

# STORIES OF CHANGE

STORY #1  
OCTOBER 2017

## Toys Change Lives *Pathways to Employment*

### CHANGE

The Keeping Our Freedom Youth Indigenous Corporation has contributed to improving the education and employment opportunities for young Indigenous Australians in Casino, NSW. Since the Pathways to Employment program commenced in 2015 over 15 young men have transitioned from incarceration into an opportunity where they can gain skills, confidence and hope by learning woodwork to create toys and furniture. The Indigenous Corporation has expanded from a garage shed into an enterprise that has a shop front on the main street, a workshop at the rear for training, a marketing strategy and a website for the sales of handmade products internationally.

The program has received national media attention ([ABC NEWS STORY / NORTHERN STAR](#)) and recognition from the NSW Parliament. The Community Recognition Notice from the NSW Legislative Assembly stated that the program was “providing a pathway to a better life for young offenders”.

### SOCIAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS

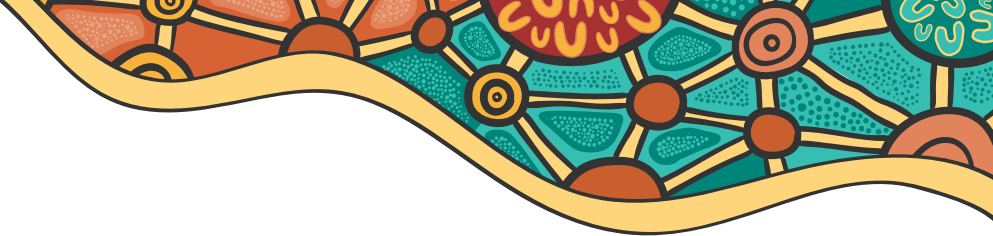
As a result of advocacy associated with this program, the Minister for Justice and Police in NSW wrote, **“Acmena Juvenile Justice Centre is supportive of collaborating with the Pathways to Employment Program in defining a formal referral process from the centre as part of a detainee’s exit plan”** (Letter to Mr Chris Gulaptis Member of Parliament for Clarence, December, 2016). Implications of this referral process may mean that the program is incorporated into the Juvenile Justice initiative to build **“an evidence base of ‘what works’ with Aboriginal clients to reduce re-offending”** (Letter as above).

However, this program can be aligned with existing evidence of what works to demonstrate effectiveness. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare produced a resource sheet titled ‘Strategies to enhance employment of Indigenous ex-offenders after release from correctional institutions’ ([Grafam & Shunkfield, 2012](#)).

**“ We don’t do something for them, we don’t do something to them, we do something with them, which I think is the big difference ”**

Pastor Pete Boughey





This table maps the program against the Institutes' criteria for 'what works' to enhance employment:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Criteria	Pathways to Employment Program	Met / met in part / not yet met
Programs incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices, particularly those involving Indigenous facilitators or traditional elders in delivery.	Program has three board members, two Indigenous and one non-Aboriginal. All are involved in supporting and facilitating the activities.	Met
Programs with a long-term focus (minimum one year) and a strong case-management approach. A comprehensive and personalised case-management approach can have a significant positive impact on employment outcomes for individuals.	Highly personalised. Not time bound.	Met
Transition programs that begin pre-release and continue for several months post-release, with clearly stated program objectives and individualised assistance.	The director of the Indigenous Corporation also provides chaplaincy services at the juvenile justice centre and has an opportunity to build rapport prior to release. Program objectives are tailored to the individual.	Met
Programs that take a broad approach to post-release support by tackling issues relating to social disadvantage as well as employment.	Board members are linked with wide range of existing support programs but arrangements have not yet been formalised.	Met in Part
Strategies to enhance employment of Indigenous ex-offenders after release from correctional institutions.	Training and skill development provided. Work routines and behavioural expectations are incorporated into the program.	Met
Programs that incorporate on-the-job work experience with other forms of support, such as mentoring.	Peer to peer mentoring and Elder to youth mentoring is the cornerstone of this program.	Met
Use of mainstream Job Services Australia employment services or specialist employment services for (non-Indigenous) offenders.	Board members are linked with wide range of existing employment support programs but arrangements have not yet been formalised.	Met in part

CFD and the Indigenous Corporation hopes that this program can contribute to the body of evidence around 'best practice' and effectiveness of employment services. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recognises that the area of employment services for Indigenous ex-offenders is broadly under-researched (Graffam & Shunkfield, 2012). CFD and the Indigenous Corporation would welcome an opportunity to collaborate with a research organisation to evaluate this program and enhance the specific knowledge for employment programs.



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - IN PRACTICE

### 1. Our understanding

With more young men being referred through the judicial system, the program was fast outgrowing its workspace. The program explored additional funding opportunities, including finding more ways of selling their products. The Indigenous Corporation identified limited branding and marketing as an area for improvement.

### 2. Engage and empower

The Indigenous Corporation approached CFD to assist and a volunteer with marketing experience was engaged.

### 3. Connect and build

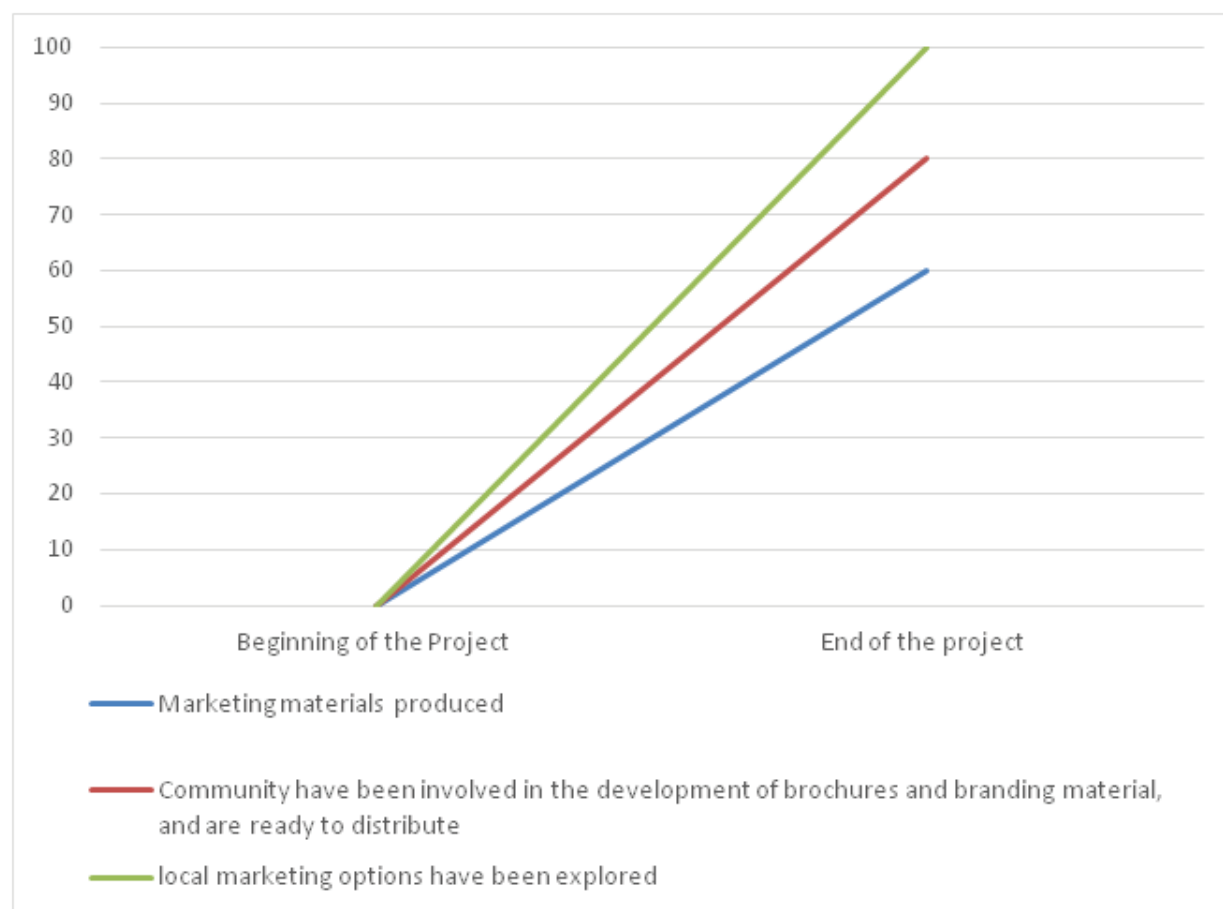
The volunteer, Justin, worked with the young men to create a [website](#), swing tags, and branding. This was a collaborative process as Justin sat down and helped them to come up with their own ideas and stylistic direction.

### 4. Design and deliver

Development of the marketing materials, including a [video posted on YouTube](#), has supported them to achieve their goal of expanding their workspace and becoming self-sustainable.

### 5. Reflect and celebrate

The marketing has generated interest from the media and general community. Youth representatives have been invited to speak at local community group events and this may lead to potential funding opportunities. ([Insights - Feature](#)).





## COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF CHANGE

CFD asked the participants to rate their progress against their own indicators of success which monitor short-term outcomes and their long-term dream. In this project there was a considerable difference in change. The community did progress towards their ultimate dream of a self-sustaining enterprise and a program that supports the development of young Aboriginal men through education and employment.

**“ I kept relapsing and needing drugs all the time. I’ve only been out for six months and Pete got me together. It helped me stay out of trouble; I’ve got something to do, I’m not out there being bored. I’m not going back there [to detention] ever. ”**

Participant in the program quoted in the [ABC NEWS STORY](#)

## CHALLENGES

Rapport building for the purposes of collaboration and team building takes time. This is particularly pertinent when working with Indigenous young men. It was challenging for Justin to develop trust and relationships but, fortunately, in this case he was able to create a collaborative team environment in the time available. The youth contributed ideas and felt comfortable to have input into the design. However, CFD in future will consider that additional time may be required for rapport building and trust development at the ‘connect and build’ stage of the partnership.

The major lesson from this project relates to the power of marketing to attract media attention and be used for advocacy. Without the website and video this program may have not received recognition from politicians, policy makers, potential funders and customers. A relatively small investment can yield broad impact, particularly when the program aligns so closely to best practice as documented by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

## KEY RESOURCES

Graffam J & Shinkfield A 2012. Strategies to enhance employment of Indigenous ex-offenders after release from correctional institutions. Resource sheet no. 11. Produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/c0e0c765-b79e-4020-9bf7-f477f0853403/ctgc-rs11.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

## KEY LINKS

ABC: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-25/pastor-helps-young-offenders-find-jobs-after-juvenile-detention/7781506>

Northern Star: <https://www.northernstar.com.au/news/pastor-is-changing-young-lives/3077301/>

Website: <http://www.tcl.org.au/>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJiBbm2UPoI>

Insights Feature: <https://www.insights.uca.org.au/features/pathways-to-success>





## COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT

### OUR VISION

First Nations peoples and communities are thriving

### WHO WE ARE

Community First Development is a First Nations community development and research organisation that creates positive change in and with First Nations communities.

### WHAT WE DO

We undertake social and economic development, and research projects in partnership with First Nations communities, businesses and people. Communities have control; they name the priorities and choose the design, assets, capabilities and approaches to achieve their vision. We provide tailored support through community partners, skilled staff, trained volunteers, key supporters and service providers



*We do things with,  
not to or for, our people.*

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