

From: [ISEP](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: ISEP Submission about Work Experience for Aboriginal Youth [SEC=OFFICIAL]
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Attachments: [Kimberley Echo - Traineeship story - 2019.03.19.pdf](#)

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From: [REDACTED] <ceo@hcshire.wa.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 10 September 2021 7:00 PM
To: ISEP <ISEP@niaa.gov.au>
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: ISEP Submission about Work Experience for Aboriginal Youth

Afternoon,

This email submission targets one element of the equation of shifting aboriginal youth to employment. In my view, the difficulties faced with education, is that there is no prospect of a job at the end of the education cycle in the minds of most that finish year 12. Families do not value education, because there is no planned outcome.

Without direct placement in a job; the incentive and motivation is lost within 12 months if not pushed by parents. The reality is that in many remote locations - jobs don't exist, so direct placement into what "appears" like work is the only thing to keep youth hopes and dreams alive (because they all have dreams of a future). I appreciate that "placed based" program variances and flexibility of programs is required in any successful program; yet from our experience, even that is too far removed from what a person needs to make this shift to a job. Without family belief structures and experience of employment, employment is not on the horizon of most youth. Working with individuals and what they want to achieve is the only way to be successful.

For this reason, we went into the Scholl and demanded they come and work for us. Shire was wanting to create a pathway, give 12 months' work experience incentive and then see what happens.

The Shire of Halls Creek committed to offer all students leaving year 12 in HC a "traineeship" for the next 5 years. Whilst COVID interrupted, we are still moving to this goal. In effect - it was a 12 month work experience program, as the majority of students did not possess the numeracy literacy skills needed to be trainees doing a Cert II or III. Even so, as a work experience program it created some unintended outcomes. The support in the community to give kids a job was extremely high, it changed the conversation from no jobs to a pathway to a job. The community did not mind what the work was, just as long as the youth took the opportunity. It's like opening a book to read; when you are not a proficient reader; you prefer not to. We had to shake that belief and demonstrate things were possible. This change generated significant interest among youth of the town (9 in the first year) walking around with Shire staff - employed. Was it real productive work? Most worked to their capacity, so in a nutshell yes. We encouraged youth to take up a role that they thought they would enjoy inside the Shire system - every Shire has multiple roles, so there are plenty to choose from.

Shire made sure we signed each up with the job network service provider first - paid them Level 1 Age grading under the LG Awards, so most received an annual wage around \$25k + costs, cost the Shire \$30k per person roughly. Recovering the \$11k, six month payment - costs between \$10k to \$15k per person is accurate. The challenge I would place in this submission, how many people could you employ at \$15k per person - compared to the cost of maintaining a JNSP network? Local Government is the perfect beast to be able to function in this space - make it attractive to LG and it will happen, particularly if remote is targeted. If every aboriginal youth was offered this as an option, the stepping stone to employment is provided, the one thing missing at present. It is a tool, as part of the total equation - but a very cheap tool in the scheme of things.

In the first year - HC had only 1 student finishing year 12 - and he took up an apprenticeship, so we offered the "traineeships" up to 25 yo's and filled the quota of 10. Year two, we had 7-8 youth finish year 12, of those that came to us - only one had the skills sufficient to make a "reasonable" trainee - but that has not stopped the process. Of those that were trainees most have progress to other options. Shire offered no guarantee of employment - we just open the door, but naturally, some have gone on to work for Shire, and do additional training at the Shire.

Whilst the 12 month "work experience/traineeship" creates a stream suitable for some youth - our experience here in Halls Creek has been a valuable eye opener to what drives the thinking of a young person when seeking a way forward after school. The aims were;

- Give a pathway away from high school; make schooling more valuable, capture them at end of year 12 (Oct) - give them 2 months' pay by Christmas, and they will be engaged for the rest of the period.
- Utilise employment/payment of a wage for 12 months to create incentive in the youth to seek more and to continue in the workforce;
- Made sure the individual needs of each person were met (was this what they wanted to do, did they want to change to other roles?) and there was real flexibility in shifting around; they got to see the whole of the business;

- They got to experience what it was like in the workforce, the roles responsibilities, the policies, the practice of a big employer - they were expected to comply with all rules as if they were an employees;
- Received exposure to IT, OSH, LG programs, office protocols - etc. all that is part of local government, but not normally your local employer. I think it was an experience they will remember;
- The trainees CHANGED our culture too. 10 youth in an organisation of 50-60 adults causes impact, mostly good.

The problems we face in HC are about shifting the employment talent pool in our town. In 2019, I believe the Unemployment rate was 47%. We know that approx. 30% of our population sit in a bubble under 15yo. In the next 10 years they will all be seeking work. The plans we must have NOW to avoid unemployment of 60% are not optional. The Shire employed approx. 15 road crew staff in 2019 when we invested \$6m in road plant (new roads crew), we conduct a Cert III Civil training program at our cost each year to feed this workforce, so far 16 persons have completed the program (most are now employed) and have established the year 12 traineeship program.

In addition, Shire has employed about 40 people FTE and PT across additional funded programs - grant funds. The unemployment rate was 27% (last time I looked), which is a substantive result, but still a long way short of the rest of the Nation and our aim of shifting the skill set and providing a pathway to employment of the 2-3 hundred youth under 15. Our future won't change unless we provide a suite of responses; target youth for experience "like" work, place youth in jobs for experience; give them some incentive and confidence and they may surprise us. Target training in skills that matter - in our case; machine skills suit everyone and provide long term activity in roadworks programs that have a 10+ year horizon minimum, and then into mining if that is their choice. Participants can see themselves doing this for a career.

Every LG across Northern Australia could provide 10 work experience places in a blink - so why don't they now? Maybe because they are not aware of the financial incentives that apply - but the kicker in this idea is the value it provides in creating a pathway for education and the fact that it exposes youth to work. In most remote locations - there are only very few community jobs available for youth. No Macca's, KFC or HJ's; no Woolies or Bunnings, where most youth learnt what work and employment was about. No avenue to that - means work experience has to be created.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Regards

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Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Halls Creek
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