# 1ST DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

# RECORDING: 06.11.2014 Lunchtime Governance Discussion

ATTENDEES: MC Michael Christie

 MS Spencer, Michaela

HV Verran, Helen

MH Harrison, Mike

JT Turnour, Jim

EO Elspeth Oppermann

JS Jan Salmon

LR Linda Rosenman

Matt Matt Campbell

CB Christine Black

PB Petra Beurgelt

TP Tejaswini Patil

TV Trevor van Weeren

JG Jackie Gould

A Ann

HB Helen Burns

MINUTES RECORDED: 1 hour 45 min 25 sec

MINUTES TRANSCRIBED: 1 hour 45 min 25 sec

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Transcribed by: On Time Typing. info@ontimetyping.com

*Note 1 Inaudible words indicated by ‘….’.*

 *Audio Quality: Mostly: reasonable audio quality. However comments via Skype and the comments by some speakers throughout were poor (inaudible/only partly inaudible).*

 *Transcript Quality (given it is only a 1st draft): Good.*

 *As requested, this is a 1st Draft Transcript i.e. it has been transcribed only once against the audio recording and has not been proofread, and is therefore not guaranteed to be highly accurate. Also note that the identities of speakers was often not known and some of the speakers in this transcript may not be identified correctly. However, this transcript is a generally accurate transcript of the recording.*

*Note 2 If identities are unknown they have been transcribed as:*

 *F? for unidentifiable female speaker*

 *M? for unidentifiable male speaker*

*TRANSCRIPT:*

*0:00:00*

MC Chris this is Petra. Petra works for the school of psychology and is working on projects on a whole lot of projects, but one of them is in Milingimbi where we’re working on water resources and Chris is our new academic straight from south east Queensland. This is Mike Perrison, who is.

PB …

MC He’s going to say a few words today about what he’s been doing but a lot of it’s been to do with the Tiwi Islands. You know where the Tiwi Islands are?

PB Yep.

MC And that’s Jan who’s a demographer, this is Petra.

PB …

MS Just telling Trevor the number to ring. He’s in Ramingining at the moment.

Some comments about telephone/technology.

MC Have you met Trevor?

PB Yeah.

MC Where here?

PB Yeah.

MC Oh, and .. with … and he and Michaela you know.

? Yeah.

MC I just keep reintroducing people.

*Some irrelevant comments*

MS We have Trevor and we have Julie in the form of her story.

? She’s not here to discuss it?

MS No Trevor’s going to introduce it.

MC Julie’s doing the working with the government to try and develop an engagement and coordination strategy for the government because they realise now that they need to be more accountable to … and need to do a lot more work coordinating. And so they’ve got a working group and developing a government wide NT government strategy of engagement and coordination and Julie’s been in Alice Springs for the last few days helping them workshop how they could structure it, how it might unfold. And I just got an email saying it was a howling success. A great relief to everybody especially me.

*Some irrelevant comments while waiting for phone to get through.*

MS/MC Hi Trevor.

TV Hello.

MC Hi Linda.

LR Hello.

MS We’re almost ready to start just waiting on the Skype people, and Helen who’s going to join us in half an hour.

PB Who’s Helen?

MS Helen Verran. Where is she?

MC She’s back from the arctic circle, she’s now on … at University Melbourne isn’t she?

MS She is. She’s going to find a nook somewhere where she can sit with her mobile phone. … at 1.30 so .. .interrupt the discussion.

MC I’ve got a meeting at two o’clock so I will apologise as well. … Can you hear us Trevor?

TV I can hear …

MC Yep.

*Some irrelevant comments about technology & weather.*

MC John Greatorex just left this morning, hope it doesn’t get slippery on the road… Near Gapuwiyak.

*Some irrelevant comments about weather & places etc.*

MS Hi Jim.

JT Hi. … …

MS The cameras here aren’t working.

JT But I can hear people.

MS We’ve got Trevor on the phone and going to call Ann in about 10 minutes.

*Some irrelevant comments about technology.*

MS Let’s start. Hello everyone, welcome back to the governance luncheons again. We’ve got a few new people today so might just start with going around the room, some introductions. Do you want to start Christine?

*Laughing.*

MH I’m Mike Harrison.

JG Hi I’m Jackie. I think I know everybody.

MC I’m Mike.

TP I’m Tejaswini. I’m from … school of Melbourne social work.

MS I’m Michaela Spencer of the Northern Institute.

PB I’m Petra with the school of Psychological and Clinical Scientists.

EO Elspeth Opperman … Northern Institute.

JS Jan Salmon Northern Institute.

CB Christine Black Northern Institute.

MS And on Skype?

JT Jim Turnour of the Cairns Institution Cairns.

MS And on the phone?

TV Trevor Van Weeran by the skin of my teeth.

MC Does anybody who’s new want to introduce themselves with a few more words or happy to just do that as it comes along?

CB well what else did you want?

MC A bit about your background, what you’re thinking to achieve, where you have come from, if you’ve got twenty five words or less.

CB Just … how you’re perceived and … …

Matt Matt Campbell.

MC Hey Mattie. Okay we’re just hearing from Christine our new academic from Queensland.

MS If you’d like I’m just going to say a bit about how the group started. I’ll do that and … ? A lot of people already know, this is our seventh meeting now but there’s some new people today. This group initially started out emerged out of an idea that, Julie Cathcart had who’s not here today. Her and Trevor and others had a …. They’d been doing a lot of work in remote communities in Arnhem Land and … governance, … around governance. And now working on a governance project but it just seemed to be everyone’s … and then they came to stay, correct me if I’m wrong in this Trevor. But they visited Darwin and came back to the Melbourne Institute for a while and everyone here was also talking about governance. So it seemed like there was a moment where it would be nice for everyone to be able to connect in with each other, … what they were doing around this similar topic but perhaps in disparate ways and forms. And different methods in relation to places etc. so it was sort of out of that that this was born. And we just meet once a month and share what we’re doing. Also working towards a book that we’re going to be, Helen will talk a bit more about later. … we’re working towards that over the next few months. that’s us. Do you want to say any more words about it?

CB Okay. With my background as being an Indigenous in south east Queensland and also a lot of history in this world, your comments about working out something … was surprising to me. And …

MS That’s Ann joining us. Hi Ann.

A Sorry for being late.

MC That’s all right, our new researcher Chris is just saying a few words to introduce herself or have you finished? no keep going.

CB So it’s surprising when you made those comments about the … new way of engaging with Indigenous people after all this time … sort of out government … But obviously it has been amiss. … my feeling is jurisprudence, Indigenous jurisprudence, so more … So now I’m interested in out of my last book I wrote about the last part of it was, how good health is a major part of … … interested in healing aspects of how people understand land as their healer. Rather than say the … then on the other side, with the coming of the …, represents … … From that the conversations with … has come this idea which is from the … to the southern uni that … techniques that come out of the cultural understanding of their relationship with the forests and the lands, and comparing that with my Kimberley associates who went to the Melbourne Institute for a workshop, how the stock, cattlemen now, Aboriginal cattlemen, instigate their cultural and legal understandings of how to interact with land and cattle, … there. But I’m looking at the actual understanding of the Indigenous jurisprudence of it rather than the usual … related stuff and the usual sort of stuff. Then out of that in Sali they have rabia courses, rabia … courses which are also I think they’ve developed a cultural history behind that, and recognise we have once talked about the cultural, like the whole history, of it being a more dynamic history and adaptation of the situation, rather than a continuity of what has been before. But it’s still has the core things of, how do you maintain culture and law in a dynamic natural just … society. So … understanding the … here. So we’ll … a comparative study which we hope to do with … … …

MS Great thanks. Do you want to say a few words …?

TP Well my interest in governance is purely from a theoretical perspective. My interest is in … writing on discourse, especially discourse power, and I’ve always had my approach to the welfare of the state so to speak, whether it is welfare or otherwise, has always been my analysis and always been my from a … theory perspective and so that’s what attracted me. So this might sound a bit shameless but I might still put that actually conversation with Elspeth, one of the evening conversations, she was probably she was winding down. So we had an interesting and robust conversation about how government in practices actually define knowledge. And we were talking about and I think in relation to Indigenous knowledge but that also extends to my own work on race, and nationalism. As well as my other interest is an … Muslim othering so how Muslims are constructed. What I try and do is I look at media representations of how for example, Muslims or other communities I are represented in … fashion so this is, the production of knowledge itself is deviance of; essentially this is the hypothesis. I have slightly moved away from that hypothesis I must say because in a recent paper I’ve argued that if you think about the public sphere in Australia and think about it in different kinds of spheres you can think about the dominance sphere so led by the… and the general xenophobic NT News, the Murdoch press media so that’s the more dominant discourse where there’s a lot of hue and cry, oh just a small thing happens oh, you know she is a Muslim, oh they must be a terrorist etc. Then there is the other discourse where all the Muslim and other community leaders are trying to … it and say look no, we are not radicals we are not fundamentalists etc. and then there’s the counter public which is just using all kinds of mechanisms to say we need to protest and this idea that we shouldn’t protest in this way, we should have only seven types of slogans and types of posters, is a way of exercises our own political will and recognition. So what’s the broader point of me telling this story. The broader point is this constant deviancy, this constant othering of maybe the Muslim and other minority communities in Australia has got impact on government policy and clearly we can see that in relation to Australian immigration, policy current immigration and I don’t want to get started now, most probably I’ll be arrested at the end of the day.

F? … lots of people are writing on that, I’ll give you the source of someone that is well known in that field so you get plenty of back up on what you’re saying.

TP Yeah so essentially that’s where I’m at.

PB Thanks. I … to the coop by Michael because I started in July August on a project which is evaluating the engagement of Indigenous communities so that’s all about governance so it makes absolutely sense to be here to learn more from you guys about governance and especially governance in the space of Indigenous communities, working together with government agencies and corporations as well. and I have a second interest in it because one of my other research areas, or one of my main research areas is … disaster … response, and that’s a space where collaboration of governments is paramount because so many different agencies and different … need to work together to … people being saved, in the case of natural disaster. And recovering fast from natural disaster. So governance theory is paramount there. And think also actually as I’m also passionate about people and government agencies and … and cooperation of businesses working together is because … . … was much collectivist … community orientated society and so I know, it becomes possible when people are working together and combining their strength. Something as entirely can, basically the impossible can become possible. That’s my …

MS Thanks Petra. So today yes sure.

MC Can I say one more thing. Don’t forget everybody especially new chums that there’s a blog and we invite people to write one page about what they are thinking and doing in terms of what everyone else is thinking and doing so have a look on the blog site and there’s a little manifesto that says who we are and what we think we’re doing and there are opportunities for people to just write one page saying I’m Petra and I’m thinking about problems at Milingimbi and how I work with government and Yolngu and this is what interests me and we can use those as ways of developing more writing or more thoughts and talks. For example, the one Trevor’s talking about that Julie did is already on the web and she did it as a blog.

F? This is Helen Burns.

? Hey Helen.

MC We’re just starting.

MS Good timing. Michael’s just … into Julie’s blog post.

MC Or into the blog.

MS This one’s actually not on our site, it’s something Julie wrote for another site but I sent it around to everyone on an email and there’s a few copies here if anyone hasn’t actually seen Julie’s story of being involved in the Indigenous engagement, sorry the IAS. And Trevor’s going to say a few words about that story. And the process of being involved and submitting an application to the IAS. Is it all right if I hand over to you Trevor?

MC Yeah anybody who hasn’t seen it I’ve got a copy of the guidelines which guided them in working out this application if somebody wants to have a look at those.

TV Yeah I’m as ready as I’ll ever be. Julie was a … to let me know that this piece of writing is pretty much a stream of … write up following the euphoria of getting the application finished with minutes to spare so it’s not a carefully edited constructed piece but kind of comes out of a practitioner context of work on the ground. And it reflects that practice. I’ve sent a few pictures to Michaela to put up on the.

MS Yes we’ve got a picture at the moment of Julie looking at the yellow post its on the wall.

TV Yes those people on the phone I don’t know if you can see it but Michaela can send you the URL that’s appropriate. So that particular .. has got three support members from the recently established … Aboriginal corporation at Gapuwiyak and we spent a week there about three or four weeks ago working out the AIS application and what we can see is after looking at it at a … of yellow post it notes and down below there’s purple ones and pink ones. There were three projects we were looking at and trying to match them against how we were interpreting the Indigenous advancement strategy bureau speak. And they were pretty .. and we struggled with that because we found some confusion. At the best of times I sometimes get … perspectives and targets and outcomes … mixed up but we really had to nail it and there were words that are, categories like program needs, gaps, target groups, … target outcomes, key outcomes from indicators, program outcomes, program areas, resources value for money, all these categories that we had to try and shape the idea that it was coming from the directors of the corporation something that we hoped could transition from the context of that meaning to be appropriate to some desk jockeys in Canberra. We did have to work and concentrate hard and go backwards and forwards. The second photo, can you see that one. That’s Julie and John Greatorex at the homeland of Marparu and you can see in the background the whiteboard, we’ve done a bit of scoping out. in the background would be application of Julie writes in her blog post, you know the … back and forth, to people like Mike and other Yolngu who were involved in the early stages of conceptualising it. and I guess one of the things that really struck Julie and I was all the things that it did to our heads over a concentrated week in terms of getting our heads out of doing the work on the ground to then dealing with these bureaucratic forms and trying to squeeze in the hopes and dreams of the … One thing Julie particularly focused on is the nature of the to and fro of thinking just another government program, they’re not going to stick to it they’re going to change in the next election cycle. And then at the same time trying to be positive and hopeful with the people that are … One thing she notes further down in her blog posts is she was struck by finally when we got the final submissions off, … she was struck afterwards by thinking you know, people all over Australia have that concentrated period, fi not six weeks well the last few hours polishing up their applications and considering the aims and objectives of their commitment method and theory behind what they are wanting to achieve in their various projects and various concepts. And self-evident, she was feeling that maybe what does that mean with all that consciousness happening around the same thinking, is that it … It was an interesting thought that everybody was picking up what they were working on, looking at it, turning it upside down trying to squeeze it into a new format for the Prime Minister and Cabinet and sending it off, and then sitting back with fingers crossed waiting to see what would happen because nobody knows, it’s like a black hole, a black box in Canberra and nobody knows what’s happening down there. We did receive a note this week saying people who were looking for money to start beginning of next year will be told something in December and people wanting to start mid-2015 will be told something at the end of February. That’s the only communication we’ve had out of there to date. Is that a good intro Mike?

MC Can I remind people that may not realise that this whole thing comes from a radical change of government policy in Canberra where all Aboriginal affairs were put into the department of the Prime Minister and they got all the money that they’d been giving to 150 different programs and put it into one box and said okay, you guys out there, it’s up to you to start to work out what you want so we’re no longer going to have bureaucrats in Canberra deciding your fate, it’s going to be you that has to work it out for yourself to make a plan. And so there’s a lot of really interesting rhetoric in there. Everybody’s making their plans and as Julie or Trevor was saying people are thinking, is this just a cynical exercise or does it actually make a difference. And Julie’s point is that whether it’s a cynical exercise or not, it just got everybody fired up and really interested and thinking maybe they are going to trust us to do it our own way. And Julie’s other point is that was happening all over Australia so there’s an object of governance that has bolted out of its stable and we’re just waiting to see what might happen.

F? I think it potentially brings up the interesting point Petra made which is you’ve got communities right across the country that have all been focusing on the application process and if you could harness that energy rather than everybody now sitting back and waiting to see who gets money and how much they get and when they get it, it would actually potentially make for a really powerful movement. But it’s like I guess whenever you put in a grant application you go phew, made the deadline and then you go back to what you were doing until you hear whether you’ve got it. and it would be interesting to think about harnessing a way of harnessing all that energy rather than just waiting for decisions to be made by some group in Canberra.

Matt Can I add something?

MC Yeah Matt in Alice Springs there.

Matt Yeah, … Tangentyere here. So we were heavily involved in the IAS process as well and seems to me that in practical terms a lot of the promise that came about from the announcement of the IAS and there was a lot of trepidation about when is it going to be announced, how long is the period going to be in which we can do our application, it was originally four weeks but stretched out to six weeks. Which an organisation like Tangentyere probably gets between $10 and $15 million dollars’ worth of money from the federal government to provide services, it’s a huge job compared to an organisation that just has one little thing and probably there’s some bigger than Tangentyere for who it would have been even more difficult. But two very interesting … took place as it went along. The first one was that everybody’s programs were extended for six months as of the end of this year. So rather than provide longer term funding agreements for people they said no we’ll just stretch them out to the end of the year and then … money will be allocated. Within the process what happens is … were told just reapply what you are already doing, essentially along the same lines as what you are already doing, that would be the way to go, so there’s a very interesting sort of change in practical terms that went along. And the other big change that happened is the surprise the announcement it was said that four years’ worth of money would be allocated in this round and half way through the application time everybody was told no, we will only be giving money for the first year. So that people had to write applications as if they might get four years’ worth of money but in real terms they’re actually only going to give one year’s worth of money so we don’t know what happens after that year’s worth of money is allocated. So it seems to me that partly what happens was, the grand intentions of the government sort of started getting a bit minimised, I’m not sure why that’s the case, but we went from a grand experiment down to actually not so grand. It certainly put a lot of organisations through a very complicated and difficult process, very difficult for us just Tangentyere can’t possibly do all of the proper negotiations for all the programs in that length of time, it’s just impossible, it was a huge task just to do all the work to get the application in. so it’s interesting that that happened and I guess the bottom thing is, that after we’ve done this and we’ve certainly put in some pitching so we definitely said yeah, there are some services that are not currently provided that we think would be good to provide and we’ll put that into our application. But that all goes into a decision making process which has no clarity whatsoever so that the whole government speak about transparency and access to information and good decision making and roles and responsibilities for us, we put together a thing and it just disappeared. So we have no idea at the end of the process how the decisions were arrived at. We will get presumably an allocation of money but it will probably just be for the services that we’re already providing. Our sort of specialty ones probably won’t get funded and we’ll just go on but somehow … our 150 programs have changed into the Prime Minister’s brand new experiment and it’s working its way around the land. I just thought I’d add that in terms of some practical things that have accompanied the grand rhetoric.

M? If I can just quickly add to that. From a Tiwi point of view the work we’ve been doing with Tiwi Islands training and employment board they’ve lost about $900,000 of program funding out of the 150 programs that have been collapsed. That have either been finished up now at Christmas time or June of next year. And we did the work to, which I’ll talk to a bit later, in terms of assisting … with their IAS application, and a number of those programs simply don’t fit into the new five priority areas. So we’ve been pretty imaginative in the way that we’ve written it up. But there’s no way known I think that they’re going to actually, that they’ll be funded, if they take a fairly rigorous probity approach to the criteria that will be spelled out for making assessments. And what I think we’ve also got to remember is that in terms of a change in policy this is occurring, so they’ve collapsed 150 programs, they’ve given organisations around Australia six weeks to put applications in altogether. The organisations that are already delivering those 150 programs all know that there’s been a $250 million cut in the Indigenous affairs portfolio anyway out of those. So I think it depends on where you sit. So if you’re an organisation that’s just set up, a new organisation, like occurred that hasn’t had a chance to put their hand up for some new funding I think it’s probably fairly euphoric. If you’ve been in the business for 10 or 15 years and you’re already been through the mill many, many times in applying for a whole range of different programs and permutations and prominations have changed in policy etc. a lot of the people in my networks are fairly concerned about where this is all going to finish up this year. It depends on where you sit.

A Ann from cairns here. Can I allocate your perspective to …?

F? Sure.

A I agree with the last two speakers so much … Matt. … Tony … I’d just like to add that the RTO I was working with developed their IAS application, this came at the worst possible time for them because they had to acquit funds that they know they’re not going to get again, because of the cuts, and that amounted to between $300,000-$500,000. And the what they had to do to acquit those programs clashed with the timing .. in this application so they’d be … desperate for help, they didn’t have any extra people on board from … their application. And the second point, I can’t remember what the second point was. It’s just that there’s no, not knowing what the assessment criteria is going to be for this and having to be very creative about how … … difficult task … never mind the risks of …

MS Ann do you want to call back? The line keeps dropping out.

A Bloody hell. …… .. pissed off with this technology.

MS Put a few expletives in and that will keep the line steady.

A And there’s just one other point that I was and I’ll be quick. Every cat and his dog was applying for this. I can’t tell you how many white organisations who work in the Indigenous space have also applied for this funding. … organisations that aren’t Indigenous controlled or Indigenous managed or Indigenous people and I think that’s a really interesting thing, who is going to get the funding again, is it going to go to organisations that are managed by non Indigenous people or not.

MC Yeah there’s going to be a lot of people that suddenly have no job, no funding, no organisation. No institution. There’s going to be a lot. Let’s hope it’s not us.

MS Jan just had another point.

JS I’ve sat on a number of committees where assessing applications I just don’t know how they’re going to make decisions by December given the breadth of the and the fact the criteria’s not very clear and you’re going to have so many people, different people with different understanding of the criteria. I just don’t know how it’s going to get through.

M? From a probity perspective, if the government’s put in nearly $5 million dollars out there and there’s no actual criteria weighted criteria against which they’re going to actually assess these applications that’s been put in the public domain, I wouldn’t be surprised if there’s some larger Indigenous organisations that finish up being substantially defunded actually taken to court next year.

JS …

MS Was Jim also involved in an IAS?

JT I agree. I was involved with the organisation I’m working with J… in doing their application. a couple of things. I agree pretty much with everything that’s been said. I think there’s we talked about it previously that there’s a neoliberal sort of agenda competition, and the like, … different processes. First you’ve got that you need the capacity for engagement so unless you’ve got the capacity to write a grant and understand government you can’t really engage it. so that … a whole lot of people … a lesson in how to work with … that may have good ideas and may be able to be worked with and develop up ideas, as people have demonstrated they’ve done, we’ve got some capacity to do that sort of work. The second thing in relation to that and it’s just about slipped my mind, was around the fact that, actually … three things. It’s actually about competing particular regions, rather work together and some of that went on within our region, so the institute that … was involved, in a number of groups that saw themselves as …, they might have worked together. And the third thing is, yes people have got enthusiastic around the government … competitive process, I think they’ve said they’re going to weight each of the selection criteria … But if you added up all the amounts of time and energy across all those organisations and people across Australia, it would run into billions of dollars. The Melbourne Cup stopping would be a minute impact on that sort of activity compared to the number of people who get funded. So this is … we had. … engagement. It does set up local competition when corporations there could be a better way to approach things and there’s no recognition of the way, the economics and productivity losses of all those people that have worked on something that will become disappointed and disenfranchised by the process.

MS I’m wondering whether all that work does disappear, though. Like when I look at these pictures of the ground up approach and working with people on the ground, putting all your ideas on post it noes working carefully, carefully, carefully, negotiating trying to build something. I don’t know that that will vanish. I don’t’ know but I feel like that’s building something that won’t necessarily just … money that doesn’t come through. That maybe that can also sort of siphon off in another direction or something that won’t be lost.

F? But I think that exemplifies the level of governance capacity that does exist on the ground because people are so used to having to do stuff so fast, and be able to as clearly as possible both articulate their own aspirations and then translate it into whatever the latest government speak is, in very short spaces of time and to adapt to a loss of funding commitment and then the insecurity of not knowing what’s coming next. While it’s incredibly frustrating I think also people have a real resilience because they’ve operated in that space for so long, in a lot of cases they’re quite clear about what their needs are and how to be opportunistic with something . so without wanting to put.

TV Can I just add. … started up talking about … Just another little back story. The photo with the three men working with Julie on the application, that … newly established corporation registered through … It was only a couple of weeks old when this letter came. And kind of like the first work … together. Two weeks later, a commercial group in north east Arnhem Land, Arnhem Land Progress Association, which is also an Aboriginal corporation registered with …, they run all the stores in the … and it’s been going for about 40 years, they rang up and said we heard you guys have got a corporation at Gapuwiyak and that you were thinking about partnering with us, possibly around RAGC work. And within a few days the CEO had … directed us to Ramingining and Milingimbi where they’re operating the RAGC program and had a few high level meetings with them and were starting to talk about strategic partnerships and MOUs and talking about …, one of the directors was saying, it’s amazing, we had no recognition before but now we’ve got this body representing us, that corporation …, now we can be recognised. And the IAS at this stage were .., because … black box somewhere, but yeah, this new opportunity came along which they got pretty excited about. because one of the … of the legislation that came through, pretty early on was that, nobody would get more than half a million unless they were a registered Aboriginal corporation. But for this group of people everything kind of lined up in a row pretty much.

Matt Yeah that’s true except if you’re a non Aboriginal organisation which they are allowed to be, a company … or something. One of the things that happened at Tangentyere is that we were essentially forced to go under Oric because we were registered under the Associations Act I think and if we didn’t go under Oric which is has much sort of more punitive clauses and easier to prosecute companies and organisations for noncompliance, than under the Associations Act. If we didn’t do that then we could see that we wouldn’t get any money. So … coming through was definitely doing an IAS application … so I think that’s. … the second point you said but was it the IAS that did that work, got people to think yeah I’m being recognised or is that the corporation?

TV No the incorporation actually having the body that outside agency like ALPA that actually recognised that … structure and go oh we can talk to these guys now. Whereas before they had their own Yolngu governance and running and working but they couldn’t be recognised. … And the last thing, the interesting thing that Oric does is it forces everybody to include either Aboriginal corporations or Indigenous corporations. So if you get registered under ATSIC you can be any kind of call yourself whatever you like but that is a bit patronising I think, having that …

Matt Yeah the people who we were encouraged to partner with … social services or Mission Australia they had no … so they can get IAS money without those extra conditions. … if they don’t comply, the provisions obviously can be held accountable for that much, harder for . it’s much easier for them to do the wrong thing and get away with it than it would be for an Aboriginal organisation.

MC But I thought we had the impression very early on that the whole thing was an attempt to weed out those middle non Indigenous organisations like Mission Australia and the Red Cross and try to get Aboriginal corporations set up so that they could be delivering their own business. So it seems to me that.

Matt I think it’s the opposite. I think that they like those organisations and they want little Aboriginal organisations to partner with them. So that the big non Aboriginal organisations provide the rigour and can train us a little … organisations to become confident. I think that’s really.

MC Yeah same point.

MH It’s Mike here. Just bear in mind that a key element of all this in terms of people being able to win funding along those lines, there’ll be fairly rigorous financial viability tests that they’ll be using so if you are a reasonably new Aboriginal or Indigenous organisation that’s only recently been registered without a substantial financial track record that they can check on you automatically go on the high risk pile.

MS So you can’t… any kind of credit rating.

F? … never get funded to have credit.

F? Well not for me. I guess it sounds incredibly negative. I guess the question is, is there any way that any of those negatives could also be looked at in terms of potential positives?

MH Well yes you could, and what you’d be doing in that instance, would be looking at and this will all come down to the extent to which … are going to be given some flexibility and a bit of capacity to think outside the box so they may have some very good applications from relatively new Aboriginal organisations that have put their hands up for IAS applications that won’t have a financial track record and will be assessed as being high risk but they may well be able to get those people together with other Indigenous organisations. So for example a partnership between the new organisation in Arnhem Land and ALPA, they’ll have a fantastic long term financial track record, they may well be able to get those two people together so that if they have a partnership in place the application could be rejigged to say okay, for the first year or two we’ll actually get these guys to do the work under ALPA’s umbrella and ALPA being prepared to support them to get up and running. If they’re given that freedom and that flexibility to do that. And the proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

JT Just to add to that I think the other opportunity is as is aid, there’s been competition within our region [Cairns] between some organisations. But there has been a lot of energy come into these applications from particular groups and if people are successful, there is always an opportunity to go and talk to your local … or Indigenous … about … approaching one of the things that I think was, we talked to regional Aboriginal organisations about, is about whether there’s opportunity in the wash out when we look at the applications across the region, and how … are interested in how they might link together across land trusts or … and there may have been gaps in what they … and they can go back and start talking about a place based approach to joining up some of the applications.

TV During our work we ran the local Indigenous coordination centre, the … department … asked me for some clarity I think. And there it is, everything is pretty much on the … website, we followed those rules and because it’s … we can’t … but at this stage that last push has been actually going down to Canberra at some point, to give a local perspective on the selection process.

PG Coming to it from the outside here, I think it’s remarkable that the government is not going to tell you any more, we are wanting you to tell us. What you want. Which I think because it’s a substantial amount of money eight billion. To basically give that control away.

MC the other thing about that, the opposite side though in terms of outcomes, if you look at the fine detail there, and it’s something like the environment, the criteria that they will be using is the number of houses that are privately owned by Aboriginal people on Aboriginal land. So that they’ve got a whole lot of outcomes that are actually quite opposed to the vision of some of the people that are putting through these things so that it’s a difficult balance.

F? It’s a typical neoliberal strategy and it looks like it’s opened but it builds into the code of the way in which you are governed, or choose to participate through, the way Oric governs you and through the way the IAS is structured and the objectives you have to achieve that code, limits what creativity you’re allowed to have. So it looks like you’ve got this flexibility but you actually at a fundamental level are controlled in how you use that creativity so you use it to the government’s benefit to achieve their objectives, and you have room to wiggle in that but not as much as you’d really like.

MC It’s all very … coding isn’t it.

F? Yes.

PB So what’s missing is to work out what actually constitutes success and what … can be achieved. …

F? …

PB Yeah so what’s missing is, who says how success is defined. Another thing I found interesting is, I get that it was changed from 150 programs to five programs and they are targeting different areas and it’s a place based approach. I wonder about those programs which specialise in specific aspects, which in reality in a community play out in all in a direction together. Someone here said they are also considering place based strategies. So from a governance perspective I’m wondering what’s the better approach or is that actually different approach which indicates both approaches in a way to bring it forward. And was it difficult okay, to … … what sort of strategies, what are the strategies that are successful in such an environment, how can you get hold of the strategies and say okay if the government … open how can we make it work and … … equal.

F? I think Jim’s argument was that using a place based approach was a way of actually counteracting the negative effects, these divisive effects, competitive effects that are involved in the way IAS is structured.

MS Unfortunately I’m conscious there’s still a lot of things on the agenda. And this sort of links into what Mike be talking about and this is … maybe we could shift over to that direction and say thanks very much Trevor for introducing that and to Julie for making her story available.

MC And we will with permission from Julie put it on the website for the.

MS We’ll talk to Julie about that.

MC We’ll talk to Julie about that so if we can have a look at it and start thinking through some of the implications. Thanks Trevor.

TV I was just wondering, Helen, what’s she feeling?

HV Yes I’m still here. What I’m feeling is how so many of us … governance.

MS Sorry Helen could you speak put the phone closer to your mouth?

*Helen gone. Comments about technological problems (not transcribed)*

MH Thanks guys. I sent Michaela circulated a couple of bits of paper that will hopefully give context to this. There were two documents. I haven’t done an actual document for presentation today, I’ve given you an excerpt out of one part of the Community Action Plan Workforce Development Strategy that I did for Tiwi islands Training and Employment board, that’s the one that just talks about the snapshot of the region if you like. The second one is a fairly high level cut of the Community Action Plan Workforce Development Strategy which is at the moment still in the process of being we’re chasing money to implement. But what I wanted to do was try and talk a bit more about the Tiwi Islands as a place. Certainly in terms of the ground up governance research project that’s been done here. And also from my knowledge of what goes on and what’s occurring in other parts of Northern Australia. Just to try and contrast some of the significant differences of existing governance arrangement son the Tiwi Islands to try and draw out the fact that there are already some quite well developed existing models floating around that have taken quite a different approach to what’s often the case in a lot of other Indigenous communities. So a quick walk backwards. The traditional governance arrangements on the Tiwi Islands, it’s one language group, the Tiwi Islands, it has eight land ownership groups, eight land owner clans, and four skin groups so the skin groups are actually amalgams of larger number of skin groups but they generally operate under the four broad groups. A bit of history is also important to understand. First contact that’s documented with the non Indigenous non Aboriginal world the Dutch actually visited the Tiwi islands back in the 1700s. it was reasonably from what you read a reasonably okay contact but they didn’t hang around for long. then the Poms turned up in the 1820, 1830s, to establish fort Dundas. It only lasted a couple of years because the Tiwi’s didn’t really want them there so the Poms decided it was all too hard and packed up and gave it away. The next level of contact came with the establishment of the Catholic Mission on Bathurst Island, the community now of Waranyunga back in 1910. Little bit of Macassan activity but not a lot, they didn’t have anything like the level of contact with the Macassans as occurred in East Arnhem Land and the Gulf Country. Again it was more about this really fierce capacity for Tiwi people to hang on to their country and they did that I think pretty well.

F? What about the sealers and fishermen? I thought they were also had a very early.

MH Quite hostile again, there was no ongoing contact with any of those sort of groups as well. That’s the important context in the whole deal. Population about 2800 odd people living on the islands and quite a few Tiwi people who live in Darwin as well. In terms of its governance structures, the Tiwi Islands has its own land council established in 1978, 79. So it’s reasonably unique in terms of my understanding of land councils across Australia it’s one of the few that’s actually one language group one land council. So it was quite tiny in that regard. The (Anindiwula) council on Groote Eylandt is the other one, they were established a bit later but I don’t think they’ve been anywhere near as successful in driving their own governance structures and a lot of that I think is due to history and what’s happened with the manganese mine there over the years. Just coming forward and in terms of this stuff, the Tiwi’s again were one of the only discreet language regions that had their own regional economic development strategy done back in the days when the NT government used to do regional economic development strategies in the early 2000s. and I was actually involved in helping them to write that all those years ago. So it’s a significant contrast compared to other regions. Also in terms of governance when ATSIC was around for those who remember the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Tiwi’s were the only mob that had their own ATSIC region, most other regions were an amalgam of a larger region and a larger number of language groups and from a local government perspective, they also, when community government councils were first established they had community government councils in each of the three main communities, Waranyungu, Milikapiti and Palankapi. And then with the advent of the shires in local government reform arrangements again they retained their own Tiwi Shire.

F? So were they …? Were they in the documents?

MH Those structures don’t exist in the NT. So from a governance perspective from a point of view of the historical stuff, I guess the important issues there is they’ve been able to very much maintain their own Tiwi identity and their Tiwi structures around this. Then moving further forward, once the land council was actually established its history.

*Telephone voiceover interrupting.*

F? Has the population been pretty stable?

MH It’s still growing. So the land council when it was first established one of its really strong missions right from the start was that the Tiwi people, as well as wanting to maintain culture and identity, also the Tiwi elders, leaders, the big men as they call them if you’ve read a bit of Tiwi culture, they were strongly focused on developing their own economic base. Their view of the world is they had their own resources, they wanted to maintain those on an ongoing basis, maintain their culture, maintain country but took the view that passive welfare and all of the stuff that came with that was something they wanted to control themselves. So if you have a look at that bit of paper, over the years what they’ve done is established their own wholly owned Tiwi organisations, so all of the organisations I’m going to run through now are either owned, so they’re wholly owned Tiwi organisations. They are beneficial either that the beneficial trustees or the incorporation, in their incorporations association, they all have a responsibility to provide beneficial benefits to the Tiwi people but they’re generally established as companies. So you have organisations like Tiwi resources, Tiwi enterprises, Tiwi Plantations, the Tiwi’s have their own forests which they were able to keep themselves after the collapse of a couple of the major managed forestry companies. They have 30,000 hectares of their own forest that they will begin harvesting now and next year straight after the wet season. They’ve struck a $200 million deal with the Japanese company Mitsui to sell that forestry product. They have Port Melville so they’ve entered into a joint venture with a Singaporean company called Esion. There is a new port now at Port Melville and that’s also been developed as an alternative marine supply base to service the oil and gas sector. They have their own tourism business called Tiwi Adventures. Again I remind you all these organisations are either companies with trusts and or associations and they’re all wholly owned Tiwi enterprises and the directors and shareholders are representatives of the Oklan… clans. Then there are a couple of other family trusts that have been established, one at Waranyunga and one at Milikapiti and these two family trusts are have been established to represent the land owning clan and family of the 99 year leases that were signed as part of the intervention. The money for the leases was paid in advance by the Commonwealth government so these family trusts have now been established and what they’ve done with that money, as well as being able to do some investments, they’ve also got involved in a range of economic activities of their own as well. A couple of others, there is a Tiwi Islands training and employment board, again wholly owned by the Tiwi people representatives of the Ok… clans. And I call them the second tier organisations so we have stores, takeaways, licenced clubs, three major arts centres and an arts network, Jilimara … Tiwi Designs and the Tiwi arts network that are generally associations and their members are members of the community that they’re involved in. Tiwi’s have also established their own Tiwi education board, the education board runs the Tiwi College on Melville Island and they plan over the next three years to take responsibility for the delivery of primary education at the two communities on Melville Island, under the Northern Territory government’s model of independent public schools. and will then begin the lengthy process of negotiating with the Catholics for taking over responsibility for primary and secondary education at Warunyunga which I think will take quite a lot longer to occur. They had their own health board a number of years ago which went broke and they haven’t been back to visit that. From a local government point of view they have a Tiwi regional authority, there are now local boards operating in the three major communities, and from a governance perspective the four skin groups are formally represented on each of those local boards. Interestingly the regional council is looking at splitting into parts, so one part would continue to run core local government services, and they are still planning to spin off a separate … to take responsibility for non-core local government services they deliver things like child care, night patrol, Centrelink agencies, the list goes on and on, so they can separate the two. I’ll spin along more quickly. Then there’s a whole raft of other organisations some of which are non incorporated, generally supported by NGOs, so strong women’s groups, strong men’s group, the delivery of aged care on the Tiwi Islands, that are supported by a range of providers including mobs like the Red Cross, Centacare etc. that don’t have any formal relationship with any traditional governance structures on the Tiwi Islands and they’re probably the bits, at this point in time, that people are most concerned about because they don’t actually have a home at this point in time so there’s a fair bit of discussion about those.

 So the broad model is, the Tiwi’s are basically with their own Tiwi owned entities they are currently worth around $300 million themselves so their view of the world is well, government’s nice but we’ve actually established our won structures, we’re going to run our own enterprises, we’ll make our own profits, and we’ll determine how we use that money to sustain and maintain our culture and those enterprises that are making money, we can invest in other enterprises to help them get established and/or other social or cultural activities that we see important. So for example, the Tiwi Education Board and the development of the Tiwi college is a really important priority for the Tiwi people. Many of the Tiwi owned enterprises have already been heavily investigating in the establishment of sustaining of that particular organisation so they’re not relying on government funding.

F? Can I ask a question about that? So how do they actually then fund the college for example?

MH It’s an independent public school.

F? So people pay for tuition?

MH And the Tiwi Education Board are funded by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory government to do that but what I’m saying is, that as most other private schools around Australia, they also have benefactors and the benefactors are these Tiwi owned enterprises that are also investing in the college. So they’re pretty well advanced when it comes to that sort of approach and that sort of thinking. A couple of other things, I’ve put a bit of a high level thing in there in terms of the community action plan and the Community Workforce Development Strategy. There’s two key governance priorities in there. One relates to the development of Tiwi boards to build their governance capacity around them being able to drive Tiwi workforce development and there’s also a strong interest there in developing supervision and management capacities of Tiwi people. At the back of that document is a bit of a snapshot of the Tiwi workforce and the big gap is around Tiwi people holding management and supervision positions. So they’re very keen to start a long term strategy to develop that stuff up. So that’s a key focus of the community action plan and the Community Workforce Development Strategy, as is the governance because what the Tiwi leaders are now saying and this is supported by the land council, and the skin groups, is that they want to get to the stage where they can effectively continue to build their own economy and get more Tiwi people working and engaging at all levels within those organisations. So in terms of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy application, I helped Tiwi Islands training and employment board put their application together, that finished up coming to about $20 million, there’s a fair bit of capital in that. But in terms of strategies around the management of workforce development capacities of Tiwi boards there’s about $450,000 in those over a couple of years to do that properly so we’ll wait and see whether that actually gets a gig or not.

 The other two quick things that are worth mentioning. One quick thing is the Tiwi’s have also entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth government to do further economic development activity. There’s an economic strategy being currently developed, supported by the NT government by Chief Minister’s. they’ve said that the Tiwi’s have said that they’re prepared to put aside 10,000 hectares of further land make that land available to the Northern Territory land corporation, enter into a long term lease, on the basis that they’re able to establish further Tiwi Enterprises that would develop and jobs. So that’s a bit of the elephant in the room at the moment in terms of how that might translate over the next few years. But I just wanted to give you a quick rundown on that because these structures are all corporate structures. They’re all set up as companies, or incorporated associations with beneficial trusts hanging off the side so they are very much living in the adapting their traditional cultures and approaches, they’re living in the broader world, and they’re using the economic leverage that they can get from that to spend on their own social, cultural and economic activities.

F? So Mike, this IAS bid, did it address job creation, all that sort of thing?

MH Yes.

F? Is that going to be.

MH That document basically we’ve written the IAS against those six priorities.

F? And it wouldn’t be competing with people who won the RJCP who had the contracts?

MH Titep are the RJCP provider.

F? I thought they’d lost it.

MH No. They. Titep were, are the RJCP provider on the Tiwi Islands. So they’ve got their own, Titep is a wholly owned Tiwi organisation with representatives of the Oklan… owned clans to sit on the board to run that show and that Titep now is an RJCP provider, they’re a registered training organisation, they’re a group training company and they also deliver all of the money management training programs across the islands as well as some pretty innovative literacy and numeracy programs from some of the old Commonwealth programs that have been axed, that’s part of the $900,000 that they’ve lost.

F? how did they come up with that approach to.

F? That approach doesn’t work. It just doesn’t add up.

MH What.

F? You’re saying all these things have happened. And yet you’re saying only now they’re talking about the people training into the jobs.

MH No, I told you it’s been around for 12 years.

F? Well you say this all stated in the 1970s. How come people aren’t already in those positions of management and running these things and why have they got a high, like, this unemployment, the welfare dependency and all that, why aren’t they fully employed? Because I mean it’s fantastic and it sounds like a hell of a lot of employment so why have they got these social problems? I mean, welfare dependency and unemployment.

MH If you have a quick look at the back page of this there’s a quick snapshot there of the Tiwi workforce. So at the moment you’ve got around about 600 odd jobs on the Tiwi Islands, 640 jobs.

F? Yeah but who’s employed in them.

MH 429 of those jobs are held by Tiwi people. 212 are held by non Tiwi people. And the 212 held by non Tiwi people are significantly held by people in management and supervision roles.

F? Yeah that’s the thing, the management and supervision, that’s when you’re running your own country, that’s when you’re actually in charge, not when you’re filling up the low levels.

MH Correct.

F? Now this has been going on all these years. I’m not criticising. I’m wondering with, it sounds fantastic all that development, but unless it’s in those particular positions. Why aren’t they all filled considering all the time we’ve had.

MH The reason that they haven’t been filled is even with all this work that’s been done over the years, Tiwi people haven’t and whilst there’s a strong understanding from the Tiwi people and the people working in those Tiwi organisations that they want Tiwi people working in them, it’s no different to most other communities. And in most other communities most of the positions of authority and management and responsibility aren’t being held by Aboriginal people, they’re being held by non Aboriginal people.

F? Yeah so therefore it’s not a success until they’re in those management positions. You can’t say it’s Tiwi run until they are in those positions. So what’s going on.

MH Because you’ve had all these Tiwi organisations now that are really actually got some clout and are starting to get somewhere what they’re saying very strongly through the workforce development strategy is they want to build their capacity as Tiwi Board members to actually start setting policies and strategies that will hold non Tiwi people that are in current management positions accountable for developing those approaches to build stronger …

F? But you’ve had a long time for that. We’ve been … since 20 years ago.

MH It hasn’t been done systematically.

F? So what drops off? Why doesn’t, like we were saying that 20 years ago you had to do that sort of. What do you think’s happened?

MH My personal view? There’s a whole range of institutionalised behaviours, racism if you want to use the term that’s still alive and well and kicking and there needs to be a whole strategic approach to change that. And one of the key things that we’ve put in here, is building the capacity of Tiwi boards to set and hold non Tiwi people accountable for building those things. And then starting to invest long term in those things, to make a change. Otherwise you’re not going to get anywhere.

F? Yeah. I’ve heard all this so much before.

MH And also bringing Tiwi boards together so they can support one another to do this stuff and I think it’s the same issue in most Indigenous communities.

F? Oh it is, it is.

F? Can I ask about the implementation plan? To what extent does that feed into the IAS bid?

MH The IAS bid is about implementing this.

F? Okay so the local implementation plan that was developed as part of Closing the Gap and all that, has just dropped off?

MH There’s still bits of it happening. But most of the local implementation plans that were done in the NT in my understanding, they’re all not much is happening with them.

F? That’s my understanding I was just asking you. There was all that activity that went into them.

MH I’ll just quickly the other thing and I’ll then shut up. The Tiwi Land council also played a role in the Indigenous Advancement Strategy application process so the TLC actually ticked off on the IAS applications that they thought were in line with the overall priorities of the Tiwi region so that will hopefully help to ensure that we’re not going to get too many competing applications from organisations who want to do stuff on the Tiwi Islands. If they don’t have the endorsement of the local land council they’re probably not going to get a Guernsey.

F? Can I ask a question? What is the literacy rates like on Tiwi Islands?

MH Not good.

F? I think there’s a link, I’m not … saying this but there is a link between … governance and literacy, I think that’s one of the reasons why we’ve been talking about … for 20 years. Until you get really good literacy, more than functional literacy happening in communities we’re still going to be … the same questions and issues in another decade or two.

MH I don’t disagree. Most of the board members of these Tiwi entities are now getting a bit old and tired. They were all educated in the mission era, they all have really good functional levels of literacy and numeracy, they operate very well at that level. the big issue are the kids that have been schooled in the last 15, 20 years, and their levels of literacy and numeracy are pretty low. But the big challenge for the Tiwi now is that once the forest starts there’ll be an additional 100 jobs in the forest for Tiwi people. When the port gets going there’s probably another 100 jobs there. So if you just look at the rough numbers there’s about 420 odd Tiwi people in the workforce at the moment. if you add another 200 jobs to that, that’s a pretty significant increase over the space of two or three years and there’s going to need to be a hell of a lot of work done to actually do the work to get people prepared and then support them into these roles and then sustain them in these roles over the next three to five years. So that will be a major task so that’s why we’ve put our hand up for some pretty significant IAS money to actually help this happen.

F? But aren’t they making enough money? You said there were $200 million or something didn’t you? Or companies worth about $200 million.

MH That’s what sits on their balance sheets.

F? But they must be making good profits.

MH It’s not recurrent income that they’re generating so.

F? Oh. It’s the value of the holdings.

Matt Can I ask something. Has there been any work done on how much is government money flowing into that sort of, … tracking money around the community, and in relation to the island?

MH Not that I’m aware of but they’re all private companies so most of the money has been generated from income that they’ve generated from their own enterprises.

F? That they would have to disclose … ?

F? Does the money go back in or go offshore?

MH First rule of regional economic development, hang on to as much money as you can and multiply it around the community so that’s what they’ve tried to do.

F? They do. I just thought they might invest.

MS Last question.

M? The second question. Just in relation to this … Aboriginal people in management and in other roles, I mean, there’s been capacity building programs, like did anybody do any critical research around asking those questions, the CEOs are generally employed by the board and I gather, the boards or Aboriginal boards, around some of those critical discussions around what decisions are made at the board level, around employment at the top level and how you bring about that culture, in a researched way that’s critically engaging those issues around racism and … and the like?

MH that’s an area that I’m interested in. I’m doing some research on that at the moment and hopefully will be at the stage where rather than doing a research exercise for a research exercise’s sake, if we get some of this IAS money we’ll actually be able to do it on the ground in the Tiwi Islands and look to do it on an action basis with a range of these organisations over the next couple of years.

MS I’m sorry about other questions but, people are actually starting to pack up and I’m aware that, I think Helen’s still on the phone. Is that right?

MH I’m happy to take if people have got any more questions or have a chat I’m happy to have a yarn.

MS Please can we … Some of us can stay if we want. We’ll grab Helen next time and she’ll talk about the process that we’re going to go through to be building … and the work she’s been doing overseas with a group similar to ours, and talking about our group, and maybe next time we’ll pack less in so we can talk for longer.

MC And Helen might actually make a little thing to tell us what she’s.

MS She might make a little video piece. So if you can hear this Helen I’m sorry.

MH The other quick thing is those documents I’ve given you aren’t for circulation please. They’re only internal documents so please don’t I don’t want to see them falling off the back of trucks. Please.

MS But keep talking to Mike or writing on the blog, continue the conversation any way you like.

*End recording.*