluation and Audit 1997; Smith 1996; Spicer 1997).

## Recommendations

We suggest to all governmental and bureaucratic stakeholders involved in the CDEP scheme that the following recommendations be seriously considered.

- In order for CDEPs to continue to operate successfully, several changes to the way in which the scheme is funded and administered are needed. Recent changes to the funding rules mean that CDEPs can no longer generate wage surpluses. Such surpluses have allowed CDEPs to be financially viable. The government needs to increase funding to replace wages savings.
- There is considerable uncertainty in the level of funding received by CDEPs, which reduces their ability to operate in a business-like fashion. ATSIC should increasingly move towards providing three-year funding on a rolling basis contingent upon CDEPs having satisfactory business plans.

## Notes

1. This assumes that there is not a reversal of the current migration trends leading to a large in-migration of non-Indigenous people to the region.
2. As of 1996, other significant employers include Australian National Railway (about 40 employees), Optima Energy (195 employees), Port Augusta Prison (122 employees), Port Augusta Hospital (231 employees), and Woolworths (175 employees) (South Australian Centre for Economic Studies 1998).
3. Of the 310 participants only 17 are recorded on the CDEPManager database as being non-Indigenous.
4. A short questionnaire was administered to 35 participants. The questionnaire included questions on why the person was on CDEP, whether or not they wanted to leave CDEP for 'mainstream' employment and why. In addition there were questions on basic personal characteristics (e.g. age, gender, and marital status) and questions about previous work experience and what the participant was doing immediately before starting CDEP.
5. The two-days-a-week participants are paid according to the level of ATSIC participant wages funding. As of 1 July 2000 the Remote rate was \$194.58 per week and the Non-Remote rate was \$175.24 per week. Each participant receives an additional \$20.00 per week to bring them into line with the extra money work-for-the-dole participants receive. Other participants are paid according to the relevant Award (Industrial Relations Audit of Bungala Aboriginal Corporation 1999).

Bungala currently has participants undertaking the following traineeships

- Farming Level 2
- Farming Level 3
- Carpentry
- Clerical Processing (Office Administration) Level 2

- Clerical Processing (Office Administration) Level 3
  - Clerical Processing (Office Administration) Level 4
  - Small Business Operations
  - Child Care Aide Level 2
  - Child Care Aide Level 3
  - Construction Worker Grade 1
  - Construction Worker Grade 2
6. While there may very limited business opportunities for CDEPs in remote locations, these CDEPs often have no effective competition. This allows them to generate income. This, however, often comes at the cost of taking on the provision of services which are the responsibility of various government organisations, allowing them to renege on their funding responsibilities for Indigenous citizens.
  7. Altman (1990) drew attention to the problem of CDEP schemes having too many objectives and failing to achieve any of them.
  8. The wages of administrative staff can be paid from recurrent funding.

## Appendix A. Description of Bungala CDEP work activities

**Table A1. Work activities**

Division	Work activities
Construction work program	Building new houses Building industrial sheds South Australian Housing Trust maintenance Building repair work Shop fit House extensions and renovations Play ground construction Fencing
Office administration	Reception Pay schedules Filing Office administration Clerical assistance
CDEP works program	
Yard gangs (3 yard gangs)	Demolition and landscaping Rubbish removal Furniture removal
Wood gang	Fire wood collection
Work site	Equipment maintenance
Emeroo Station	Not active
Homestead Park	Grounds maintenance General upkeep
Arts and crafts	Arts and crafts production
Kitchen	Cooking
Brick machine	Not active
Davenport	Municipal services (rubbish collection, weed control, etc.)
Child Care Centre	Child care
Expansion projects	Vegetable garden Orchard Yard crew Art and craft Wood crew Weed eradication Building renovation and maintenance Revegetation Art and craft signage Fencing

**Brief description of activities***Works Program*

- Homestead Park, which is open to the public, is situated in Port Augusta and is a tourism centre that was previously run by the City Council. The centre has a collection of relics and several interesting historical items.
- The yard gangs are responsible for clearing and cleaning yards and assisting in furniture removal.
- The wood gang's task is the collection of firewood.
- Emeroo Station has been used as a conference and training facility but has no participants working there.
- A kitchen is located at Umeewarra (in Davenport) which provides lunches for participants and staff.
- The Art and Craft centre is used predominantly by female participants although there are small number of male participants working at the centre. All participants are engaged on the production of painting and artefacts and other craft activities.
- Bungala Workshop/Work site is used for storage and to carry out repairs and maintenance to plant and equipment.
- The Child Care Centre is located within the Spencer Institute of TAFE, Port Augusta Campus.
- Davenport community residents choose to work on the community and are responsible for undertaking various municipal services there.
- The brick machine is currently hired out.

*Construction Program*

Building and construction provides full-time employment for nine tradesmen and 20 apprentices and participants. The building and construction gangs undertake repairs and maintenance for houses owned by the South Australian Aboriginal Housing Authority within the township of Port Augusta and at Davenport community. Construction activities of varying dimensions, as well as renovations, are undertaken.

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