

## Responses to NIAA questions in relation to the implementation of ISEP

### Introduction

Kapani is an established employment and training company, with training and employment depots in Aurukun and Cairns. Kapani has delivered employment and training outcomes to indigenous communities in Cape York and the Gulf of Carpentaria since 2017. Kapani is one of the leading employers of indigenous community locals in Aurukun and has delivered a unique and effective employment and training model that incorporates community psychology, culture, language and partnerships with key business stakeholders.

Kapani works with the community to identify local unique employment and business opportunities that require similar skill sets, that trained cohorts can work across the business areas, to create diversity in the workplace and business. This model of pulling together a range of job areas enables Kapani to also be flexible to community cultural and clan issues, enabling workplace rostering to be flexible and be able to move rapidly with changes in the community.

Local workers attend the workplace in the morning with their team of five and are assigned team jobs across the business interest areas. These job areas include Mine Work, environmental work, consultancy, construction, and agriculture. Within the Kapani model, the aim is to develop skills that are transferable across the work areas, with emphasis on loader, excavation, truck and light vehicle ticketing. The business model utilises best practice health and safety procedures and these procedures are trained and reinforced uniformly across all the business areas.

**QUESTION:** How should the Indigenous skills, engagement and employment Program (ISEP) work alongside the new employment services model and the new remote engagement program to build work-ready skills and connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to rewarding, sustainable jobs?

*□ NIAA is interested in stakeholders' views on whether Indigenous-specific employment investment should target specific cohorts, transition points, regions, industries, barriers, etc.*

**RESPONSE:** Kapani has found considerable employment success in the utilisation of a trauma informed training and employment model:

In recognising the histories of community trauma, Kapani has created a 'trauma informed' training and employment management approach, that understands how PTSD impacts on workers and how best to manage, supervise and educate individuals influenced by histories of trauma.

Much research has been written about trauma informed management, but it is essential to adopt this style of management with a remote area cohort with histories of 'mission' institutionalisation. For the majority of the trainees, traumatic symptomatology is evident in the majority of trainees, either as a consequence of their direct exposure to

community violence, or indirectly through the process of transgenerational trauma. This symptomatology, appears to grow exponentially with age, and that, by the age of 35, significant symptomology is seen, particularly around trauma based triggering. Our experience during our training, is that individuals over the age of 35 tend to present with a greater prevalence of trauma symptomatology and comorbidity. Best training and employment outcomes have been seen between the 16 year nine month to 32 year age cohort.

Transition points: Prison release/bail program. Kapani is currently invested in developing the first Cape York diversion centre, with the aim of diverting Aurukun people from jail and ensconced in a facility that focuses on job skills training. This approach follows the recommendations of the 2020 Queensland Productivity Commission report. The Diversion Centre will become the hub of job and training opportunities with the current Mine operations, Automotive and metal recycling facility, agricultural projects, and plant operations training being conducted on the same 250 acre site. This site was negotiated through a land use agreement with the Traditional owners, and after ten years, the site infrastructure and facilities will transfer over to direct local ownership.

Regions: For four months of the year, the region is isolated due to wet season flooding, and the remote community is 11 hours drive from a metropolitan area. Employment and training operations must have significant on the ground resourcing and regular resource maintenance, so as to maintain reliable and consistent service delivery. Contingency plans must be put in place for any and every eventuality. This requires a significant up front investment in resources, so as to ensure effective service delivery.

Industries: Mining, Environmental restoration, Global warming agricultural shift initiatives, accommodation service provision. Kapani is currently invested in delivering, or developing employment outcomes in these areas.

Barriers: lack of community diversion options. Kapani is working with the TO PBC to build a diversion centre, that will become the main hub for the business enterprise, as discussed above. The PBC has significant belief and investment in this model, through partnering with Kapani to permit a land use licence to develop the site.

Currently, around 30% of all adult males in the community are currently serving periods of detention in custody. While this large absence of males from the community produces a significant loss of working age males, the periods of custody serves to imbed and perpetuate trauma based symptomatology and reactivity, which serve as a significant impediment to sustaining employment. A local diversion centre would provide an avenue for the courts to impose conditional bail orders and enable the individual to remain on country and acquire training and skills applicable to the local area.

Lack of relevant community infrastructure to support employment. Within the community of Aurukun, there is no clothes shops, shoe shop, tool shop, hardware, no means to pump a tyre up, no means to buy a tyre for a car, limited computer access, slow to no internet access, etc etc. These basics impact significantly on an individual's capacity to maintain employment.

**QUESTION:** How could IAS investment be designed to be more flexible and responsive at the regional level, and better meet the needs of the community for Indigenous job seekers and employers?

□ NIAA is interested in stakeholders' views on more flexible investment that builds on success factors and leverages partnerships and other investment at the local level, including partnerships and opportunities for co-investment with industry.

RESPONSE: Kapani has linked with remote area mining companies to assist their effort to grow their indigenous local area workforce. To that effect, Kapani has sought assistance from the Federal Government for contemporary machinery and equipment to train local people in readiness for jobs in the mining space. This equipment has included plant machinery, tools, and relevant infrastructure to familiarise locals and imbed competency on this equipment and those skills can be transferred into the workplace. Without relevant equipment and machinery, the local population enters the workforce without knowledge, which creates anxiety, performance reduction and perpetuates the cycle of failure.

Within community, participating partners could agree to resource share, particularly around training equipment. In Aurukun there are myriad resources locked up in shipping containers because services providers take silo approaches to service delivery.

Kapani currently offers an open use of facility to all employment stakeholders in the community, while government agencies will charge for the same service. Cape York Land Council, Health service providers, Police, the Traditional Owner PBC and many others now accept that the Kapani depot as a gathering place. To achieve the community confidence, Kapani has had to work with the community to create a space that is culturally appropriate, modern, and multiuse. Local people utilise the training space as a space to gather, have BBQ's, work and train.

The Kapani approach embeds trainers and instructors to live in the community. Kapani understands the ineffectiveness of fly in fly out approaches and as such, staff are expected to stay in the community and invest in the social fabric.

The Kapani staff are expected to embrace and grasp a basic level of local language. This capacity is seen to carry significant respect and facilitates capacity to disseminate knowledge. In order to acquire language skills, the trainers must form individual partnerships with local people, to assist with knowledge sharing .

**QUESTION: How should results of the new ISEP program be measured, monitored and evaluated to ensure investment contributes to closing the gap in employment outcomes?**

*□ NIAA is interested in stakeholders' views on how Indigenous-specific employment investment should be monitored and meaningful data collected and made accessible to demonstrate clear outcomes.*

RESPONSE: Kapani measures training and employment success across a basic three-point algorithm, drawn from a biopsychosocial model.

Reliability: Daily attendance, and on time. Attending with PPE and with an attitude to work. Signing time sheets.

Teamwork: The individual must demonstrate a capacity to work in small teams.

Typically jobs within the local area require individuals to work in teams.

During preemployment training, trainees are educated on what is effective teamwork, and how to contribute as a team.

Fitness for work: The individual must demonstrate a commitment to workplace drug and alcohol policy and physical fitness.

Kapani has found, that where these factors can be improved, employment outcomes are a natural consequence. The Kapani employment algorithm assigns three points to each factor, with a total score of 9. A score of 7 to 9 are ready for independent work, 5 to 6, require additional support/supervision, 3 to 4 require further training and assistance.

During pre-employment training, Kapani invests considerable effort in collecting the individual's basic identification requirements. This is a basic requirement for employment, however, up to 50% of our indigenous workforce, turn up for employment with no immediate capacity to produce the basic identification and work ready documents (Personal ID, Tax file number, USI and bank account).

**QUESTION:** How can we embed shared-decision making in community-based workforce planning?

- *NIAA is interested in identifying the opportunities for partnerships with appropriate stakeholders in the employment space, and how shared decision-making can be best facilitated, for example through community-based workforce planning.*

**RESPONSE:** Kapani has identified employment opportunities for local indigenous people through two approaches. Firstly, identifying the existing and emerging employment opportunities: Through an understanding of the existing labour market, Kapani is able create targeted culturally appropriate training that builds individual capacity to stream those persons in too employment.

And secondly, identifying potential employment opportunities through the creation of project management groups that entice non-traditional stakeholders to invest or participate in remote area indigenous community employment building. Kapani has created these project management groups in partnership with the Traditional owners, local non-for profits, and state and federal representatives. For example, Kapani has utilised the Department of Veterans Affairs to attract retired skilled soldiers to community to deliver training, Kapani is currently working with the Chair of the National Agriculture Board to identify emerging employment potential with the current interest to shift agricultural development to Northern Australia as a consequence of global warming. Kapani is working with interest groups internationally to identify opportunities for business development.

**QUESTION:** How can the ISEP encourage potential employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide safe and culturally appropriate work environments? How can employers better value the skills and perspectives of Indigenous employees?

- *NIAA is interested in understanding how all employers, including Indigenous employers and SMEs, can be supported to further employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.*

**RESPONSE:** It is the Kapani experience that those employers who have a good grasp of the Trauma informed management model, will achieve better outcomes in the management of remote community indigenous peoples. Prospective employers would benefit from understanding how a trauma informed management model is applied and how it benefits remote area indigenous populations.

The Kapani experience has also shown the importance of incorporating indigenous language within the workplace, particularly around safety commands, pleasantries and with positive reinforcement. This has tie in too the Trauma Informed Management Model.

Employers, when working in community, must take on a wholistic approach to staff management and investment in the community. The employer, where possible should be seen to be utilising local people in high visual community work projects, investing infrastructure and staff in community cultural practices, and being seen to be a community resource. An example of this, the Local Kapani trained loader operators are deployed during funerary ceremonies, to go to ceremony sites and clean up the area, in preparation for 'sorry business'. This is seen to be a high valued job task for the local operators and is seen to carry significant respect amongst the community.

**QUESTION:** How should the ISEP consider a local focus?

□ *NIAA is interested in stakeholders' views on whether defined boundaries required for the ISEP, or whether applicants for funding under the ISEP are best placed to determine the local region within the context of a specific funding proposal?*

**RESPONSE:** Having the flexibility to delivery training outcomes differently in different communities is essential to success. Training must be delivered with the knowledge of the existence of an actual job, not training for the sake of training. There is no point delivering a Cert4 in Permaculture, when the likelihood of a fish farm in the community is zero, while non-indigenous plant operators are flown in too community to dig trenches for building works.

Responses compiled by [REDACTED] Director Kapani Aurukun. [REDACTED] a senior psychologist with 22 years experience in project management in remote indigenous communities. [REDACTED] currently managing the Aurukun employment and training programs in Aurukun.