TTNQ INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
FEBRUARY 2012

Prepared for

Australian Government | Department of Resources, Energy & Tourism
CONTENTS

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND AND PROGRAM SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND
   1.1 A Brief Introduction 2
   1.2 The Purpose of the Evaluation 2
   1.3 Evaluation Methodology 3
   1.4 Acknowledgements 4

2. TTNQ INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM
   2.1 Overview of the Program 5
   2.2 Program Funding 5

3. OUTCOMES OF THE TTNQ INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM 7

SECTION TWO: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4. FUNDING
   4.1 Administration Costs and DEEWR Outcome Payments 8
   4.2 Trainee Wages Funding – DEEDI and QAS 8
   4.3 Mentor Funding 9
   4.4 Literacy and Numeracy Funding 9
   4.5 Funding and the JSA Providers 9
   4.6 Trainees’ Contribution 9
   4.7 Buddy System at Work 10
   4.8 Program Coordinator 10
   4.9 Award Wages 10
   4.10 Specific Skills and Qualifications 10
   4.11 Summary of Funding Recommendations for Future Programs 11

5. RECRUITMENT 11

6. CERT II TRAINING 12

7. MENTORS 13

8. CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING 14

9. PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS 14

10. JOB SERVICES AUSTRALIA 15

11. HOST EMPLOYERS
   11.1 The Cost of the Program to Host Employers 16
   11.2 Capacity and Intention to Retain Trainees 17
   11.3 Awareness/Knowledge of the Program 18
   11.4 Selection/Recruitment of the Trainees 19
   11.5 Cultural Awareness Training 19
   11.6 Mentors 20
   11.7 Would They Do It All Again? 20

12. BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE 21

ATTACHMENT ONE: PROGRESS REPORT 1
ATTACHMENT TWO: PROGRESS REPORT 2
SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND AND PROGRAM SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (DRET) - acting on behalf of the National Long Term Tourism Strategy’s (NLTTS) Indigenous Tourism Working Group - commissioned The 20/20 Group Australia Pty Ltd (The 20/20 Group) to conduct a detailed qualitative evaluation of an Indigenous Employment Program while it was underway in Cairns in 2011.

One of nine Working Groups implementing the NLTTS, the Indigenous Tourism Working Group (ITWG) has been tasked with identifying issues that are restricting Indigenous Australians from considering/gaining employment in tourism and hospitality, and identifying opportunities that will increase employment outcomes.

The opportunity to examine this issue in detail emerged in the Tropical North Queensland Region with the launch of an Indigenous Employment Program initiated by Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) in a unique collaborative partnership with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), the Queensland Government Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), Job Services Australia and local tourism industry operators.

The 12 month program was launched by TTNQ in January 2011 and completed in January 2012. The 20/20 Group was commissioned by DRET to undertake the three stage evaluation in July 2011.

1.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The 20/20 Group was briefed to undertake research and evaluation of the TTNQ Indigenous Employment Program focusing on:

- An understanding of the processes of the program, not a measurement of the outcomes.
- The dynamics of the funding arrangements.
- How the partnerships have evolved, developed and consolidated over the course of the program, including those with host employers.
- Any improvements that could be made to the program.
- Whether the program empowered the participants with the necessary work ready and life skills to seek, secure and maintain employment into the future.

The underlying purpose of the evaluation was threefold:

1. To provide a flexible process to inform the project while it was being carried out and assist TTNQ and its collaborative partners to improve outcomes as the project progressed.
2. To disseminate the findings in order to encourage the uptake of this type of collaborative approach in Indigenous employment in the tourism industry.
3. To provide a clear and concise report that can be easily disseminated to industry stakeholders through various communication methods.

1.3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

STAGE ONE
Timing: July 2011
Key Activities: Interviews with program stakeholders/partners
Interim verbal reports to DRET and feedback from DRET
Delivery of first progress report
Key Outcomes: Preliminary assessment of the challenges and issues faced by the program coordinator and partners. Specifically: understanding the processes of the program, the dynamics of the funding arrangements, the development and consolidation of the partner relationships, and recommendations on interventions, support and improvements that could be made to the program as it unfolds.

STAGE TWO
Timing: August, September, October 2011
Key Activities: Reiterative interviews with program stakeholders/partners
Consultation with program Steering Committee
Interviews with participants and host employers
Interim verbal reports to DRET and feedback from DRET
Delivery of second progress report
Key Outcomes: Review and evaluation of the actions taken based on the recommendations in Progress Report #1, and the impact these have had on the program; assessment of the challenges and issues faced by the host employers; further explore the challenges and issues around the distribution and allocation of outcome funding between the agencies and partners; feedback from participants; recommendations on any further interventions, support and improvements that could be made to the program prior to its completion.

STAGE THREE
Timing: November 2011, January, February 2012
Key Activities: Consultation with program Steering Committee
Interim verbal reports to DRET and feedback from DRET
Delivery of Final Evaluation Report
Key Outcomes: An Executive Summary of the two progress reports provided to date; a summary of the issues identified and recommendations on how they should be managed in the future in order to encourage the uptake of this type of collaborative approach in Indigenous employment in the tourism industry across Australia.

This Final Evaluation Report needs to be reviewed in conjunction with Progress Reports 1 and 2 which can be found in Attachment One and Attachment Two respectively.
### 1.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 20/20 Group would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the following program partners and individuals who contributed invaluable feedback and support to the evaluation process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
<th>PRIMARY ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRAM PARTNERS:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTNQ</td>
<td>Lesley Dan</td>
<td>Project Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andrea Fogarty</td>
<td>Project Manager/Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trevor Dan</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joy Harris</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEDI</td>
<td>Darren Barba</td>
<td>Funding/Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Don McLaughlin</td>
<td>Funding/Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James Humphreyson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aust. Employment Covenant</td>
<td>Leon Epong</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways to the Future</td>
<td>Susan Hardy</td>
<td>Training (Cert II)/Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Learning Workshop</td>
<td>Catherine McRae</td>
<td>WELL Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers Training Centre</td>
<td>Penny Clelland</td>
<td>Training (Cert III)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITEC</td>
<td>Leigh Pollard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVS</td>
<td>Veronica Killick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QITE</td>
<td>Sally Majid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neato</td>
<td>Renata Wall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JobFind</td>
<td>Clare Davey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOST EMPLOYERS:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diver’s World</td>
<td>Paul Goodall</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebel Hotel</td>
<td>Mandy Armstrong</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jean Lapthorne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raging Thunder</td>
<td>Chrissio Fulton</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Cat</td>
<td>Steve Davies</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shangri-la Hotel</td>
<td>Jae-Maree Lundstrom</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quicksilver</td>
<td>Tess Pinches</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nicole Richardson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novotel Oasis Hotel</td>
<td>Lisa Clarke</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passions of Paradise</td>
<td>Allan Wallish</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scotty Gardner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Club Hotel</td>
<td>Gary Ferguson</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairns Visitor Information Centre</td>
<td>Val Shields</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARTICIPANTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Shennay Mundraby</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Danielle Nye</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Raeleen Nye</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Patricia Newbury</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Rhasheda Solomon</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Noel Mast</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **TTNQ Indigenous Employment Program**

2.1 **Overview of the Program**

The TTNQ Indigenous Employment Program started on 5th January 2011 with the appointment of the Program Coordinator and first Mentor, and was completed at the end of January 2012. In its simplest form, the program consisted of the following steps:

**Stage One – Work Ready Training and Cert II in Tourism**

- 31 participants were recruited into the program, divided into three groups (two of 11 and one of 9).
- Each group received a five week, full-time accredited training course (Cert II in Tourism), as well as group and individual mentoring, numeracy and literacy, life and ‘work ready’ skills, and other associated workshop activities.
- The last week of the training included 2-5 work experience days with different tourism operators in Cairns.
- The training was staged, with Group 1 starting the five week course on 10th January, and Group 3 starting on 2nd May 2011.

**Stage Two – Employment and Cert III Training**

- At the completion of the initial five week training course, the participants were interviewed by TTNQ to determine the most appropriate employment options, and then placed with host employers.
- TTNQ paid the participants’ traineeship wages and the host employers provide on-the-job training and experience.
- Some host employers’ staff members received cultural awareness training as part of the program, but not all.
- During their employment through TTNQ, the participants undertook further accredited training in Cert III Hospitality or Tourism. Six months was allocated to the program to accommodate this training phase.
- TTNQ’s commitment and funding covered the participants’ training and wages for six months. The host employer was then expected to employ the participant when they achieved their Cert III qualification.

**General**

- Participants received ongoing mentoring and support on an as-needs basis throughout the program.
- TTNQ was the facilitator of the program and it contracted the Program Coordinator and Mentors.
- It sub-contracted the training elements to Pathways to the Future (Cert II) – which was also the designer of the program - and Cairns Training Institute of Australia/Cairns Training Centre (Cert III).
- The Learning Workshop delivered 18 hours’ worth of numeracy and literacy training as part of Stage One under its WELL IEP contract for the region.

2.2 **Program Funding**

The program funding was multi-layered and relatively complex, but based on the information provided by various stakeholders, it can be broken down as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Fund/In-Kind</th>
<th>Total Funds (inc GST)</th>
<th>Breakdown of Funds</th>
<th>Allocation of Funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>$231,643</td>
<td>$126,500 Wages for the mentor and project coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$56,363 40% of Cert II training costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,280 Cultural awareness training costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$18,500 38% of admin overheads and motor vehicle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$25,000 PTTF ongoing consultancy fees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEDI</td>
<td>Skilling Queenslanders for Work</td>
<td>$323,950</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80% of traineeship wages @ $9,500 per participant + GST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR via JSA Providers</td>
<td>Employment Pathway Fund</td>
<td>$46,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33% of Cert II training costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR &amp; DET via PTTF</td>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>$39,035</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27% of Cert II training costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QAS via Cairns Training Centre (and CTIA)</td>
<td>User Choice</td>
<td>$103,849</td>
<td>$25,143 Cert III training costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$78,706 20% of traineeship wages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Learning Workshop</td>
<td>In Kind</td>
<td>$33,480</td>
<td>- Numeracy and literacy training. Dollar amount is an approximation based on the total program budget put together by PTTF. TLW has the contract to deliver the WELL IEP Program in the FNQ region.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTNQ</td>
<td>In Kind</td>
<td>$36,200</td>
<td>$6,200 Recruitment of participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host employers</td>
<td>In Kind</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$30,000 62% of admin overheads and motor vehicle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Work experience costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$844,657</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Outcomes of the TTNQ Indigenous Employment Program**

The program outcomes can be summarised as follows:

- **31 participants started the program and completed their Cert II Training**
- 2 dropped out of the program prior to completing Cert II Training
- **29 participants were placed with host employers and started Cert III Training**
- 9 left the program prior to completing Cert III Training:
  - 2 relocated out of Cairns
  - 1 was unable to complete due to pregnancy
  - 4 disengaged with the program/were not ready for work
  - 2 did not attend their Cert III training
- **20 participants completed their Cert III Training and traineeship with one or more host employers**
- 8 failed to transition into on-going employment or further training
- **12 participants transitioned from their traineeship into on-going employment or further training.**
4. FUNDING

The key findings and lessons learnt regarding funding issues of the program can be summarised as follows:

4.1 ADMINISTRATION COSTS AND DEEWR OUTCOME PAYMENTS

TTNQ has acknowledged that the budget was put together with a certain degree of naivety, particularly in regard to:

- the amount of man hours required to administer and manage the program; and
- the DEEWR funding being subject to milestones such as the completion of Cert III training ($600 per participant), and commencement into employment post traineeship ($500 per participant).

However, it is noted that DEEWR was very flexible and variations to the contract were made on two occasions to adjust the weighting at certain milestones. These variations were made to reflect the higher than anticipated number of participants entering the program from Streams 3 and 4 - bringing with them significant or extreme barriers to training and employment – and the lower number of participants reaching certain milestones as a result. TTNQ might have been unable to access the full funding amount had variations to the contract not been made.

It was acknowledged that lessons have been learned by all parties in the design of the payment structures with regard to this issue, and should be noted by any future program facilitator/designer.

TTNQ effectively increased its workforce by 100% when it became the employer of the 31 program participants. As Streams 3 and 4 job seekers, these employees required a far higher degree of training, management, mentoring and administration than the program designer or manager anticipated and the original budget and funding structure did not sufficiently cover these costs.

4.2 TRAINEE WAGES FUNDING – DEEDI AND QAS

Under the funding agreement, DEEDI paid for around 80% of the trainees’ wages until they finished their Cert III training, (the balance came from QAS through User Choice). There was concern raised by some of the stakeholders during the course of the program that if a trainee finished their Cert III training before the six months traineeship was up and the host employer was unable to retain them, there would be no funding available to provide them with employment/work experience for the balance of the program. This situation did not eventuate, however, it should be considered a possibility by future program facilitators.

Another issue which came to light during the course of the program relates to the trainee wages contribution provided through QAS/User Choice which was budgeted at $4,000 per participant. In some of the participants’ cases, the TTNQ program was deemed to be a continuation of training, which meant some participants did not qualify for the full $4,000. This, again, reduced TTNQ’s ability
to access all the funding it originally thought it would receive. TTNQ could have checked with QAS prior to signing up the participants for the program to ensure they qualify for the full funding amount, but this was overlooked at the time.

4.3 MENTOR FUNDING
At the program design phase it was assumed the services of the mentor would be staggered along with the intake of participants, ie by the time the second group was recruited, the first group would need less mentoring and so on. The reality was completely different, with some participants requiring less mentoring and others requiring more intense mentoring throughout the program, increasing as they completed their Cert II training and went in to full time employment, not decreasing. The demands on the mentor therefore did not match the hours or dollars it was assumed would be required. As a result, TTNQ appointed a second mentor to assist in the last few months of the program, which proved to be an extremely positive move. However, it had to request a variation to DEEWR’s contract to do so.

4.4 LITERACY AND NUMERACY FUNDING
Literacy and numeracy training was provided as part of the Cert II training via the WELL Program, however it became apparent that many of the trainees required further training in this area beyond the 18 hours allocated as part of the initial five weeks. It was also evident that sometimes the need for additional literacy and numeracy training did not emerge until the participants started in the workplace and were faced with specific industry/technical writing challenges.

While literacy and numeracy was also part of the Cert III training, it would seem prudent to allow for some additional training funds to cover this issue on an as needs basis in future programs, although it is acknowledged that the need can be very hard to predict with any accuracy until the program is well underway.

4.5 FUNDING AND THE JSA PROVIDERS
Each JSA provider contributed $1,500 per participant to the program. The issue of perceived value for money was always going to differ from provider to provider depending on the outcomes of the participants they referred. In the case of ITEC who referred 19 of the 31 participants, the manager did not believe the program delivered value for money, but he acknowledged this was ITEC’s problem as much as the program’s because they should never have referred so many participants in the first place.

PVS, who referred four participants was willing to pay the initial $1,500 because it recognised the potential of the program, but the manager of PVS wasn’t happy to be continually approached by the trainees for all the extras and incidentals once they started work.

4.6 TRAINEES’ CONTRIBUTION
TTNQ believes that if the program is to be repeated, the trainees should contribute a nominal sum to their Cert III training, not just to assist with the budget, but also to get them to ‘invest’ in their own future, rather than view the program as “just another course provided by the Government”; and to commit to the term of the
program. If this proposal is given merit, it may also assist in reducing the resistance felt by the JSA providers about contributing $1,500 per participant to the program.

4.7 BUDDY SYSTEM AT WORK
The Steering Committee agreed that a buddy system at work was a beneficial addition to the program, and suggested ways in which the concept could be structured and improved (ie special training for buddies, a transition period between the mentor and buddy, etc). If this system is to be developed in future programs, additional funding will be required.

4.8 PROGRAM COORDINATOR
TTNQ’s Program Coordinator was appointed at the same time as the participants for Group 1 were being recruited. She therefore had to ‘hit the ground running’ and it is now acknowledged this had repercussions for the program. The Steering Committee agreed that in future the Program Coordinator needs to be appointed well before the participants are brought in to give her/him time to build relationships and commitments from JSA providers and host employers in particular. This will require funding to cover salary costs for an additional few weeks at the start of the program.

4.9 AWARD WAGES
The original budget was calculated using a standard trainee award wage, Monday to Friday, @ 38 hours a week for 26 weeks. The reality is that trainees in the tourism industry are sometimes required to work more than eight hours a day (especially on the boats), and more often than not at weekends. In other words, the budget did not take into account the overtime and other additional wages costs involved in working in an industry such as tourism, and this again impacted on TTNQ’s funding and cash flow demands.

4.10 SPECIFIC SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS
Another challenge was the lack of specific skills and qualifications held by the participants, although this was only evident in the more regulated sectors such as the dive/marine and white water rafting industries, where training in specific areas is mandatory; as opposed to non-skilled labour in the hospitality area.

One employer said the only real issue he had was that the trainee has no relevant qualifications or skills to be able to move up to the next level for a company such as his, and that basically makes him unhirable, however much they like him.

The employer believed the program would be more effective if, say, it identified the top ten trainees, established what type of career they wanted to pursue, whether it’s on boats, or in hospitality, and then spent the funding on really up-skilling those in their chosen field.

He also believed the program needed to better identify exactly what career the trainees want to pursue; it needs to find out what it is they want to do, not just give them a job in the tourism industry in general.
### 4.11 SUMMARY OF FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS

- Undertake a realistic assessment of training, administration and mentoring costs when developing a budget, taking into consideration the likely needs and challenges faced by the participants (some of these are addressed in the items below).
- Ensure funding payments subject to milestones are weighted to adequately cover upfront administration, management and training costs, and allow for a proportion of participants who may leave the program prior to completion.
- Negotiate the term of DEEDI's funding to cover the full six months of the program, rather than just the period of the Cert III training.
- Check with QAS prior to signing up the participants that they qualify for the full User Choice allowance of $4,000. This should become a condition of the initial selection process for participants.
- Include an allowance in the budget for the appointment of two mentors at a minimum for the full duration of the program (assuming the level of participants to be around 30).
- Include an allowance in the budget for any additional literacy and numeracy training on an ‘as needs’ basis once the trainees have started work with their host employers.
- Explore the options for reducing the funding contribution from the JSA providers (by increasing other contributions, or finding alternative sources); thereby encouraging a greater participation rate from the providers and a higher level of potential trainees to select from during the recruitment phase.
- Consider the notion of including a nominal contribution from the trainees, which should take into account that not all trainees will be placed with host employers during their entire Cert III training period.
- Include an allowance in the budget for the cost to implement a ‘buddy’ system at work (ie special training for buddies).
- Include an allowance in the budget for the Program Coordinator to be appointed prior to the program starting/recruitment of participants, so that he/she has time to build relationships and commitments from the JSA providers and host employers in particular.
- If the Program Coordinator does not have direct experience in or knowledge of the operational, funding and reporting processes of Job Services Australia, the budget should include an allowance to pay for a consultant who does.
- The wages component should be calculated to better reflect the reality of the long hours/weekend work experienced by many of the trainees. Tourism is not a Monday-to-Friday, 9-5 industry.
- The need for special qualifications should be taken into account when placing trainees in particular sectors of the industry (Dive Master, Coxwain etc), and an allocation allowed in the budget to pay for an additional training.

### 5. RECRUITMENT

**Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:**

JSA providers played a crucial role in sourcing participants and promoting/supporting the principles of the program. However the recruitment phase for each group proved inadequate with only the required number of job seekers referred to the program to fill
the available spaces, leaving TTNQ with no option but to accept all those referred. In addition, these job seekers were from Streams 3 and 4, many of whom had known health and social issues preventing them from fully participating for the duration of the program.

While the JSA providers were criticised for not referring enough job seekers to the program in the first place – and for referring some that were totally unsuitable – it was broadly agreed that the ultimate responsibility for the recruitment process lay with TTNQ as the future employer of the trainees, so it was in TTNQ’s interest to make sure it had an adequate pool of appropriate candidates to select from.

However, TTNQ identified a high turnover of case managers within the JSA organisations, which meant that maintaining awareness and support for the program was challenging. It was also evident that there was some hesitation from JSA case managers to promote the program due to negative or disappointing experiences with other IEPs in the past, and the relatively high cost to the JSA provider compared to other training programs.

TTNQ believes the program should perhaps be structured differently to attract a higher calibre of trainees. If the recruitment process was conducted through schools, there may be less Stream 3 and 4 participants involved. This would require a complete overhaul of the funding as the current funding arrangements through the JSA providers/Employment Pathway Fund, and DEEWR/PPP and IEP funds, stipulate that the participants must be registered with Centrelink and a JSA provider.

**Recommendations:**

- Future program facilitator needs to explore the funding options to enable the recruitment process to be facilitated through schools in addition to JSA providers
- Future program facilitators need to take a more active role in:
  - clearly communicating the desired outcomes of the program to the JSA providers, and the importance of the recruitment process;
  - building and maintaining relationships with the key JSA personnel throughout the duration of the program; and
  - the recruitment process itself, ‘weeding’ out those referrals it believes to be unsuitable for future employment by the organisation

6. **CERT II TRAINING**

**Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:**

While the initial five week training delivered the Cert II elements within the time frame, several of the stakeholders believed this stage of the program should be extended as many of the participants still required additional support with a variety of skills before they could be considered ready for full time employment, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, and general work ethics.

The five weeks provided the participants with a good routine as it was five days a week, full time and prepared them for the discipline they needed to maintain a job. However, when the five weeks were up, it could take another couple of weeks before TTNQ placed them with a host employer and this could be very disruptive to the routine they had
established. This appeared to be a ‘danger zone’ when some of the participants lost focus and were at risk of disengaging with the program.

While TTNQ contacted its membership base at the outset of the program to advise them of the process and encourage their participation as host employers, they were not followed up again, or actual traineeships secured, until the first group of participants had completed their Cert II training – hence the couple of weeks delay between completing the training and starting work with the host employers.

Recommendations:
Future program facilitators should consider the following additions to the initial stage of the program:

- The participants continue with social skills and other work ready training after the five weeks until they are placed in employment to ensure a continuity of the routine and discipline they have become accustomed to. The initial five weeks should therefore be extended to, nominally, seven, with the next group being deferred for a couple of weeks to allow the trainers and mentors to focus on the current group, so that there is a smooth transition between training and employment.
- The budget will need to be amended accordingly to allow for this additional training/mentoring period. This may need to include some additional funding to accommodate on-going WELL training/support beyond the 18 hours per person allowed for in the TTNQ program, which was delivered as part of the Cert II training.
- Alternatively, facilitators may consider an additional stage be introduced into the program which allows the participants to continue with some non-accredited training after the initial five weeks while doing some part time work, or work experience, to ease them more gently into a full time work environment.
- Facilitators should develop a database of willing host employers and job/work experience opportunities prior to the completion of the Cert II training to allow for a more seamless transition into work when the trainees are ready, and a broader choice of job opportunities.

7. MENTORS

Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:
The role of the mentor (or mentors) is crucial to the success of the program. TTNQ’s budget originally allowed for one person in this role and it appointed an experienced male Indigenous mentor, who was highly regarded. However it became apparent very early that the program would benefit from having two mentors for the following key reasons:

- Some of the female participants did not respond as well to the mentor as their male counterparts, which is not a criticism of the mentor; merely a reflection of cultural norms.
- The demands of his role were stretched well beyond his capacity to mentor 31 participants effectively.

It was also generally acknowledged by all stakeholders that knowing how to find the right balance between helping the participants to overcome their barriers while setting the appropriate boundaries so that they learn how to help themselves was a huge challenge, especially when each participant had individual needs and issues.
Recommendations

- The program budget should allow for a minimum ratio of mentors to participants of 1:10, or 1:15 maximum. If more than two mentors are required, there should be one female and one male.
- The program should include appropriate mentor training before the participants are recruited - specifically tailored to the program - to teach the mentor how to maximise the resources at his/her disposal (ie other support agencies, JSA providers etc), how to set boundaries and provide ‘tough love’, and how to provide participants with the tools and strategies they need to help themselves. Time management is crucial for mentors so they need to know how to use all the support mechanisms at their disposal.

8. CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING

Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:
Host employers were meant to receive cultural awareness training at the TTNQ premises as part of the program; however it proved hard to get employers to the training sessions, or to ensure they sent their most appropriate staff members.

In a work environment, cultural awareness needs to come from the top down, so that it filters through all levels of staff, and it should not be a ‘static’ policy or action – cultural awareness training should be on-going to ensure that existing staff are reminded/refreshed and new staff members are exposed to the issues.

Recommendations

- Ideally, cultural awareness training should be delivered at the employers’ premises to make it easier for them to attend. However, this needs to be balanced out against cost/time constraints.
- Cultural awareness training should be linked to an outcome in the funding contract, including the condition that staff members most needing exposure to the training in the host employer organisations are actually the ones receiving it (ie, supervisors/’buddies’ of the trainees).
- Host employers should be encouraged to provide an on-site ‘buddy’ to act as an informal work place mentor or just a central point for the participants to go to if they have a problem.
- Interest from host employers should be secured from the very beginning of the program – before the participants start their Stage 1 training - so that there is enough time and flexibility to ensure they receive adequate cultural awareness training before the participants start work with them. This also relates to Item 6, above.

9. PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS

Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:
It was generally agreed that one of the key ingredients to the success of the program is the collaboration between program partners/stakeholders. However, communication between all the stakeholders was not always ideal in the TTNQ program.

For example, in the early stages of the program some of the JSA providers felt they were not being kept in the loop adequately about the details of the program and the progress
of the participants, which in some cases compromised their own internal processes and outcomes as measured by DEEWR.

It appears there was also a grey around some of the roles performed by the designer of the program, who also delivered the Cert II training, and the facilitator of the program, (TTNQ), particularly around mentoring and host employer engagement. However, it was broadly agreed that this was an issue unique to this IEP because designer of the program was also a sub-contractor to the program facilitator. This was an unusual relationship structure and one that is unlikely to be repeated in future programs – and should probably be avoided - but does illustrate the need for very clear and visible lines of communication and defined roles for each of the program partners from the outset.

However the general feeling was that the program partners’ relationships developed reasonably well and most problems that arose were resolved collaboratively. For DEEWR to work with DEEDI on a project like this has also been a positive. According to a representative from DEEWR, the two organisations have worked together in the past but not at this level, and all program partners learned a lot over the course of the program.

Recommendations

- The program facilitator needs to meet individually with the JSA providers prior to the program starting to clearly set out the process, goals, obligations, funding requirements etc – both in person and in writing – so that the JSA providers know exactly what’s required of them in terms of funding and recruitment, and TTNQ knows exactly what the JSA providers need in terms of information, feedback etc. These clear lines of communication with the JSA providers in particular are crucial to the success of the program, and need to continue throughout the program.
- The roles and responsibilities of all the program partners should be documented and distributed from the outset so that all stakeholders know the areas of responsibility and there is no confusion over who is the program facilitator, coordinator, mentors, trainers etc.

10. **Job Services Australia**

Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:
As the program progressed, it became apparent that it needed to more carefully ‘dovetail’ into the JSA process and funding outcomes. For example:

- There appeared to be some unanswered questions around the final outcomes/ending of the program as it progressed: What happens if the host employer cannot retain the trainee at the end of the program – where are their support networks going to come from when they find themselves unemployed? Has the employer (TTNQ) been advised that it will need to sign a Separation Certificate to enable the job seeker to go straight back on to Centrelink benefits?
- Some of the participants were earning more than $1k per fortnight, which automatically exited them from the Centrelink system and, in turn, the JSA system. *(In one instance, the participant had exited from the JSA provider’s system, and the same provider had been asked to pay for some additional training required by the*
host employer, but it no longer has access to the Employment Pathways Fund for that particular job seeker).

- TTNQ was funded to pay the trainees wages for six months or while they undertook their Cert III training – whichever happened first. If the participants completed their accredited training units prior to the end of six months, the DEEDI funding ceased, and unless the host employer was willing to take them on full time, the participants would have been left unemployed. JSA providers get paid when the job seeker has 13 and then 26 weeks of continuous work, with minimal gaps in between, and the program ran the risk of not meeting this outcome.

One of the JSA providers suggested that future program facilitators should engage/consult with someone who has an understanding of how Job Services Australia operates. For example, he thought that it would be beneficial for the JSA provider to meet with the host employers who were going to offer their trainee a full time position at the end of their Cert III training, as they could assist them with wage subsidies and other support mechanisms they might not be aware of.

**Recommendations**

The program coordinator needs to facilitate meetings between the relevant JSA providers and the host employers while the program is in progress to talk about what’s going to happen when the six months funding has finished and what assistance the JSA providers can supply to the employers, which may not cover the cost of an entire wage as the program did, but will go towards giving the participant continued employment. The JSA providers can also help the employers to tap into other resources and networks to take over where the program leaves off (ie mentoring support).

11. **HOST EMPLOYERS**

11.1 **THE COST OF THE PROGRAM TO HOST EMPLOYERS**

**Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:**

Would the host employers have participated in the program if they had to make a more substantial financial contribution than the investment of time and commitment to the trainees? The results to this question varied but can be summarised in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVES OF PAYING A CONTRIBUTION</th>
<th>NEGATIVES OF PAYING A CONTRIBUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Host employers may be more committed to the trainee’s success if they are financially invested in that outcome.</td>
<td>Loss of host employers willing (or able) to participate, resulting in a smaller pool to work with, and potentially less jobs available, especially in a tight economic climate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host employers would want to be more involved in the recruitment process and have a broader selection of trainees to choose from, which may have a beneficial ‘flow-back’ effect to the initial recruitment of trainees into the program.</td>
<td>Risk of some trainees being rejected due to their lack of confidence and experience, ie not being given a chance to prove themselves because they simply don’t interview well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less money would need to be sourced from external funding.</td>
<td>Less tolerance and patience shown to trainees who may need a little more ‘hand holding’ than others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations
While there is some merit in the notion of asking host employers to contribute to the trainees' wages in future programs, this needs to be balanced out against the negatives. The final decision should be made on a case by case basis depending on the economic climate, accessibility of funding and other influencing factors at the time.

11.2 CAPACITY AND INTENTION TO RETAIN TRAINEES
Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:
The capacity of host employers to retain trainees basically came down to the general economic conditions in Cairns in 2011, with the state of the tourism industry definitely affecting the decision making process for most of them.

Their intention to retain the trainees, however, came down to a number of both positive and negative influencing factors, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVES FACTORS</th>
<th>NEGATIVES/CHALLENGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Effective two-way communication and understanding between the employer and the</td>
<td>• Influence of family (this was also a positive in a handful of cases).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trainee so that if problems do arise they can be resolved.</td>
<td>• General lack of work ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The trainee's willingness and eagerness to learn and progress.</td>
<td>• Unreliability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The trainee's growth in confidence which was been nurtured by the host employer.</td>
<td>• Difficulties with communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of work readiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inherent shyness/lack of confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of specific skills and qualifications (ie diver's ticket).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, it would appear that those trainees who had a ‘buddy’ at work (which was usually their direct supervisor, or a peer), seemed to overcome the challenges more easily than those who did not relate to their work colleagues as readily. While these are almost accidental relationships, and depend heavily on the unique characters of the individuals involved, it would seem appropriate to encourage and formalise a buddy system at work.

Recommendations
The evidence of common challenges and success stories were not unexpected. Similarly, it was not expected that all the challenges and issues were ever going to be completely resolved. However, they do highlight the importance of the following three elements in the program:

1. Cultural awareness training for the host employers, which should include the importance of effective communication in the workplace. However, this training must be undertaken by the relevant staff (ie direct line managers, or supervisors of the trainees) for it to be of any benefit
2. Work readiness/work ethics training for the participants, which should be extended as necessary for individual participants
3. The transition between the initial training (Cert II) and full time work which, for some participants, might need to be a combination of part time work and further training, to ease them into a ‘real life’ work situation a little more gently
A formal buddy system at work should be considered, which might include the following elements:

- Host employers to ask their staff who would be willing to become a ‘buddy’ – it must be voluntary.
- Buddies to be identified prior to participants starting work.
- Buddies provided with special training, in addition to cultural awareness training.
- Transition period between mentor and buddy prior to participant starting work, so that he/she gets to know and be comfortable with their work buddy before starting in the workplace.
- Host employers to put participant and buddy on same work roster wherever possible.
- Buddies brought together (ie a morning tea event) to meet, network, provide peer support etc.
- Buddies given priority access to program mentors.
- The implementation of the buddy system to be incorporated into the MoU with host employers.

11.3 **AWARENESS/KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROGRAM**

Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:

Some employers were fully aware of how the program worked and who was funding it, and were very comfortable with how they were being kept in touch with progress; while others knew little to nothing about the details of the program, except for the fact that it was being funded by Government and administered by TTNQ. This is not intended to infer that TTNQ had not kept them informed. It is just evidence of the fact that most of them had prioritised other areas of their business – especially in the economic climate of the time – and had not paid any attention to, or had forgotten details of, the program.

Everyone filters information in different ways, especially when that information is secondary to the day-to-day operations of a business. Those that welcomed and retained details provided by TTNQ tended to be HR managers, or those directly involved with the recruitment and employment of staff. Those that didn’t were the busy operations managers, or ‘front line’ personnel, who have other priorities.

While it could be argued it is not really important for the host employers to know every detail of the program, it is important that key details – such as how and when the program is ending – are reinforced, so that the trainees are not being told one thing by the program coordinator and another by their host employer.

**Recommendations**

There is no doubt that TTNQ provided this information, but it was not absorbed by several of the employers. There is never going to be a perfect solution to this challenge, but it highlights the need for lines of communication to remain as flexible as possible to suit all types of recipients, so that those who want regular and detailed updates by email can receive them; and those that prefer face-to-face meetings when it suits them, should also be accommodated.
11.4 Selection/Recruitment of the Trainees

Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:

While all the trainees were ‘interviewed’ by the host employers, they had, in the main, been pre-selected by TTNQ as appropriate candidates for that particular host employer, either because of previous/similar experience, or because the candidate had expressed a desire to work in a particular field.

The main lesson learnt in regard to the placement of participants was that TTNQ put itself under too much pressure at the beginning of the program. The Program Coordinator was appointed at the same time as the first group of participants started their initial training, and she had to hit the ground running, rather than giving herself time to become familiar with the structure of the program, talk to the JSAs, set up reporting procedures etc. As a result, the process to identify and secure the necessary number of host employers for the first group was rushed and possibly not as well communicated as it could have been, resulting in a degree of ‘mis-matching’ between participants and employers. In addition, the process of ‘selling’ the concept to the host employers on this first program was far more time consuming than it will be in future when employers know what to expect, and the right questions to ask.

Recommendations

In future programs the Program Coordinator needs to be appointed well before the participants are brought in to give her/him time to build relationships and commitments from JSA providers and host employers. Ideally, the host employers should be identifying specific roles/jobs for the participants to fill, rather than the other way round (ie the participants being matched to the host employer, who were then asked to find roles for them).

There may also be an opportunity for the recruitment process to be further built into the initial Cert II training than it already is, to give the participants real exposure to the process of applying for jobs and going through interviews. This would require the host employers to write ‘job ads’ and then get the participants to apply for the jobs which most appeal to them and attend interviews with the host employer.

The result could mean a better fit between employers and trainees, but it could also result in less confident trainees being ‘left on the shelf’, thereby damaging their confidence even more, and needs to be approached with caution.

11.5 Cultural Awareness Training

Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:

Most of the ten employers spoken to had sent representatives to the cultural awareness training, or had attended themselves. However, all the employers agreed that it was a good thing to include in the program. Those employers (or their staff) who attended a cultural awareness training session agreed that it was worthwhile – some more than others. The challenge for future programs is how to make the cultural awareness training as effective as possible, and as meaningful as possible to those who attend.
Recommendations
Learning about Indigenous history – and the effect it still has on Indigenous people today - is important; but it is equally important to learn how to communicate effectively and empathetically with indigenous people in the workplace. While this message is best imparted by Indigenous people themselves, it can be backed up, and made more compelling, by a host employer who has been through the experience and is willing to share his or her story with other employers.

Some of the stories told by the host employers interviewed for this evaluation process are everyday examples of what can go wrong - and right - for employers and the trainees. They are also tangible and real situations that most other employers will relate to and remember when they find themselves in a similar situation.

Wherever possible, it is also recommended to conduct the cultural awareness training at the host employers’ place of work, especially for the larger employers. This would likely result in more of the employer’s staff being able to attend, and the sessions could be tailored to suit the particular employer. However, all of the above recommendations ultimately come back to the commitment from the host employers and their understanding of the fact that there are some fundamental cultural and communication differences when it comes to employing Indigenous trainees.

11.6 MENTORS
Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:
The employers were unanimous in their praise for the back up support of the mentors and agreed that it made all the difference to the program.

Recommendations
The mentor role was one of the most important features of the program. This form of support, however, doesn’t need to begin and end with the program assigned mentor; nor should it be limited to support for just the trainees.

Mentoring can be provided in the form of a ‘buddy’ system at work for the trainees (refer to comments under 11.2 above), as well as peer-to-peer mentoring between employers. The transfer of knowledge from one host employer who has been through the experience, to another one who is just beginning the journey, could be an effective way of providing support for all the key players, not just the trainees.

11.7 WOULD THEY DO IT ALL AGAIN?
Summary of Findings/Lessons Learned:
Nine out of the ten employers said they would be very happy to participate again; and a couple said they might, but with some reservations.

Recommendations
Based on the high proportion of host employers who would participate in the program again - even those who had already decided not to retain their trainee – it has to be acknowledged that the fundamentals are in place, and the merits of the program are recognised. It is recommended that the ‘good news stories’ and
positive feedback from this program be utilised in the marketing and communications for future programs, as these forms of testimonials are powerful and genuine endorsements.

12. **Barriers to Employment for Indigenous People**

The following feedback was provided by the TTNQ IEP mentors when asked what the major issues were that impacted pathways to greater employment for Indigenous people. They are repeated here, in no particular order, as reference for any future IEP facilitators:

**Welfare:**
Fear of losing entitlements from Centrelink, which has become a security blanket for them. To become a trainee and receive a salary means giving up their entitlements, which is new ground for the participants and created a fear of the unknown: *What if I can’t get my Centrelink entitlements back?*

**Housing:**
No stability, moving from house to house, poor conditions, overcrowding, food and cleanliness issues. Housing issues made it hard for the participants to concentrate on the process of improving their life.

**Family Influence:**
The bond of family is particularly strong in Indigenous culture. Participants would drop everything to go to the aid of a family member. This includes Sorry Business, domestic violence, mental health, separation from loved ones. Family influence was one of the biggest hurdles when it came to losing focus on training and work commitments.

**Health Issues:**
This is a huge problem, particularly related to smoking and alcohol abuse, but also includes unsafe sex, and having relationships with fellow participants which caused problems and absenteeism from training.

**Communication:**
Lack of confidence, and the issue of ‘shame’. Feeling inferior when dealing with educated, confident, non-Indigenous co-workers. The fear of making mistakes and looking like an idiot. Lack of basic communication skills such as making a phone call to say I won’t be in today, or I’m sick, I have a family member to look after. Lack of phone credit often meant no phone call and then the participant would think it wasn’t worth going back to work because they’d mucked up by not calling.

**Lack of Driver’s Licence and/or Criminal Records:**
Participants often failed their driving test (several times) because of literacy problems with the written exam. Without transport they don’t bother to even apply for jobs. It becomes a vicious circle. Bus passes are no longer available through the JSA providers and became a major excuse for non-attendance at work. 90% of the trainees were affected by a lack of transport/mobility.
Having a criminal record can affect them mentally. They may physically be out of jail, but mentally they are still there.

**Personal Support:**
The participants had very little support and many think it’s them against the world. They put a lot of blame on everybody but themselves, and they won’t take ownership or control of their lives. They have a lack of life skills and communication skills.
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE NO</th>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>i.i Purpose of the Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>i.ii Stakeholder Consultations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>i.iii Recommendations – Immediate Actions for Current IEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>i.iv Recommendations – Future Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1. BACKGROUND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.1 A Brief Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2 The Purpose of the Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3 Evaluation Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2. TTNQ INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.2 Timelines of the Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.3 Program Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.4 Program Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3. INTERVIEWS WITH PROGRAM PARTNERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4. KEY DISCUSSION POINTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.1 Program Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.3 Stage 1 – Cert II Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.4 Stage 2 – Cert III Training and Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.5 Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.6 Cultural Awareness Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.7 Program Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.8 Outcomes/Likelihood of Sustainable Employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I.I PURPOSE OF THE REPORT
To provide a preliminary assessment of the challenges and issues faced by the TTNQ IEP program coordinator and partners. Specifically: understanding the processes of the program, the dynamics of the funding arrangements, the development and consolidation of the partner relationships, and recommendations on interventions, support and improvements that could be made to the program as it unfolds.

I.II STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS
13 interviews were conducted with stakeholders between 28th June and 27th July 2011.

Overall the response to the program was very positive with stakeholders agreeing that it was a worthwhile endeavour on a number of fronts.

However, some issues and recommendations for improvements were identified and are detailed in this report.

The recommendations have been identified into two categories:
- Immediate actions for current IEP
- Future programs

I.III RECOMMENDATIONS - IMMEDIATE ACTIONS FOR CURRENT IEP
The program funding appears to be working well in terms of the accredited training (Cert II and III) and employment costs, but has been underestimated - mainly through unanticipated circumstances - when it comes to three key areas:

1. ADMINISTRATION
   Basic Issues:
   - Lesley Dan, the Program Coordinator, is contracted by TTNQ and paid on an hourly basis. The budget assumed that her hours would be more concentrated in the initial stages, but would reduce to around 15 hours a week when the program got underway. In reality, the role is more of a full time position than anyone anticipated.
   - TTNQ did not take into account the full impact of the additional administrative work the program would generate for its HR and payroll staff. The organisation effectively increased its workforce by over 100% when it became the employer of the 31

"I think it’s been well run and has all the right intentions, but it needed more attention to the nuts and bolts. There have been lessons learned from the first program which will be valuable for next time round”

"Another benefit is that the program will have provided the job seekers with transferable skills and if they don’t end up with a full time job, we can at least market those skills to other employers or jobs we might know about.”

"Not only will they be better trained and experienced, but they will have learnt to become less reliant on the welfare system”.

“When you get State and Federal agencies working together and all the other agencies are on board, you have to think it’s a good program.”
program participants.

- The budget was put together with a certain degree of nativity in regard to DEEWR’s approach to outcomes. Payments are made when certain milestones are reached, but the administrative overheads and Cert II training delivery costs, for example, are fixed, so if there are fewer participants completing the second stage of the program it results in less outcome payments from DEEWR, but the fixed costs that have already been expended do not reduce accordingly.

**Immediate Actions:**

- TTNQ to do an urgent review of its administrative overheads, and expended and anticipated funding dollars. Based on this review, TTNQ to propose what additional dollars it may require to successfully complete the program.
- TTNQ to discuss additional funding requirements and variations to its contract with DEEWR.

2. **WORK READY / LITERACY AND NUMERACY TRAINING**

**Basic Issue:**

Several of the participants are still experiencing fundamental problems with their work-readiness after the initial five week Cert II training, particularly in the area of literacy and numeracy. Feedback suggested that Groups 2 and 3 would benefit from further WELL training and support during their Cert III training, which Group 1 has already completed.

**Immediate Actions:**

- The Learning Workshop (TLW) to meet with Careers Training Centre (CTC) to review the participants’ progress in Cert III training, review the syllabus and ascertain what reading and writing/numeracy skills each individual might need to help them finish their qualification.
- Establish the hours/dollars required to deliver the additional training.
- If TLW was to deliver further training as part of the Cert III course, TTNQ would need to discuss the best approach to funding with DEEWR as TLW would not be able to deliver it under its existing WELL IEP contract.

2. **MENTORING / HOST EMPLOYER SUPPORT / TROUBLESHOOTING**

**Basic Issues:**

- The ratio of one mentor to 31 participants is too high and the demands of the mentor’s role are stretched beyond his capacity. This is having an adverse effect on the progress of some of the participants.
- Susan Hardy from Pathways to the Future (PTTF) is currently paid $1,250 a month consultancy retainer as a ‘troubleshooter’, assisting with trainees who are having difficulties, and supporting the host employers. This fee does not cover the hours that Susan is currently putting in working with the trainees on a one-on-one basis, but like everyone else she is doing it anyway, because her motivation is to see them succeed and to get them through the training and into long term employment.
Immediate Actions:
- TTNQ to review the need for additional funding for a second mentor as part of the overall budget/funding review.
- As part of this review, clearly define the roles of the individuals contracted by TTNQ: ie mentor, ‘troubleshooter’, program coordinator, host employer engagement, HR support, etc, and estimate the hours/funding required to fulfill these roles.
- Should it be established that additional funds are required for a second mentor or any of the other roles, TTNQ to discuss a variation to its contract with DEEWR.

Other Immediate Actions Not Related to Funding

Basic Issues:
- There appear to be some unanswered questions around the final outcomes/ending of the program. For example, some of the participants are earning more than $1,000 per fortnight, which automatically exits them from the Centrelink system and, in turn, the JSA system. What happens if the host employer cannot retain the trainee at the end of the program – where are their support networks going to come from when they find themselves unemployed? Has the employer been advised that he/she will need to sign a Separation Certificate to enable the job seeker to go straight back on to Centrelink benefits?
- The program was deliberately timed so that the majority of participants were working with their host employers to coincide with the peak of the tourism season (June to September) when there would have been more traineeship and employment opportunities available. However, with the best will in the world, no one could have foreseen the downturn in the tourism market in Cairns in 2011 caused in part by the rising Australian dollar, Cyclone Yasi, and the Queensland floods. In a more buoyant market, there are more likely to be long term positions available to the trainees at the end of the program than will realistically occur this year. Should the long term employment outcomes of this program not be as successful as hoped, the health of the tourism industry should be taken into consideration as an influencing factor. This issue will be explored in more detail in the next phase of the evaluation process.

Immediate Actions:
TTNQ should be facilitating meetings between the relevant JSA providers and the host employers now to talk about what’s going to happen when the traineeship funding has finished, and which employers are likely to retain the trainees into full time positions. The JSAs can provide advice and assistance to the employers which may not cover the cost of an entire wage as the program is currently doing, but will go towards giving the participant continued employment if required. The JSA providers can also help the employers to tap into other resources and networks to take over where the program leaves off (ie mentoring support).

Recommendations - Future Programs
Recommendations on improvements to the program should it be repeated, or replicated elsewhere, are detailed in Section 4 of this report.
These recommendations relate to the following program elements:

- The recruitment process
- The transition between Stage 1 (Cert II and work ready training) and Stage 2 (Cert III and employment)
- The mentor
- Cultural awareness training for host employers
- Communication between program partners
1. BACKGROUND

1.1 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (DRET) - acting on behalf of the National Long Term Tourism Strategy’s (NLLTS) Indigenous Tourism Working Group - commissioned The 20/20 Group Australia Pty Ltd (The 20/20 Group) to conduct a detailed qualitative evaluation of an Indigenous Employment Program while it was underway in Cairns in 2011.

One of nine Working Groups implementing the NLTTS, the Indigenous Tourism Working Group (ITWG) has been tasked with identifying issues that are restricting Indigenous Australians from considering/gaining employment in tourism and hospitality, and identifying opportunities that will increase employment outcomes.

The opportunity to examine this issue in detail emerged in the Tropical North Queensland Region with the launch of an Indigenous Employment Program initiated by Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) in a unique collaborative partnership with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), the Queensland Government Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), Job Services Australia and local tourism industry operators.

The 12 month program was launched by TTNQ in January 2011, and The 20/20 Group was commissioned by DRET to undertake the evaluation in July 2011.

1.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The 20/20 Group was briefed to undertake research and evaluation of the TTNQ Indigenous Employment Program focusing on, but not necessarily limited to the following elements:

- The establishment of the cooperative partnerships and funding agreements required for the project.
- The recruitment of Indigenous job seekers.
- The suitability of identified positions and appropriateness of training.
- The retention and mentoring of trainees.
- The engagement with potential employers.

The underlying purpose of the evaluation is threefold:
1. To provide a flexible process to inform the project while it was being carried out and assist TTNQ and its collaborative partners to improve outcomes as the project progressed.
2. To disseminate the findings in order to encourage the uptake of this type of collaborative approach in Indigenous employment in the tourism industry.
3. To provide a clear and concise report that can be easily disseminated to industry stakeholders through various communication methods.

1.3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

At the time of writing this progress report, the evaluation methodology was broken down into three core phases as follows:
PHASE ONE (CONFIRMED):
Timing: July 2011
Key Activities: Interviews with program stakeholders/partners
First monthly report via phone (13th July 2011)
Deliver first progress report (29th July 2011)
Key Outcomes: Preliminary assessment of the challenges and issues faced by
the program coordinator and partners. Specifically:
understanding the processes of the program, the dynamics of
the funding arrangements, the development and consolidation of
the partner relationships, and recommendations on
interventions, support and improvements that could be made to
the program as it unfolds.

PHASE TWO (TO BE CONFIRMED):
Timing: August, September, October 2011
Key Activities: Reiterative interviews with program stakeholders/partners
Interviews with participants and employers
Second monthly report via phone (13th August 2011)
Third monthly report via phone (13th September 2011)
Fourth monthly report via phone (13th October 2011)
Deliver second progress report (31st October 2011)

PHASE THREE (TO BE CONFIRMED):
Timing: November 2011 to March 2012
Key Activities: Reiterative interviews with program stakeholders/partners,
participants and employers
Fifth monthly report via phone (13th November 2011)
Sixth monthly report via phone (13th December 2011)
Seventh monthly report via phone (13th January 2012)
Deliver draft evaluation report (20th February 2012)
Deliver final evaluation report (2nd April 2012)

This document is the first progress report, delivered at the completion of Phase
One. The methodologies and key outcomes for Phase Two will be confirmed with
DRET following a review of this report.
2. TTNQ INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

The TTNQ Indigenous Employment Program started on 5th January 2011 with the appointment of the Program Coordinator and Mentor, and will be completed by 20th January 2012 when the final progress report is due.

In its simplest form, the program consists of the following steps:

STAGE ONE – WORK READY TRAINING AND CERT II IN TOURISM

- 31 participants were recruited into the program, divided into three groups (two of 11 and one of 9).
- Each group received a five week, full-time accredited training course (Cert II in Tourism), as well as group and individual mentoring, numeracy and literacy, life and ‘work ready’ skills, and other associated workshop activities.
- The last week of the training included 2-5 work experience days with different tourism operators in Cairns.
- The training was staged, with Group 1 starting the five week course on 10th January, and Group 3 starting on 2nd May 2011.

STAGE TWO – EMPLOYMENT AND CERT III TRAINING

- At the completion of the initial five week training course, the participants were interviewed by TTNQ to determine the most appropriate employment options, and then placed with ‘host employers’.
- TTNQ pay the participants’ traineeship wages and the host employers provide on-the-job training and experience.
- Some host employers’ staff members have received cultural awareness training as part of the program, but not all.
- During their employment through TTNQ, the participants have been undergoing further accredited training in Cert III Hospitality or Tourism. Six months has been allocated to the program to accommodate this training phase.
- TTNQ’s commitment and funding covers the participants’ training and wages for six months. The host employer is then expected to employ the participant when they achieve their Cert III qualification. Group 1 was just reaching this milestone at the time of writing this report.

GENERAL

- Participants have been receiving ongoing mentoring and support on an as-needed basis throughout the program.
- TTNQ is the facilitator of the program and contracted the Program Coordinator and Mentor. It sub-contracted the training elements to Pathways to the Future (Cert II) and Cairns Training Institute of Australia/Cairns Training Centre (Cert III).
- The Learning Workshop delivered 18 hours’ worth of numeracy and literacy training as part of Stage One under its WELL IEP contract for the region.
### 2.2 Timelines of the Program

Based on the June 2011 report provided to DEEDI by TTNQ, the following chart sets out the timing for each of the three groups through Stages One and Two of the program:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Coordinator and Mentor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment for Group 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1, Work Ready Training (Cert II)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 Traineeship/Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert III Training starts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment for Group 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1, Work Ready Training (Cert II)</td>
<td>1.3.11</td>
<td>15.4.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 Traineeship/Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert III Training starts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment for Group 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1, Work Ready Training (Cert II)</td>
<td>2.5.11</td>
<td>10.6.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 Traineeship/Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert III Training starts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final Project Report from TTNQ to DEEWR is due on 20th January 2012. The contract is valid until 9th March 2012.
2.3 **Program Partnerships**

While the following graph implies a fairly rigid and ‘pigeon-holed’ structure for the project partners in Stages One and Two, the reality is that the process has been far more reiterative, with Pathways to the Future (PTTF), for example, continuing their involvement with the participants from the recruitment stage onwards, and assisting host employers with HR issues in Stage Two. The graph is simply intended to demonstrate the scope of the program partners and their primary roles.
2.4 **PROGRAM FUNDING**

The program funding is multi-layered and relatively complex, but based on the information provided by various stakeholders, it can be broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>FUNDING SOURCE</strong></th>
<th><strong>FUND/IN-KIND</strong></th>
<th><strong>TOTAL FUNDS (INC GST)</strong></th>
<th><strong>BREAKDOWN OF FUNDS</strong></th>
<th><strong>ALLOCATION OF FUNDS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>$231,643</td>
<td>$126,500 Wages for the mentor and project coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$56,363 40% of Cert II training costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,280 Cultural awareness training costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$18,500 38% of admin overheads and motor vehicle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$25,000 PTTF ongoing consultancy fees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEDI</td>
<td>Skilling Queenslanders for Work</td>
<td>$323,950</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80% of traineeship wages @ $9,500 per participant + GST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR via JSA Providers</td>
<td>Employment Pathway Fund</td>
<td>$46,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33% of Cert II training costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR &amp; DET via PTTF</td>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>$39,035</td>
<td>$25,143 Cert III training costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>User Choice</td>
<td>$103,849</td>
<td>$78,706 20% of traineeship wages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Learning Workshop</td>
<td>In Kind</td>
<td>$33,480</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Numeracy and literacy training. Dollar amount is an approximation based on the total program budget put together by PTTF. TLW has the contract to deliver the WELL IEP Program in the FNQ region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTNQ</td>
<td>In Kind</td>
<td>$36,200</td>
<td>$6,200 Recruitment of participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$30,000 62% of admin overheads and motor vehicle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host employers</td>
<td>In Kind</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Work experience costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$844,657</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Interviews with Program Partners

The 20/20 Group was appointed at the end of June 2011 and received its first official briefing from DRET on 4th July 2011. (Refer to Key Outcomes of Phase One in Item 1.3 above).

In the meantime – on 28th June - The 20/20 Group conducted its first stakeholder interview with TTNQ in order to gain a broader understanding of the Indigenous Employment Program. In total 13 interviews have been conducted with program partners as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
<th>PRIMARY ROLE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TTNQ</td>
<td>Lesley Dan</td>
<td>Project Coordinator</td>
<td>28.6.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTNQ</td>
<td>Trevor Tim</td>
<td>Project Mentor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTNQ</td>
<td>Andrea Fogarty</td>
<td>Project Manager/Steering Committee</td>
<td>27.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEDI</td>
<td>Darren Barba</td>
<td>Funding/Steering Committee</td>
<td>14.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Don McLaughlin</td>
<td>Funding/Steering Committee</td>
<td>12.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Employment Covenant (AEC)</td>
<td>Leon Epong</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>12.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways to the Future (PTTF)</td>
<td>Susan Hardy</td>
<td>Training (Cert II)/Steering Committee</td>
<td>6.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Learning Workshop</td>
<td>Cathrena McRae</td>
<td>Literacy/Numeracy Training</td>
<td>21.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTC</td>
<td>Penny Cleland</td>
<td>Training (Cert III)</td>
<td>8.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QITE</td>
<td>Sally Majid</td>
<td>Recruitment (JSA)</td>
<td>6.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVS Workfind</td>
<td>Veronica Killick</td>
<td>Recruitment (JSA)</td>
<td>8.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neato</td>
<td>Renata Wall</td>
<td>Recruitment (JSA)</td>
<td>10.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JobFind</td>
<td>Clare Davey</td>
<td>Recruitment (JSA)</td>
<td>15.7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITEC</td>
<td>Leigh Pollard</td>
<td>Recruitment (JSA)</td>
<td>13.7.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The key discussion points to arise from these interviews are summarised in Item 4 below.
4. **KEY DISCUSSIONS POINTS**

4.1 **PROGRAM FUNDING**

- The program funding has underestimated the amount of man hours required to manage the program. For example,
  - Lesley Dan, the Program Coordinator, is contracted by TTNQ and paid on an hourly basis. The budget assumed that her hours would be more concentrated in the initial stages, but would reduce to around 15 hours a week when the program got underway. In reality, the role is more of a full time position than anyone anticipated.
  - TTNQ did not take into account the full impact of the additional administrative work the program would generate for its HR and payroll staff. The organisation effectively increased its workforce by over 100% when it became the employer of the 31 program participants.
  - Overall, the participants are requiring far more support and mentoring than initially anticipated. Trevor Tim, the Program Mentor contracted by TTNQ, is paid for 30 hours a week, but he is stretched extremely thinly and ideally the program should have allowed for two mentors, one male and one female. (According to some of the stakeholders, this issue can also be attributed to the lack of suitable candidates through the recruitment process, and the lack of mentoring training tailored to the program).
  - Susan Hardy is currently paid $1,250 a month consultancy retainer as a ‘troubleshooter’, assisting with trainees who are having difficulties, and supporting the host employers. This fee does not cover the hours that Susan is currently putting in working with the participants on a one-on-one basis, but like everyone else she is doing it anyway, because her motivation is to see them succeed and to get them through the training and into long term employment.
  - Once the program is complete and TTNQ’s funding ceases – including the funding for the program coordinator - it still has an obligation under its contract to report on the progress of the participants for a further period (believed to be around two months, but this needs to be confirmed). Once again, the administrative cost to manage this obligation was never taken into consideration in the budget.

- The budget was put together with a certain degree of nativity in regard to DEEWR’s approach to outcomes. Payments are made when certain milestones are reached, but the administrative overheads and Cert II training delivery costs, for example, are fixed, so if there are fewer participants completing the second stage of the program it results in less outcome payments from DEEWR, but the fixed costs that have already been expended do not reduce accordingly.

- However, it is acknowledged that in general the funding agreements for IEPs are designed to be flexible so that all parties can learn as they go, and variations are possible if necessary. Don McLaughlin from DEEWR has already told TTNQ not to be afraid to ask for more funds if it thinks it needs it to
realistically achieve the outcomes all the stakeholders want. While he could not guarantee additional funding from DEEWR, he did not think it would be a problem to get supplementary funding approved if it meant ensuring the program was a success.

- One of the negatives regarding the funding structure is the effect it has had on the participants because of the number of agencies involved. Some feedback suggested that as far as the participants are concerned there are too many people involved, all wanting forms completed, questions answered, participant feedback etc. This often happens during their Cert III training days simply because they are all gathered together in one place making it easier for the JSA providers, Government agency and other stakeholder representatives get hold of them. The number of people wanting to talk to them and the volume of information they have to deal with is not only confusing, but also disruptive to their Cert III training.

**RECOMMENDATIONS – IMMEDIATE ACTIONS**

- TTNQ to do an urgent review of its administrative overheads, and expended and anticipated funding dollars. Based on this review, TTNQ to propose what additional dollars it may require to successfully complete the program.
- TTNQ to discuss additional funding requirements and variations to its contract with DEEWR.
- Refer to items below for specific recommendations regarding the funding as it applies to other elements of the program.

**4.2 RECRUITMENT**

- It was stated by many stakeholders that one of the key factors for the success of the program lies in the recruitment process. While they acknowledged that there are multiple barriers to be overcome, they ideally needed to be identified and worked through with each individual at the recruitment stage.

- For example, it appears that only 11 participants were referred by the JSA providers for the first 11 places in Group One which did not give Susan Hardy or TTNQ any opportunity to select the best possible applicants and ‘weed out’ those that were just not suitable for the program.

- The recruitment process was one area which revealed the most amounts of contradictions, with some stakeholders saying that the recruitment process worked well - it was other factors that came into play when the participants went off the rails; while others criticised the process holding it accountable for many of the ensuing problems.

“I want to remain flexible and be supportive of all the stakeholders, but they have to understand that the training sessions are not a meeting time for them to catch up with the trainees.”

“I have worked with IEPs that have had extremely successful outcomes because the recruitment process has been good. The participants were very carefully selected and weeded out, which may sound harsh, but that's what's needed”.

“There have been a lot of issues with the participants, but Susan and Trevor are on top of it. There have only been two drop outs from Group 1, so that's an outcome in itself and says that the recruitment must have been successful”.

“...”
While the JSA providers were criticised for not referring enough job seekers to the program in the first place – and for referring some that were totally unsuitable - it was broadly agreed that the ultimate responsibility for the recruitment process lay with TTNQ as the future employer of the job seekers, so it was in its interest to make sure it had an adequate pool of appropriate candidates to select from.

This issue can also be attributed to the lack of upfront consultation with the JSA providers before the program started. Had the JSA providers been better engaged and consulted during the program design phase, the recruitment process may have been more successful.

**Recommendations – Future Programs:**

While the recruitment process is complete for this program, it is recommended that TTNQ and/or future program facilitators take a more active role in:

a) communicating the desired outcomes of the program to the JSA providers, and the importance of the recruitment process; and

b) the recruitment process itself, weeding out those referrals it believes to be unsuitable for future employment by the organisation.

**4.3 Stage 1 – Cert II Training**

All the stakeholders agreed that Susan Hardy and Bronwen Gratton from PTTF were very good at what they do and were genuinely passionate about their desire to see the participants succeed.

While the initial five week training delivered the Cert II elements within the time frame, several of the stakeholders believed that this stage of the program should be extended as many of the participants still require additional support with non-accredited skills before they could be considered ready for full time employment.

The five weeks provides the participants with a good routine as it’s five days a week, full time and prepares them for the discipline they need to maintain a job. However, when the five weeks are up, it can take another couple of weeks before TTNQ places them with a host employer and this can be very disruptive to the routine they have established.

This appears to be a ‘danger zone’ when some of the participants lose focus and go off the rails.

“We can put who we like up, but it’s up to TTNQ to make the final decision. I imagine they would have a set of KPIs and contractual obligations with DEEWR, in the same way we do, and they are going to end up employing them, so that need to make the decision who comes on to their program.”

“Their (Susan and Bronwen from PTTF) ability to build relationships and respect from participants says it all. It’s blindly obvious they really do care; and for a lot of the participants it’s the first time anyone’s believed in them. To see the response of the participants – to see their level of engagement, willingness and attitude – that’s worth a lot. They had self-belief and the confidence to engage with strangers like myself. You could feel the energy in the room”.

“If they still need support in terms of social and life skills, then they’re probably not ready for work. They should resolve most of their personal issues before they start work, but we’ve got them on this roller coaster because the program has a timing schedule.”
While some participants need more than the initial five week training to become truly job-ready, this would need to be assessed on an individual basis at the end of the five weeks.

RECOMMENDATIONS – FUTURE PROGRAMS:
- The participants should continue with social skills and other work ready training after the five weeks until they are placed in employment to ensure a continuity of the routine and ‘discipline’ they have become accustomed to.
- The initial five weeks should therefore be extended to, nominally, seven, with the next group being deferred for a couple of weeks to allow the trainers to focus on the current group, so that there is a smooth transition between training and employment.
- Alternatively, it was suggested that there may be an additional stage introduced into the program which allowed the participants to continue with some non-accredited training after the initial five weeks while doing some part time work, or work experience, to ease them into the work environment more gently.

4.4 STAGE 2 – CERT III TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT
- Penny Cleland from CTC believes it has been a learning curve for TTNQ in terms of understanding the legislative requirements of training, but the TTNQ team has now got its head around the issues and has been helpful and flexible when it’s needed.
- CTC has just started delivering the training to Group 3. Attendance of trainees through Groups 1 and 2 was only around 50%, which would indicate that there were still some fundamental problems with their work readiness before they started.
- Cathrena Rae from The Learning Workshop (which delivers the 18 hours’ worth of WELL training during the first phase/Cert II training), suggested that some of the trainees may benefit from further WELL training/support during their Cert III training.
- Penny Cleland believes that all the stakeholders have learned from the experiences of Groups 1 and 2 and that they won’t be repeating the same mistakes in Group 3; for example, they won’t be giving the participants the expectation that as soon as they finish their Cert III training they will get a full time job and their wages will go up.

“You are dealing with infinitely large barriers to work and they need longer to prepare for that. There needs to be a more graduated transition into a full time work environment. . . .It’s not hard to put them through the Cert II training; it’s the transition into work that’s the issue”.

“I think there will be some amazing success stories from this program, and even those that may not get their Cert III qualifications, at least we have exposed them to the opportunities and they may succeed next time. I had one trainee on PPP who took three attempts to get his Cert III and by the time he got it he was totally empowered. It’s about learning from mistakes and moving forward.”

“We certainly shouldn’t be guaranteeing them a job at the end of six months,”
RECOMMENDATIONS – IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- The Learning Workshop to meet with CTC to review the participants’ progress in Cert III training, review the syllabus and ascertain what reading and writing/numeracy skills each individual might need to help them finish their qualification.

- If TLW was to deliver further training as part of the Cert III training, TTNQ would need to discuss the best approach to funding with DEEWR as TLW would not be able to deliver it under its existing WELL IEP contract.

4.5 MENTOR

- While Trevor Tim is an experienced Indigenous mentor, he believes that the program would be more effective with two mentors (one male and one female) at a minimum. Some of the female participants do not respond as well to him as the male ones, and the demands of his role are stretched beyond his capacity to mentor 31 participants effectively.

- This view was endorsed by Don McLaughlin at DEEWR and Darren Barba at DEEDI, who believes that the ratio of 1:31 is too high for effective mentoring by one person.

- While most of the stakeholders were full of praise for Trevor and made comments like “all the trainees totally love Trevor”, ‘he’s a brilliant motivator and coach’, and “having Trevor as a mentor has really helped”; there was also some feeling that he had the tendency to help the participants too much, rather than giving them the appropriate strategies and tools to help themselves.

- However, it was generally acknowledged that knowing how to find the right balance between helping the participants to overcome their barriers while setting the appropriate boundaries so that they learn how to help themselves was a huge challenge, especially when each participant had individual needs and issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS – IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- TTNQ to review the need for additional funding for a second mentor as part of the overall budget/funding review.

- As part of this review, clearly define the roles of the individuals contracted by TTNQ: ie mentor, ‘troubleshooter’, program coordinator, host employer engagement, HR support, etc, and estimate the hours/funding required to fulfill these roles. (Refer to Item 4.7, Program Partners below).

- Should it be established that additional funds are required for a second mentor, or any of the other roles, TTNQ to discuss a variation to its contract with DEEWR.
RECOMMENDATIONS – FUTURE PROGRAMS:

- The program should include appropriate mentor training before the participants are recruited - specifically tailored to the program - to teach the mentor how to maximise the resources at his/her disposal (ie other support agencies), how to set boundaries and provide ‘tough love’, and how to provide participants with the tools and strategies they need to help themselves. Time management is crucial for mentors so they need to know how to use all the support mechanisms at their disposal.

- Increase the ratio of mentors to participants. 1:10 or 1:20 maximum.

4.6 CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING

- Host employers are meant to receive cultural awareness training as part of the program; however it has proved hard to get employers to the training sessions, or to ensure they send their most appropriate staff members.

- Susan Hardy’s original intention was to deliver cultural awareness training to as wide an audience as possible – the entire TTNQ membership, not just those employers involved in the program. This would have occurred at the beginning of the program and the idea was to build up a data base of employers who might be interested in offering work experience opportunities and then full time employment, so that TTNQ would have a range of employers to call on when the time came who had already been through the training. However, this never happened and there have only been three sessions so far delivered to tourism operators who had already agreed to take on participants. Note: A fourth training session has been planned for the first week in August 2011.

- Susan believes there are two different approaches to cultural training: one is to teach employers about aboriginal history, which is important, but doesn’t really help employers when it comes to dealing with issues in the workplace. They need to know how to approach situations and have the necessary conversations without being offensive. So they need to understand the cultural context, but they also need to learn how to communicate appropriately and make themselves understood within that context.

- Ideally she would like to change the name of the cultural awareness training to something like ‘cultural awareness in the workplace’, and she believes the cultural awareness training for the employers should be compulsory – as do several other stakeholders.

- Cultural awareness also needs to come from the top down so that it filters through all levels of staff, and it should not be a ‘static’ policy or action – cultural awareness training should be on-going to ensure that existing staff are reminded/refreshed and new staff members are exposed to the issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS – FUTURE PROGRAMS:

- The training is delivered at TTNQ but should ideally be delivered at the employers’ premises to make it easier for them to attend. However, this needs to be balanced out against cost/time constraints.

- Cultural training should be linked to an outcome in the funding contract, including the condition that staff members most needing exposure to the
training in the host employer organisations are actually the ones receiving it (ie, supervisors/buddies of the trainees).

- Host employers should be encouraged to provide an on-site ‘buddy’ to act as an informal work place mentor or just a central point for the participants to go to if they have a problem.
- Interest from host employers should be secured from the very beginning of the program – before the participants start their Stage 1 training - so that there is enough time and flexibility to ensure they receive adequate cultural awareness training before the participants start work with them.

4.7 **PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS**

- According to Susan Hardy who designed the program, the key to its success is the collaboration between the stakeholders, and this was a view that was supported by all the stakeholders.
- However, communication between all the stakeholders has not always been ideal. For example, some of the JSA providers felt that they were not being kept in the loop adequately about the progress of the participants, which in some cases has compromised their own internal processes and outcomes as measured by DEEWR. **Note: This issue has now been addressed by TTNQ.**
- While some stakeholders believe that the JSA providers should be represented on the Steering Committee, others felt that this wasn’t necessary, but they all agreed that they should have been consulted in more detail before the program started so that their processes and reporting needs were identified and incorporated into the program. For example, it is important that they are made aware of the start date of job seekers’ employment prior to them starting, that they are provided with copies of Cert II and III certificates etc.
- Another issue with the JSA providers has been the initial cost and – more importantly – the additional costs for things like uniforms and specific industry training, which came as a surprise to some. This issue could probably have been avoided if all the costs had been clearly explained to the JSA providers from the outset.
- It appears that there has also been some grey around some of the roles performed by PTTF and TTNQ, particularly around mentoring and host employer engagement. However, it was broadly agreed that this was an issue unique to this IEP because PTTF was the instigator and designer of the program, but also a sub-contractor to the program facilitator (TTNQ). This unusual relationship structure and one that is unlikely to be repeated in future programs – and should probably be avoided - but does illustrate the need for
very clear and visible lines of communication and defined roles for each of the program partners from the outset.

- There seems to be confusion/differing opinions about how long the program is running for. Some stakeholders said it was delivering six months’ employment; others have said three months training and three months employment, others said five weeks training. While this is a minor issue, it does go towards demonstrating that the stakeholders are not all ‘singing from the same songbook’ and that there could be some improvement in the lines of communication to ensure that everyone involved is aware of the parameters and time lines of the program.

- However the general feeling was that the program partners’ relationships have developed reasonably well and most problems that have arisen have been resolved collaboratively.

- For DEEWR to work with DEEDI on a project like this has also been a positive. According to Don McLaughlin from DEEWR, the two organisations have worked together in the past but not at this level, and all program partners had learned a lot over the last few months.

**RECOMMENDATIONS – FUTURE PROGRAMS:**

- The program facilitator (in this case TTNQ) needs to meet individually with the JSA providers prior to the program starting to clearly set out the process, goals, obligations, funding requirements etc – both in person and in writing – so that the JSA providers know exactly what’s required of them in terms of funding and recruitment, and TTNQ knows exactly what the JSA providers need in terms of information, feedback etc. These clear lines of communication with the JSA providers in particular are crucial to the success of the program.

- The roles and responsibilities of all the program partners should be documented and distributed from the outset so that all stakeholders know the areas of responsibility and there is no confusion over who is the program facilitator, coordinator, mentors, trainers etc.

**4.8 OUTCOMES/LIKELIHOOD OF SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT**

- Of the 11 participants from Group 1, six remain with their original host employer (as at June 2011). The status of the remaining five is:
  - One is expecting a child and has dropped out of the traineeship.
  - One has relocated to Brisbane.
  - One was granted leave to attend a funeral and has not been seen or heard of since, despite efforts to contact him.
  - Two were relocated from their host employers at the request of the employers and have been found alternative positions (one with TTNQ and one with Cairns Regional Council), though long term positions are not available for them within these organisations.

- Group 1 started work at the end of February and TTNQ is funded to pay their wages as trainees until the end of August (six months), however some of the
participants have completed their accredited training units for their Cert III qualification and are being signed off now (as at mid-July 2011).

- Once signed off, TTNQ is no longer funded by DEEDI to employee the trainees. It would be unethical for TTNQ to defer signing them off to stretch it out for the full six months so that they can continue to pay them as a trainee, even if this means they may retain their job for a few more weeks if the host employer cannot offer them on-going positions.

- JSAs get paid when the job seeker has 13 and then 26 weeks of continuous work, with minimal gaps in between. One of the JSA providers believed the TTNQ program will deliver on this outcome, because – even though the program funding won’t provide employment for that length of time - the job seeker will be much better equipped to manage full time employment and the JSA provider will be more able to find them something else once the program has come to an end, should they not retain their current job.

- However, there appear to be some unanswered questions around the final outcomes/ending of the program. For example, some of the participants are earning more than $1k per fortnight, which automatically exits them from the Centrelink system and, in turn, the JSA system. (In one instance, the participant had exited from the JSA provider’s system, and the same provider had been asked to pay for some additional training required by the host employer, but it no longer has access to the Employment Pathways Fund for that particular job seeker). What happens if the host employer cannot retain the trainee at the end of the program – where are their support networks going to come from when they find themselves unemployed? Has the employer been advised that he/she will need to sign a Separation Certificate to enable the job seeker to go straight back on to Centrelink benefits?

- The program was deliberately timed so that the majority of participants were working with their host employers to coincide with the peak of the tourism season (June to September) when there would have been more traineeship and employment opportunities available. However, with the best will in the world, no one could have foreseen the downturn in the tourism market in Cairns in 2011 caused in part by the rising Australian dollar, Cyclone Yasi, and the Queensland floods. In a more buoyant market, there are more likely to be long term positions available to the trainees at the end of the program than will realistically occur this year. Should the long term employment outcomes of this program not be as successful as hoped, the health of the tourism industry should be taken into consideration as an influencing factor. This issue will be explored in more detail in the next phase of the evaluation process.

RECOMMENDATIONS – IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- TTNQ should be facilitating meetings between the relevant JSA providers and the host employers now to talk about what’s going to happen when the six
months funding has finished. The JSAs can provide advice and assistance to the employers which may not cover the cost of an entire wage as the program is currently doing, but will go towards giving the participant continued employment. The JSA providers can also help the employers to tap into other resources and networks to take over where the program leaves off (i.e., mentoring support).
TTNQ INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

PROGRESS REPORT #2
31ST OCTOBER 2011

Prepared for
Australian Government | Department of Resources, Energy & Tourism
CONTENTS

| PAGE NO |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 3 |
| i.i A Story Worth Telling | 3 |
| i.ii Purpose of the Report | 4 |
| i.iii Recommendations in Progress Report #1 | 4 |
| i.iv Challenges and Issues Faced by Host Employers | 6 |
| i.v Distribution and Allocation of Outcome Funding | 14 |
| i.vi Feedback from Participants | 18 |
| i.vii Other | 19 |

| 1. BACKGROUND | 20 |
| 1.1 A Brief Introduction | 20 |
| 1.2 Evaluation Methodology | 20 |

| 2. TTNQ INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM | 22 |
| 2.1 Outcomes to Date | 22 |

| 3. INTERVIEWS WITH HOST EMPLOYERS, PARTICIPANTS AND PROGRAM PARTNERS | 23 |
| 4. KEY DISCUSSION POINTS | 24 |
| 4.1 Feedback from Host Employers | 24 |
| 4.2 Feedback from Participants | 42 |
| 4.3 Feedback from Program Partners | 46 |
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I.1 A STORY WORTH TELLING

Steve Davies is the General Manager, Operations for Big Cat Green Island Reef Cruises. Big Cat has employed Indigenous people through a number of programs in the past, but they haven’t had a good experience. As a result, they entered this program with much trepidation, but Trevor Tims, the mentor with TTNQ, was the deciding factor.

“He is the most amazing Indigenous person I know. He is the one that gives me a lot of faith in what can be achieved and he’s changed my attitude towards the stereotypes around Indigenous people. The biggest thing that sold the program for me was the support mechanisms they have in place. Trevor is there to focus on the issues behind the scenes like transport, housing and family. The program has good solid mentors and that’s what’s needed.”

“We were very jaded from our past experience and I told Trevor and Lesley that. When Sala started with us I sat her down and told her that this program wasn’t about us, there is really nothing in it for us. I told her it was all about her, it was her opportunity and it was up to her to make the most of it.”

According to Steve, Sala has been a really interesting case because, unlike all the trainees they’ve taken on in the past, Sala wanted to work in reservations. Apparently it can take weeks and even months to train someone up in reservations, even people with previous experience. Sala had no phone experience, she couldn’t type, in fact she had little to no experience of working at all. It takes a huge effort and a lot of time for an existing member of staff to train someone. They have to supervise them on a constant basis and it takes a very dedicated person to put in the time and energy.

“I had to really sell this to my reservations team. I told them there was nothing in it for them and it would be a lot of extra work. I said that it was really up to Sala and if she didn’t want to learn then we would all go our separate ways, but I asked them to give it a go and they all embraced it, which was hard. Sala is a really good learner. She’s willing and intelligent and she picks things up quickly and applies what she’s learned. She was leaping ahead in a matter of weeks, doing better than many people who had already had experience. She’s a rare gem.”

“We had to start everything from scratch with Sala, her phone manner, typing, counter etiquette, everything. Reservations is hugely complicated with all our packages and tours – there’s a lot to take in, but she sucked it up like a sponge.”

Big Cat offered Sala a full time position which started on 3rd October 2011.
When Sala started with them as a trainee six months ago, Big Cat had been downsizing for some time and they had already cut back on staff hours. “We didn’t have enough work for her so we offered her a couple of days on the boat and she flourished with that as well. 95% of her work has been front desk work, but her willingness to jump on the boats - where she offered to do more - was the real clincher. She made herself really employable and we created a full time position for her because we don’t want to lose her.”

“She knows she’s not alone. We’re like a big family here. I’m confident now we can move forward without Trevor and Lesley, but it’s up to Sala. It’s her career and Big Cat is just a stepping stone.”

I.II PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report should be read in conjunction with Progress Report #1, delivered to the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (DRET) on 29th July 2011.

The purpose of this report – Progress Report #2 – is to:
1. Review and evaluate the actions taken based on the recommendations in Progress Report #1, and the impact these have had on the program
2. Assess the challenges and issues faced by the host employers. In particular:
   o whether they would have participated if they had to make a more substantial financial contribution
   o what is determining their capacity and intention to retain the trainees at the end of the program
   o whether solo placements have a different outcome to group placements
3. Further explore the challenges and issues around the distribution and allocation of outcome funding between the agencies and partners
4. Provide feedback from participants
5. Provide recommendations on any further interventions, support and improvements that could be made to the program prior to its completion.

I.III RECOMMENDATIONS IN PROGRESS REPORT #1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADMINISTRATION</strong></td>
<td>Review completed by TTNQ. At the time of writing, TTNQ had requested a variation to its contract with DEEWR to change the weighting of the outcome payments to better reflect the actual cash flow demands of the program. It had also requested additional funding for a second mentor, who joined the program in September.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TTNQ to do an urgent review of its administrative overheads, and expended and anticipated funding dollars. Based on this review, TTNQ to propose what additional dollars it may require to successfully complete the program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TTNQ to discuss additional funding requirements and variations to its contract with DEEWR.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Recommendations

#### Work Ready / Literacy and Numeracy Training
- The Learning Workshop (TLW) to meet with Careers Training Centre (CTC) to review the participants’ progress in Cert III training, review the syllabus and ascertain what reading and writing/numeracy skills each individual might need to help them finish their qualification.
- Establish the hours/dollars required to deliver the additional training.
- If TLW was to deliver further training as part of the Cert III course, TTNQ would need to discuss the best approach to funding with DEEWR as TLW would not be able to deliver it under its existing WELL IEP contract.

On review, the Steering Committee did not believe additional literacy and numeracy training was required, as it was something that the CTC trainers were delivering as it was needed as part of the Cert III training anyway. It was also evident that sometimes the need for additional literacy and numeracy training does not emerge until the participants start in the workplace and are faced with specific industry/technical writing challenges.

It would seem prudent to allow for some additional training funds to cover this issue on an as needs basis in future programs, but the need can be very hard to predict with any accuracy.

#### Mentoring / Host Employer Support / Troubleshooting
- TTNQ to review the need for additional funding for a second mentor as part of the overall budget/funding review.
- Should it be established that additional funds are required for a second mentor or any of the other roles, TTNQ to discuss a variation to its contract with DEEWR.

Joy Harris, an experienced Indigenous mentor, was appointed by TTNQ on 1st September 2011 to assist with the trainees during the remainder of the program.

The feedback to date from everyone involved has been extremely positive.

#### Other (Not Related to Funding)
- TTNQ should be facilitating meetings between the relevant JSA providers and the host employers now to talk about what’s going to happen when the traineeship funding has finished, and which employers are likely to retain the trainees into full time positions. The JSAs can provide advice and assistance to the employers which may not cover the cost of an entire wage as the program is currently doing, but will go towards giving the participant continued employment if required. The JSA providers can also help the employers to tap into other resources and networks to take over where the program leaves off (ie mentoring support).

TTNQ has taken a much more proactive role with the JSA providers, keeping them up to date on the progress of each participant, providing them with copies of relevant documentation (pay slips etc), and discussing any issues which need to be addressed.

Joy Harris has been accompanying the participants to their JSA appointments; and TTNQ has been assisting them with their resumes and supporting them to find employment as needed. TTNQ has also been educating the participants about the JSA providers and what services they can offer them, as it became evident that many of the participants were unaware of the JSA providers’ role.
I.IV CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACED BY HOST EMPLOYERS

I.IV.1 THE COST OF THE PROGRAM TO HOST EMPLOYERS

One of the objectives was to establish whether the host employers would have participated if they had to make a more substantial financial contribution. The results varied between some who said they would have considered it, to others who said definitely not (especially given the tough economic situation the tourism and hospitality industry finds itself in at the moment). One employer believed that the program might have worked better if the host employers had contributed. “I think it would have made us work a bit harder with them, be tougher on them and be more committed to their success.” Other comments included:

“We probably would have if it had been within our resources at the time. However, things have been very tough in FNQ recently and we are trying to look after our existing staff and protect their jobs, so it’s unlikely we would have been able to pay additional salaries for the trainees.”

“If we were asked to pay we would have been much stricter about selecting the right candidates and we would have wanted more information about the whole program from the outset.”

This last comment about the employer’s ability to select the right candidate was a common thread when it was linked to paying for their salaries. Another said that he would certainly participate in the program again because he’s always willing to give someone a chance, but if he was asked to contribute he would want to see a selection of candidates and interview them with a specific role in mind.

Two employers gave very valid reasons for not expecting them to contribute to the salaries: One explained that the hotel has a budget for a set amount of man hours worked, so if they had to pay for the trainees, the other workers’ hours would have been cut to fit them in. The fact that they got them for free meant no-one lost out and the manager was able to gain the support of her other workers for the trainees. If the other large hotels in Cairns have a similar operational model, the program could lose substantial support from a number of host employers who are willing to take on multiple trainees.

Another said they wouldn’t have contributed to the trainee’s salary if it had been a condition of the program, especially for the role she took on with no experience. “If it had been a normal job application I wouldn’t have looked at her without any experience. She wouldn’t have got a look in the door.” As it turned out, this trainee has now been offered a full time position.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While there is some merit in the notion of asking host employers to contribute to the wages in future programs, this needs to be balanced out
against the negatives. The final decision should be made on a case by case basis depending on the economic climate, accessibility of funding and other influencing factors at the time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVES</th>
<th>NEGATIVES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Host employers may be more committed to the trainee’s success if they are financially invested in that outcome.</td>
<td>• Loss of host employers willing (or able) to participate, resulting in a smaller pool to work with, and potentially less jobs available, especially in the current economic climate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Host employers would want to be more involved in the recruitment process and have a broader selection of trainees to choose from, which may have a beneficial ‘flow-back’ effect to the initial recruitment of trainees into the program.</td>
<td>• Risk of some trainees being rejected due to their lack of confidence and experience, ie not being given a chance to prove themselves because they simply don’t interview well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less money would need to be sourced from external funding.</td>
<td>• Less tolerance and patience shown to trainees who may need a little more ‘hand holding’ than others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I.IV.II  **HOST EMPLOYERS’ CAPACITY AND INTENTION TO RETAIN TRAINEES**

**CAPACITY: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

The state of the tourism industry in Cairns has definitely affected the decision making process for some of the employers. One employer said: “Because of the state of the tourism market we’re not taking on a lot of new staff, and when we do I get to pick and choose. I get two or three emails a day from people who really want to work for us, so I get the pick the cream.” Another agreed: “Putting the trainees on and keeping them would be a way easier decision if the boats are full. Times are tough and we’ve had to reduce staff as it is. We’re watching every dollar at the moment.”

If the market was more resilient, another employer said he may have decided to preserve with his training on the river because having a properly trained local Indigenous river guide would undoubtedly be a benefit to the business, but they are not training any new guides at the moment. “Having him as a river guide would definitely be an asset but it’s expensive to train them and it takes around 10 to 12 weeks to train a guide. They have to be the right type of person to start with, and they have to be motivated, they have to want to do it.”

**INTENTION: THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCERS - COMMON CHALLENGES AND ISSUES**

Several of the host employers had to deal with a number of challenges and issues which have influenced their decision to retain their trainees.
The main issue appears to be a general lack of work ethics, which manifests itself as unreliability (ie the participants not turning up for work and not advising the employers), which is also linked to the challenge of employers learning how to effectively communicate with the Indigenous trainees.

“She needs to understand that she has a responsibility to the rest of the team, to her job and she can’t just not show up for work.”

“I don’t know whether it comes back to trust, or approachability, or just language difficulties, but the biggest downfall was communication.”

Linked to the issue of work ethics and reliability, is the issue of work readiness, which was only raised directly in a few cases, but is related to many of the challenges encountered by the host employers: “I had really hoped that she would give it a go, but I think she just wasn’t ready for full time work. Part time would have been a better option for her.”

Another common issue is inherent shyness and lack of confidence, which can cause problems in the workplace, particularly in a very people-driven industry such as tourism. “She’s good when she’s here, although she won’t talk to the customers. If we’re really busy behind the till she won’t even answer the phone, it will just ring out.”

Several of the host employers talked about the influence of family to the Indigenous trainees. This can be both a positive and a negative. “He was having family issues and we tried to be understanding but it got to the point where he was only turning up for one or two shifts a week.”

Another challenge was the lack of specific skills and qualifications held by the participants, although this was only evident in the more regulated sectors such as the dive/marine and white water rafting industries, where training in specific areas is mandatory; as opposed to non-skilled labour in the hospitality area.

One employer said the only real issue he had was that the trainee has no relevant qualifications or skills to be able to move up to the next level for a company such as his, and that basically makes him un-hirable, however much they like him.

“Everyone’s done their bit. We’ve done our bit and he has done his, but at the end of the day the system is going to let him down because the program isn’t providing him with the skills and qualifications he needs to become a dive instructor. It will cost about $7,000 to put him through the dive masters course. Together with his time with us, and his Cert III training, he would then be much more employable in a job he wants to pursue. How much will it cost the system to continue to support him once the program is over?”
INTENTION: THE POSITIVE INFLUENCERS - THE SUCCESS STORIES

The following comments came from a range of employers who have (or hope to be) offering their trainees full time positions. In virtually every case the successful outcome has come about because of three key ingredients:

- Effective two-way communication and understanding between the employer and the trainee so that if problems do arise they can be resolved
- The trainee’s willingness and eagerness to learn and progress
- The trainee’s growth in confidence which has been nurtured by the host employer

“She is doing 30 hours a week now. I think she’s enjoying the job and she’s making friends. She’s learned new skills and could apply for a similar position anywhere.” This came from the host employer of two trainees, working at a large inner-city hotel. The trainee referred to has been offered a full time position. The second trainee hasn’t.

“She never complains. You can assign her to anything. The training to be a cruise attendant involves ten different roles and she’s done most of them. We still need her to do some bar training, and she’s already shown an interest in it. She’s a good learner and very interested in progressing.”

“She’s doing a great job, but she’s still a bit shy. She needs to build her confidence. Sometimes she reverts back to not doing the routine things because a challenge will present itself and she doesn’t have the confidence to speak up or ask for help, but she’s getting better.”

“She has a great work ethic. We had an issue at the beginning when she had car problems and no credit on her mobile, and I couldn’t track her down. But I explained why she needed to let us know and once she realised the importance of it, she calls to let us know if she’s got a problem and can’t get to work. She got that straight away.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above examples of common challenges and success stories are not unexpected. Nor are the challenges and issues ever going to be completely resolved. However, they do highlight the importance of the following three elements in the program:

1. Cultural awareness training for the host employers, which should include the importance of effective communication in the workplace. However, this training must be undertaken by the relevant staff (ie direct line managers, or supervisors of the trainees) for it to be of any benefit.
2. Work readiness/work ethics training for the participants, which should be extended as necessary for individual participants.
3. The transition between the initial training (Cert II) and full time work which, for some participants, might need to be a combination of part
time work and further training, to ease them into a ‘real life’ work situation a little more gently.

In addition, it would appear that those trainees who had a ‘buddy’ at work (which was usually their direct supervisor, or a peer), seemed to overcome the challenges more easily than those who did not relate to their work colleagues as readily. While these are almost accidental relationships, and depend heavily on the unique characters of the individuals involved, it would seem appropriate to encourage and formalise a buddy system at work.

This might include the following elements:

- Host employers to ask their staff who would be willing to become a ‘buddy’ – it must be voluntary.
- Buddies to be identified prior to participants starting work.
- Buddies provided with special training, in addition to cultural awareness training.
- Transition period between mentor and buddy prior to participant starting work, so that he/she gets to know and be comfortable with their work buddy before starting in the workplace.
- Host employers to put participant and buddy on same work roster wherever possible.
- Buddies brought together (ie a morning tea event) to meet, network, provide peer support etc.
- Buddies given priority access to program mentors.
- The implementation of the buddy system to be incorporated into the MoU with host employers.

Solo Placements v. Group Placements

Four of the ten employers interviewed had taken on two participants each, while the other six had one each. During the interviews, the employers of two participants were asked if they thought it was an advantage for the trainees to have a fellow participant at the same place of work. Each of the four employers were large inner-city hotels where the participants were placed in a number of roles from kitchen duties, to gardening, and front desk to laundry/housekeeping. None of the employers had given the question any thought previously and, while some of them could see the advantages of having a fellow participant at work, they didn’t think it applied in their cases as the participants had only met during their initial five week training and were not close friends. Nor did they have much to do with each other on a day to day basis at work given the nature and size of the large properties they were working at.

One of the employers (who is hoping to retain one trainee, but not the other) said that in their case she didn’t think it was an advantage at all, as one of the trainees was unimpressed with the way the other one was behaving. Another employer said she didn’t think it was an advantage for her trainees as they were both very different people.
RECOMMENDATIONS
There does not appear to be any significant advantage in group placements over solo placements, unless the two trainees were particularly close prior to starting the program and it was thought to be a benefit for both of them to be placed with the same host employer. Ultimately, this decision will come down to a ‘case by case’ basis.

I.V.IV OTHER KEY FINDINGS

AWARENESS/KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROGRAM
Some employers were fully aware of how the program works, who was funding it and very comfortable with how they were being kept in touch with progress; while others knew little to nothing about the details of the program, except for the fact that it was being funded by Government and administered by TTNQ. This is not intended to infer that TTNQ has not kept them informed. It is just evidence of the fact that most of them have prioritised other areas of their business – especially in this economic climate – and have not paid any attention to, or had forgotten details of, the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Everyone filters information in different ways, especially when that information is secondary to the day-to-day operations of a business. Those that welcomed, and retained details provided by TTNQ, tended to be HR managers, or those directly involved with the recruitment and employment of staff. Those that didn’t were the busy operations managers, or ‘front line’ personnel, who have other priorities. While it could be argued it is not really important for the host employers to know every detail of the program, it is important that key details – such as how and when the program is ending – are reinforced, so that the trainees are not being told one thing by TTNQ, and another by their host employer.

TTNQ has, without doubt, provided this information, but it has not been absorbed by several of the employers. There is never going to be a perfect solution to this challenge, but it highlights the need for lines of communication to remain as flexible as possible to suit all types of recipients, so that those who want regular and detailed updates by email can receive them; and those that prefer face-to-face meetings when it suits them, should also be accommodated.

SELECTION/RECRUITMENT OF THE TRAINEES
While all the trainees were ‘interviewed’ by the host employers, they had, in the main, been pre-selected by TTNQ as appropriate candidates to work with the host employers, either because of previous/similar experience, or because the candidate had expressed a desire to work in a particular field.

One employer said that when he has employed Indigenous people in the past it has always been through the normal recruitment process, ie they have advertised a position and interviewed them along with other
candidates. “Because they have gone through the normal selection process, they tend to be a good fit for the job and they’re more motivated because it was them that approached us.”

While this would be the ideal way to recruit and select staff, it was never going to be practical for this program. TTNQ had a responsibility to find positions with host employers for 30 Indigenous people over a relatively short period of time, and they were not always going to be the perfect match.

The main lesson learnt in regard to the placement of participants with host employers has been that TTNQ put themselves under too much pressure at the beginning of the program. The Program Coordinator was appointed at the same time as the first group of participants started their initial training, and she had to hit the ground running, rather than giving herself time to become familiar with the structure of the program, talk to the JSAs, set up reporting procedures etc.

As a result, the process to identify and secure the necessary number of host employers for the first group was rushed and possibly not as well communicated as it could have been, resulting in a degree of ‘mis-matching’ between participants and employers. In addition, the process of ‘selling’ the concept to the host employers on this first program was far more time consuming than it will be in future when employers know what to expect, and the right questions to ask.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

In future programs the Program Coordinator needs to be appointed well before the participants are brought in to give her/him time to build relationships and commitments from JSA providers and host employers. Ideally, the host employers should be identifying specific roles/jobs for the participants to fill, rather than the other way round (ie the participants being matched to the host employer, who were then asked to find roles for them).

There may also be an opportunity for the recruitment process to be further built into the initial Cert II training than it already is, to give the participants real exposure to the process of applying for jobs and going through interviews. This would require the host employers to write ‘job ads’ and then get the participants to apply for the jobs which most appeal to them and attend interviews with the host employer. The result could mean a better fit between employers and trainees, *but it could also result in less confident trainees being ‘left on the shelf’, thereby damaging their confidence even more, and needs to be approached with caution.*

**WOULD THEY DO IT ALL AGAIN?**

Nine out of the ten employers said they would be very happy to participate again; and a couple said they might, but with some reservations.
RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the high proportion of host employers who would participate in the program again - even those who are not retaining their trainee – it has to be acknowledged that the fundamentals are in place, and the merits of the program are recognised. It is recommended that the ‘good news stories’ and positive feedback from this program be utilised in the marketing and communications for future programs, as these forms of testimonials are powerful and genuine endorsements.

CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING
Most of the ten employers had sent representatives to the cultural awareness training, or had attended themselves. However, all the employers agreed that it was a good thing to include in the program. Those employers (or their staff) who attended a cultural awareness training session agreed that it was worthwhile – some more than others. The challenge for future programs is how to make the cultural awareness training as effective as possible, and as meaningful as possible to those who attend.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Learning about Indigenous history – and the effect it still has on Indigenous people today - is important; but it is equally important to learn how to communicate effectively and empathetically with indigenous people in the workplace. While this message is best imparted by experts, it can be backed up, and made more compelling, by an employer who has been through the experience and is willing to share his or her story with other employers. Some of the stories told by the employers interviewed for this report are everyday examples of what can go wrong and right for host employers and the trainees. They are also tangible and real situations that most other employers will relate to and remember when they find themselves in a similar situation.

Wherever possible, it is also recommended to conduct the cultural awareness training at the host employers’ place of work, especially for the larger employers. This would likely result in more of the employer’s staff being able to attend, and the sessions could be tailored to suit the particular employer. However, all of the above recommendations ultimately come back to the commitment from the host employers and their understanding of the fact that there are some fundamental cultural and communication differences when it comes to employing indigenous trainees.

MENTORS
The employers were unanimous in their praise for the back up support of the mentors and agreed that it made all the difference to the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The mentor role is one of the most important features of the program and, since TTNQ appointed a second mentor in September, this support
mechanism has proved to be even more effective. This form of support, however, doesn’t need to begin and end with the program assigned mentor; nor should it be limited to support for just the trainees.

Mentoring can be provided in the form of a ‘buddy’ system at work for the trainees (refer to Recommendations under item I.V.II above), as well as peer-to-peer mentoring between employers. The transfer of knowledge from one host employer who has been through the experience, to another one who is just beginning the journey, could be an effective way of providing support for all the key players, not just the trainees.

I.V. DISTRIBUTION AND ALLOCATION OF OUTCOME FUNDING

The issue of the distribution and allocation of outcome funding was explored with all the stakeholders interviewed during this phase of the evaluation, along with other issues raised in relation to the funding in general. The key points to emerge can be summarised as follows:

I.V.I OUTCOME PAYMENTS - DEEWR

The issue of TTNQ’s outcome payments from DEEWR has been addressed, and a variation is currently being made to the contract to better reflect the reality of some participants not finishing the program, and TTNQ needing to cover its fixed costs and cash flow concerns. Lessons have been learned by all parties in the design of the payment structures with regard to this issue, and should be noted by any future program manager/designer.

I.V.II TRAINEES WAGES FUNDING – DEEDI AND QAS

Under the funding agreement, DEEDI pays for around 80% of the trainees’ wages until they finish their Cert III training or for six months (the balance comes from QAS through User Choice).

There was concern raised by some of the stakeholders in Progress Report #1 that if a trainee finished their Cert III training before the six months was up and the host employer was unable to retain them, there would not be any funding available to provide them with employment/work experience for the balance of the program. This situation has not eventuated. At the time of writing, there are 16 participants who have completed Cert III:

- Five of them have been offered full time positions with their host employers and no longer require funding contributions towards their wages.
- The balance have not achieved a Completion Certificate from their employer (TTNQ) because they have either elected to do further modules, or they are not considered to be fully work ready and have the required practical skills in the workplace. As such they will continue their traineeship until TTNQ believes they qualify for a Completion Certificate.
However, another issue which has only recently come to light is the trainee wages contribution provided through QAS/User Choice which was budgeted at $4,000 per participant. In some cases, the TTNQ IEP program is deemed to be a continuation of training, which means some participants have not qualified for the full $4,000. This, again, has reduced TTNQ’s ability to access all the funding it originally thought it would receive. TTNQ could have checked with QAS prior to signing up the participants for the program to ensure they qualify for the full funding amount, but this was overlooked at the time. It is recommended that if the program is to be repeated this becomes a condition of the initial selection process for participants.

I.V.III Mentor Funding
At the program design phase it was assumed the services of the program mentor would be staggered/phased along with the intake of participants, i.e., by the time the second group was recruited, the first group would need less mentoring and so on.

The reality has been completely different, with some participants requiring less mentoring and others requiring more intense mentoring throughout the program, increasing as they completed their Cert II training and went in to full-time employment, not decreasing. The demands on the mentor therefore did not match the hours or dollars it was assumed would be required. As a result, TTNQ has appointed a second mentor to assist in the last few months of the program, which has proved to be an extremely positive move. However, it had to request additional funding from DEEWR to do so.

I.V.IV Literacy and Numeracy Funding
The Steering Committee did not believe additional literacy and numeracy training was required, (as raised in Progress Report #1) as it was something that the trainers were delivering as part of the Cert III training anyway. It was also evident that sometimes the need for additional literacy and numeracy training does not emerge until the participants start in the workplace and are faced with specific industry/technical writing challenges. It would seem prudent, however, to allow for some additional training funds to cover this issue on an as needs basis in future programs, but the need can be very hard to predict with any accuracy until the program is well underway.

I.V.V Funding and the JSA Providers
Value for Money
This issue is going to differ from provider to provider depending on the outcomes of the participants they referred. In the case of ITEC who referred 19 of the 31 participants, the manager did not believe the program delivered value for money, but he acknowledged this was ITEC’s problem as much as the program’s because they should never have referred so many participants in the first place. “If we were to do it again we wouldn’t refer as many job seekers as we did. . . we sent too many,
some of who just weren’t up to the standard required. You can never be 100% sure about the outcomes, but I would definitely send those that I thought had the best chance. If we are more selective about who we put up, then it’s going to be a better outcome for TTNQ as well.”

PVS, who referred four participants was willing to pay the initial $1,500 because it recognised the potential of the program, but the manager of PVS wasn’t happy to be continually approached by the trainees for all the extras and incidentals once they started work. “When we help job seekers, it’s about getting them out of the welfare system mentality. They need to learn to budget and become self-reliant when they start working and earning their own money, but they keep coming back to the JSAs with their hand out for all the extras. The program needs to educate them more about budgeting. We’re not a bottomless pit of money.”

OUTCOMES
At an initial meeting in July, ITEC was concerned that the program wasn’t going to be able to deliver the outcomes ITEC needed to receive its payments because many of the trainees were not doing 30+ hours a week. The perception now from both ITEC and PVS is that those who are still working are doing the required hours, so this was seen as an improvement.

In terms of the 13 and 26 weeks of consecutive work outcome, both ITEC and PVS said the program was delivering on this as well.

Obviously, for those that dropped out of the program or are completing their training, but have lost their jobs, the outcomes will not be as good – and this accounts for 13 of the original 19 ITEC referred. However, the intangible outcomes still remain for all the participants who finished (or will finish) their Cert III training and had at least some work experience. “They will definitely be easier to place. The Cert III training will certainly help, as well as the regular work hours. They got into a routine, a working mentality, and they’re much more motivated than they were.”

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PROGRAM
When asked what improvements they would make if they could redesign the program to work better from the JSA providers’ perspective, the responses included:

- If more of the program funding for the Cert II training could come from the PPP or IEP fund, it would save the JSA providers having to take it from the EPF (as a rule of thumb they budget for around $500 per job seeker from the EPF, but the TTNQ IEP program cost them $1,500 per participant, plus any incidentals).
- The program funding should reflect the actual costs of the program for the JSA providers, not just the initial $1,500.
- Ensure the participants are better educated about budgeting their own money. “Some of them are earning good money in their jobs, but the
program needs to better educate them about not expecting endless handouts."

- There needs to be more surety that the program will result in jobs for the trainees. “I've seen the development of the four guys we put up and it's been awesome, but they have to have a job at the end of it, and if their employment outcome is looking iffy, we need to know about it so we can help to keep them on track.”

I.VI OTHER FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

TRAINEES’ CONTRIBUTION
TTNQ believes that if the program is to be repeated, the trainees should contribute a nominal sum to their Cert III training, not just to assist with the budget, but also to get them to ‘invest’ in their own future, rather than view the program as “just another course provided by the Government”; and to commit to the term of the program. If this proposal is given merit, it may also assist in reducing the resistance felt by the JSA providers about contributing $1,500 per participant to the program.

When one of the JSA providers was asked about this issue, she said she thought it might be difficult to manage because not all of the trainees were in full time work while they were doing their Cert III, but they should be paying for their own incidentals and extras. “Some of the extra tickets we were paying for cost around $120 and they can afford that while they’re working. It puts a value on the end result for them.”

BUDDY SYSTEM AT WORK
The Steering Committee agreed that a buddy system at work was a beneficial addition to the program, and suggested ways in which the concept could be structured and improved (ie special training for buddies, a transition period between the mentor and buddy, etc). If this system is to be developed in future programs, additional funding will be required.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR
TTNQ’s Program Coordinator was appointed at the same time as the participants for Group 1 were being recruited. She therefore had to ‘hit the ground running’ and it is now acknowledged that this has had repercussions for the program. The Steering Committee agreed that in future programs the Program Coordinator needs to be appointed well before the participants are brought in to give her/him time to build relationships and commitments from JSA providers and host employers in particular. Again, this will require funding to cover salary costs for an additional few weeks at the start of the program.

BUDGETING ISSUES
The original budget was calculated using a standard trainee award wage, Monday to Friday, @ 38 hours a week for 26 weeks. The reality is that trainees in the tourism industry are sometimes required to work more than eight hours a day (especially on the boats), and more often than not at weekends. In other words, the budget did not take into account the
overtime and other additional wages costs involved in working in an industry such as tourism, and this again has impacted on TTNQ’s funding and cash flow demands.

I.VII SUMMARY OF FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS

- The weighting/timing of DEEWR’s outcome payments need to reflect the cash flow and upfront commitments of the program from the outset.
- Candidates should be ‘screened’ at the initial recruitment phase to ensure they are eligible for the full $4,000 allocation from QAS.
- An allowance should be made for any additional literacy and numeracy training on an ‘as needs’ basis once the trainees have started work with their host employers.
- The contribution of $1,500 per participant from the Employment Pathway Fund appears to be on the high side, especially if the JSA provider is referring multiple job seekers to the program. This could be reduced through a combination of more funding from PPP and/or IEP, and possibly a contribution from the participants themselves.
- The budget should allow for the appointment of two mentors at a minimum for the full duration of the program.
- In addition to the two mentors, the budget should also allow for the cost to implement a ‘buddy’ system at work (ie special training for buddies).
- The budget should allow for the Program Coordinator to be appointed prior to the program starting/recruitment of participants, so that he/she has time to build relationships and commitments from the JSA providers and host employers in particular.
- If the Program Coordinator does not have direct experience in or knowledge of the operational and reporting processes of Job Services Australia, the budget should include an allowance to pay for a consultant who does.
- The wages component should be calculated to better reflect the reality of the long hours/weekend work experienced by many of the trainees. Tourism is not a Monday-to-Friday, 9-5 industry.

I.VI FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Six participants were interviewed as part of Phase Two. Of these six, three are still working with their host employer and all six are yet to complete their Cert III training. Two of them may retain their current jobs if their host employers are financially able to offer them a position. The key points to come from the discussions were:

- While all six were referred to the program by their JSA provider, three of them had heard about it first through family or friends.
- None of the six were particularly interested in a career in tourism prior to starting the program. However, all six have enjoyed their time both training and working and most of them expressed an interest in exploring the possibilities of future work in the industry, even those who no longer have a job with their host employer.
- Only a couple of the participants had any previous form of employment or work experience.
• All six participants had positive things to say about the program, even those who have not been able to retain their jobs. In general they said they’ve learned a lot; the people they worked with were, on the whole, nice to them; it’s helped them to realise what they enjoy, and don’t enjoy, and what they might like to do in the future; and it’s helped to build confidence levels.

• Apart from one who did not require the services of a mentor, all of the participants were full of praise for the support given to them by Trevor in particular, and TTNQ in general.

• Challenges they faced included:
  • Transport to and from work and training
  • Levels of confidence
  • General motivation
  • Personal/family issues

I.VII Other
Recruitment through Schools
TTNQ believes the program should perhaps be structured differently to attract a higher calibre of trainees. If the recruitment process was conducted through schools, there may be less Stream 3 and 4 participants involved. This would require a complete overhaul of the funding as the current funding arrangements through the JSA providers/Employment Pathway Fund, and DEEWR/PPP and IEP funds, stipulate that the participants must be registered with Centrelink and a JSA provider.

However, ‘youth’ still at school can register with Centrelink, even if they are not eligible to receive benefits, which would give them access to the JSA network and the associated funding and programs through the JSA providers. This needs to be further explored. Alternatively, an approach to the Department of Education could be made, to see if it has any funding available which could be accessed by school students for this type of training and work experience program.

Understanding the JSA Provider’s Operational Requirements
One of the JSA providers suggested that TTNQ – or whoever was going to run the program in future - should engage/consult with someone who has an understanding of how Job Services Australia operates. “It’s very complicated. I’ve been doing this job now for four or five years, and I’m still getting my head around it all.”

For example, he thought that it would be beneficial for the JSA provider to meet with the host employers who were going to (or had) offered their trainee a full time position at the end of their Cert III training, as they could assist them with wage subsidies and other support mechanisms that they might not be aware of. These type of meetings have not been facilitated to date by TTNQ.
1. **Background**

### 1.1 A Brief Introduction

*This report should be read in conjunction with Progress Report #1, delivered to the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (DRET) on 29th July 2011.*

In June 2011, DRET commissioned The 20/20 Group Australia Pty Ltd (The 20/20 Group) to conduct a detailed qualitative evaluation of TTNQ’s Indigenous Employment Program while it was underway in Cairns in 2011.

### 1.2 Evaluation Methodology

At the time of writing this second progress report, the evaluation methodology was broken down into three core phases as follows:

**Phase One (Completed):**
- **Timing:** July 2011
- **Key Activities:**
  - Interviews with program stakeholders/partners
  - First monthly report via phone (13th July 2011)
  - Deliver first progress report (29th July 2011)
- **Key Outcomes:** Preliminary assessment of the challenges and issues faced by the program coordinator and partners. Specifically:
  - understanding the processes of the program, the dynamics of the funding arrangements, the development and consolidation of the partner relationships, and recommendations on interventions, support and improvements that could be made to the program as it unfolds.

**Phase Two (Current):**
- **Timing:** August, September, October 2011
- **Key Activities:**
  - Reiterative interviews with program stakeholders/partners
  - Interviews with participants and employers
  - Second monthly report via phone (6th October 2011)
  - Deliver second progress report (31st October 2011)
- **Key Outcomes:**
  - Review and evaluation of the actions taken based on the recommendations in Progress Report #1, and the impact these have had on the program; assessment of the challenges and issues faced by the host employers; further explore the challenges and issues around the distribution and allocation of outcome funding between the agencies and partners; feedback from participants; recommendations on any further interventions, support and improvements that could be made to the program prior to its completion.

**Phase Three (To Be Confirmed):**
- **Timing:** November 2011 to March 2012
- **Key Activities:**
  - Reiterative interviews with program stakeholders/partners, participants and employers
  - Fourth monthly report via phone (13th November 2011)
Fifth monthly report via phone (13th December 2011)
Sixth monthly report via phone (13th January 2012)
Deliver draft evaluation report (20th February 2012)
Deliver final evaluation report (2nd April 2012)

This document is the second progress report, delivered at the completion of Phase Two. The methodologies and key outcomes for Phase Three will be confirmed with DRET following a review of this report.
2. **TTNQ Indigenous Employment Program**

The TTNQ Indigenous Employment Program started on 5th January 2011 with the appointment of the Program Coordinator and Mentor, and will be completed by 20th January 2012 when the final report is due from TTNQ.

Refer to Progress Report #1 for the following information regarding the program:

- Overview
- Timelines
- Program partnerships
- Program Funding

### 2.1 Outcomes to Date:

At the time of writing, the program outcomes can be summarised as follows:

- **31 participants started the program and completed their Cert II Training:**
  - Group 1: 11 participants – 14.2.11 start date
  - Group 2: 9 participants – 6.4.11 start date
  - Group 3: 11 participants – 1.7.11 start date
- **29 participants were placed with host employers**, 2 dropped out of the program
  
  Balance remaining: 29

- 8 further participants have since left the program prior to completion:
  - 2 have relocated out of Cairns
  - 1 was unable to complete due to pregnancy
  - 3 have disengaged with the program/were not ready for work
  - 2 did not attend their Cert III training

- **16 have completed their Cert III training:**
  - 3 are awaiting an outcome with their host employer.
  - 8 are no longer with their host employer, but are seeking work
  - 5 **have been offered full time employment or continued traineeships**

  Balance remaining: 5

- **5 have not yet completed their Cert III training**:
  - 2 are still training but not working
  - 3 are still training and still with their original host employer.

In summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed training and offered full time employment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed training, still working with host</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet to complete training, still working with host</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed training, no longer with host, seeking work</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet to complete training, no longer with host, seeking work</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left the program</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **INTERVIEWS WITH HOST EMPLOYERS, PARTICIPANTS AND PROGRAM PARTNERS**

Phase Two of the program evaluation has consisted of interviews with program partners, host employers, and participants. In total 20 interviews have been conducted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
<th>PRIMARY ROLE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOST EMPLOYERS:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diver's World</td>
<td>Paul Goodall</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
<td>5.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebel Hotel</td>
<td>Mandy Armstrong Jean Lapthome</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
<td>8.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raging Thunder</td>
<td>Chrisso Fulton</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
<td>13.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Cat</td>
<td>Steve Davies</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
<td>13.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shangri-la Hotel</td>
<td>Jae-Maree Lundstrom</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
<td>13.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quicksilver</td>
<td>Tess Pinches Nicole Richardson</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
<td>14.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novotel Oasis Hotel</td>
<td>Lisa Clarke</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
<td>14.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passions of Paradise</td>
<td>Allan Wallish Scotty Gardner</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
<td>21.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Club Hotel</td>
<td>Gary Ferguson</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
<td>22.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairns Visitor Information Centre</td>
<td>Val Shields</td>
<td>Host Employer</td>
<td>29.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARTICIPANTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Shennay Mundraby</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>26.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Danielle Nye</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>3.10.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Raeleen Nye</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>3.10.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Patricia Newbury</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>3.10.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Rhasheda Solomon</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>3.10.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Noel Mast</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>3.10.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRAM PARTNERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTNQ</td>
<td>Lesley Dan Andrea Fogarty</td>
<td>Project Coordinator Project Manager</td>
<td>31.8.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Don McLaughlin Sarah Brideson</td>
<td>Funding/Steering Committee</td>
<td>6.9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR/TTNQ/PTTF</td>
<td>Lesley Dan (TTNQ) Andrea Fogarty (TTNQ)</td>
<td>Project Coordinator Project Manager</td>
<td>26.10.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joy Harris (TTNQ)</td>
<td>Project Coordinator Project Mentor Training (Cert II)/Steering Committee Funding/Steering Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Susan Hardy (PTTF)</td>
<td>Project Coordinator Project Manager Training (Cert II)/Steering Committee Funding/Steering Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James Humpreyson (DEEWR)</td>
<td>Project Coordinator Project Mentor Training (Cert II)/Steering Committee Funding/Steering Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTTF</td>
<td>Susan Hardy</td>
<td>Training (Cert II)/Steering Committee</td>
<td>6.10.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITEC</td>
<td>Leigh Pollard</td>
<td>JSA Provider</td>
<td>1.11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVS</td>
<td>Veronica Killick</td>
<td>JSA Provider</td>
<td>2.11.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The key discussion points to arise from these interviews are summarised in Item 4 below.
4. Key Discussion Points

4.1 Feedback from Host Employers

Ten host employers were interviewed during September 2011. Between them, they have hosted 14 participants, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Host Employers</th>
<th>No. of Trainees</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Trainee Still Working with Employer</th>
<th>Trainee to Retain Job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diver’s World</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebel Hotel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raging Thunder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Cat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shangri-la Hotel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quicksilver</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novotel Oasis Hotel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passions of Paradise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Club Hotel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairns Visitor Information Centre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Still working</td>
<td>1 to retain 3 possibles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*While Raging Thunder cannot offer this trainee a full time position, TTNQ has secured him a job in the mining industry.

At the time of writing, one of the above participants has been offered a full-time position, while a further three will possibly be offered a position depending on the successful completion of their traineeship, the availability of a position, and/or budget considerations. One further trainee has secured a job in the mining industry as a result of the training he received through the program. These five trainees represent a 36% possible success rate from the 14 participants who were placed with host employers - based on this sample - which accounts for around half of the total program cohort.

The four who are no longer working with their host employer have dropped out of the program.

4.1.1 Awareness of the Program

First Contact

Most of the host employers were first made aware of the program through a direct contact by either Trevor Tim or Lesley Dan from TTNQ. A couple were told about it by work colleagues (sales and marketing staff) who had attended a TTNQ function. One was approached by Susan Hardy from PTTF. The program was underway and the first group of trainees already recruited when the host employers first heard of the program.

Knowledge of Program Stakeholders, Funding, Roll-out Etc

When asked if they had a clear understanding of who the stakeholders were, how the program was being rolled out and their level of satisfaction with the lines of communication, there was a mixed bag of responses.
Some were fully aware of how the program works, who was funding it and very comfortable with how they were being kept in touch with progress; while others knew little to nothing about the details of the program, except for the fact that it was being funded by Government and administered by TTNQ.

Those that knew less about the program admitted to either not really caring about the details, or just being too busy to focus on anything outside their immediate sphere of business. Those that knew more appeared to be the more ‘process driven’ type of person, who welcomes and absorbs details.

One relatively common thread was that few, if any, had a real understanding of how or when the program was ending, and what was going to happen to the trainees once the funding through TTNQ came to an end, even those who intended to keep the trainees on as full time employees.

This is not intended to infer that TTNQ has not kept them informed. It is just evidence of the fact that most of them have prioritised other areas of their business – especially in this economic climate – and have not paid any attention to, or had forgotten details of, the program.

**Recommendations**

Everyone filters information in different ways, especially when that information is secondary to the day-to-day operations of a business. Those that welcomed, and retained details provided by TTNQ, tended to be HR managers, or those directly involved with the recruitment and employment of staff. Those that didn’t were the busy operations managers, or ‘front line’ personnel, who have other priorities. While it could be argued it is not really important for the host employers to know every detail of the program, it is important that key details – such as how and when the program is ending – are reinforced, so that the trainees are not being told one thing by TTNQ, and another by their host employer.

TTNQ has, without doubt, provided this information, but it has not been absorbed by several of the employers. There is never going to be a perfect solution to this challenge, but it highlights the need for lines of communication to remain as flexible as possible to suit all types of recipients, so that those who want regular and detailed updates by email can receive them; and those that prefer face-to-face meetings when it suits them, should also be accommodated.
4.1.2 **REASONS FOR BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM**

Most of the host employers have taken on Indigenous and other young trainees in the past, either through structured programs such as this one, or through their own individual initiatives.

Not all of them have been happy experiences, and in one particular case, the employer was not going to get involved, but was persuaded to do so by Trevor Tims – with an exceptionally good outcome.

The overwhelming reaction from the ten employers was that they are basically happy to support any initiative which is going to help Indigenous people gain work experience and skills.

The fact that the program was fully funded was also cited as an incentive by a couple of them.

One said he had been struggling to find staff, but couldn’t really afford to take anyone on full time, so the program seemed like a good solution.

4.1.3 **SELECTION/RECRUITMENT OF THE TRAINEES**

While all the trainees were ‘interviewed’ by the host employers, they had, in the main, been pre-selected by TTNQ as appropriate candidates to work with the host employers, either because of previous/similar experience, or because the candidate had expressed a desire to work in a particular field.

One employer specifically asked for a female trainee because he had a small male-only team and felt that a female influence in his workplace would be a good influence, especially with a recent increase in the number of female customers coming into his shop.

Another employer was presented with two trainees and rejected one because they had concerns she would not be able to physically fulfill the role intended for her. TTNQ replaced the rejected trainee with an alternative, who was subsequently taken on.

A further employer said that when he has employed Indigenous people in the past it has always been through the normal recruitment process, ie they have advertised a position and interviewed them along with other candidates. “Because they have gone through the normal selection process, they tend to be a good fit for the job and they’re more motivated because it was them that approached us.”
While this would be the ideal way to recruit and select staff, it was never going to be practical for this program. TTNQ had a responsibility to find positions with host employers for 30 Indigenous people over a relatively short period of time, and they were not always going to be the perfect match.

The main lesson learnt in regard to the placement of participants with host employers has been that TTNQ put themselves under too much pressure at the beginning of the program. The Program Coordinator was appointed at the same time as the first group of participants started their initial training, and she had to hit the ground running, rather than giving herself time to become familiar with the structure of the program, talk to the JSAs, set up reporting procedures etc.

As a result, the process to identify and secure the necessary number of host employers for the first group was rushed and possibly not as well communicated as it could have been, resulting in a degree of ‘mis-matching’ between participants and employers.

In addition, the process of ‘selling’ the concept to the host employers on this first program was far more time consuming than it will be in future when employers know what to expect, and the right questions to ask.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

In future programs the Program Coordinator needs to be appointed well before the participants are brought in to give her/him time to build relationships and commitments from JSA providers and host employers.

Ideally, the host employers should be identifying specific roles/jobs for the participants to fill, rather than the other way round (ie the participants being matched to the host employer, who were then asked to find roles for them).

There may also be an opportunity for the recruitment process to be further built into the initial Cert II training than it already is, to give the participants real exposure to the process of applying for jobs and going through interviews. This would require the host employers to write ‘job ads’ and then get the participants to apply for the jobs which most appeal to them and attend interviews with the host employer. The result could mean a better fit between employers and trainees, but it could also result in less confident trainees being ‘left on the shelf’, thereby damaging their confidence even more, and needs to be approached with caution.

**4.1.4 THE HOST EMPLOYER EXPERIENCE**

**COMMON CHALLENGES AND ISSUES**

While only one of the ten host employers said he wouldn’t be involved in a similar program again, based on his experience with this one, several of
them had to deal with a number of challenges and issues as host employers.

1. The main issue - across the board - appears to be a general lack of work ethics, which manifests itself as **unreliability (ie the participants not turning up for work and not advising the employers)**, which is also linked to the challenge of employers learning how to effectively communicate with the Indigenous trainees. These were some of the common responses in this area:

   “I told her to just ring us if she’s not coming, but that doesn’t happen either.”

   “She needs to understand that she has a responsibility to the rest of the team, to her job and she can’t just not show up for work.”

   “I don’t know whether it comes back to trust, or approachability, or just language difficulties, but the biggest downfall was communication.”

   “We tried to make them comfortable with us. We have an open door policy and we told us to let them know if they had any problems, if they weren’t getting on with their supervisor, those sorts of things. But they continually wouldn’t show up for work and wouldn’t contact us.”

   “He’s had more sick days than any other member of my staff. He seems to just turn up when he wants to and if we can’t rely on him being there he’s no good to me. I told him to have a good think about it and we haven’t had any more incidents since, but he’s not a team player.”

   “She struggles with the concept of rosters and time keeping, turning up late or not at all. She said she would be happy to work at weekends, but then just wouldn’t turn up.”

   “I understand they come from a different culture, but they need to understand about work ethics and it needs to be reinforced in their initial training. Our guests are our number one priority. They have expectations. They don’t care if your car breaks down, or you had problems getting the kids to school. They’re paying for a holiday and for service and if they don’t get it, it’s detrimental for all of us. And if they don’t come, we’re going to have to lay staff off, so people will be out of work. I tried to explain all this to them.”

“We’re always happy to give them a chance, but I don’t think he’s grabbed the opportunity.”
“As long as we know they’re not going to come in, we can arrange something else, but if they just don’t show up at 8.30 there’s no time to call in agency staff or re-do the rosters and it puts pressure on the other staff and they become resentful.”

“They were both so close to finishing, but the reliability just wasn’t there. We tried to get them both back on track, with Susan’s help, but it just wasn’t working and as a commercial business we just had to make that call. It’s a shame, but we’re a business.”

“I think they need to focus more on things like work ethics before they start full time work. It’s not about skills; we can teach them that, it’s about their whole attitude to work.”

“They still need to act like employees, even if they are trainees.”

2. Linked to the issue of work ethics and reliability, is the issue of work readiness, which was only raised directly in a few cases, but is related to many of the challenges encountered by the host employers.

“I had really hoped that she would give it a go, but I think she just wasn’t ready for full time work. Part time would have been a better option for her.”

This particular employer took on two trainees, one just out of school and one a little older. She commented that she thought the younger one might have found the transition into full time work easier because she was barely out of school and had the discipline and structure of school life to draw on; whereas the older trainee had been out of the workforce for a number of years and was struggling with the expectations and challenges of full time work.

3. Another common issue is inherent shyness and lack of confidence, which can cause problems in the workplace, particularly in a very people-driven industry such as tourism.

“She’s good when she’s here, although she won’t talk to the customers. If we’re really busy behind the till she won’t even answer the phone, it will just ring out.” According to this employer, the trainee in question has come out of her shell with him and his staff (three of them in total), but she still struggles to engage with the customers.

“Maybe he hasn’t made the right choice about wanting to work in this industry. He’s not outgoing at all, so it seems a strange choice.”
“I’ve told her not to be scared of making mistakes, this is how we learn. I’ve told her I’m not going to yell at her if she makes a mistake, but she still won’t try.”

“She should have perhaps had an option to do part time work and the mentor should have spent more time with her in her first week to help her build relationships. People speak differently to them and they have a different sense of humour, so it’s hard for them to build the rapport they need to gain acceptance.”

“She started having confidence issues so we all sat down with her – Trevor, Susan and I – and tried to talk it through. We told her we didn’t understand why she was lacking confidence because she was doing so well and we were really happy with her progress, but she just shut down. Something had happened and she wouldn’t talk about it with us.”

“If nothing else, I think their confidence levels have grown during their time with us. We wish them all the best and I hope that they will be able to take something from the experience that they can benefit from further down the track.”

4. Several of the host employers talked about the influence of family to the Indigenous trainees. This can be both a positive and a negative.

“She has a lot of family problems and she brings the problems to work. Then she has to leave work early to go and sort the problems out. I’ve told her that we all have family problems, but she has to learn that she can’t bring them to work and disrupt the working day with them.”

“He was having family issues and we tried to be understanding but it got to the point where he was only turning up for one or two shifts a week.”

“We understand that they sometimes have family issues and they can’t always come to work, but we need to know if they’re not going to turn up. We’re not going to employ someone else while they’re with us and have them standing around doing nothing, so if they don’t turn up it puts extra pressure on the other staff members. I explained all this to them, we did lots of explaining.”

5. Another challenge was the lack of specific skills and qualifications held by the participants, although this was only evident in the more regulated sectors such as the dive/marine and white water rafting industries, where training in specific areas is mandatory; as opposed to non-skilled labour in the hospitality area.
One employer said the only real issue he had was that the trainee has no relevant qualifications or skills to be able to move up to the next level for a company such as his, and that basically makes him unhirable, however much they like him. The trainee wants to be a dive instructor, but to do so means doing a dive masters course, gaining a coxswains licence, and various other regulated qualifications, which all cost money. At the moment, with no qualified skills under his belt, the trainee can’t go out on the tender with passengers, he can’t cook in the galley, or give advice on dive/snorkelling equipment. All they can really use him for is general deck hand duties, washing up etc.

“That’s what’s wrong with these programs. We can provide the vehicle to see if they are suited to the industry and if they like it, but the program needs to take them through the next steps to get the skills they need to become hireable. The program doesn’t go far enough for people like him.”

The employer believes the program would be more effective if, say, it identified the top ten trainees, established what type of career they wanted to pursue, whether it’s on boats, or in hospitality, and then spent the funding on really up-skilling those in their chosen field. He also believes the program needs to better identify exactly what career the trainees want to pursue; it needs to find out what it is they want to do, not just give them a job in the tourism industry in general.

“Everyone’s done their bit. We’ve done our bit and he has done his, but at the end of the day the system is going to let him down because the program isn’t providing him with the skills and qualifications he needs to become a dive instructor. It will cost about $7,000 to put him through the dive masters course. Together with his time with us, and his Cert III training, he would then be much more employable in a job he wants to pursue. How much will it cost the system to continue to support him once the program is over?”

THE SUCCESS STORIES
The following comments came from a range of employers who have (or hope to be) offering their trainees full time positions. In virtually every case the successful outcome has come about because of three key ingredients:

- Effective two-way communication and understanding between the employer and the trainee so that if problems do arise they can be resolved
- The trainee’s willingness and eagerness to learn and progress
- The trainee’s growth in confidence which has been nurtured by the host employer

“She is doing 30 hours a week now. I think she’s enjoying the job and she’s making friends. She’s learned new skills and could apply for a
similar position anywhere.” This came from the host employer of two trainees, working at a large inner-city hotel. The trainee referred to has been offered a full time position. The second trainee hasn’t.

“We were very lucky to get her. She’s very young, just out of school, but she comes has a good family life and is quite religious. Her mum is very supportive of her, driving her to and from work, which I think makes all the difference.” This trainee is also one of two who went to another large inner-city hotel and has been offered a full time position. Again, the second trainee at the same hotel hasn’t.

“We sat her down and had a chat, explaining why it was important for her to call us. We understand that she sometimes needs time off, but we were worried about her. She didn’t realise that it mattered to us, that we were concerned about her, and she really opened up after that. She has been absent a couple of days since then, but she has called in to let us know.” This trainee is working for a reef tour operator. They had a couple of issues at the beginning of her employment, but she has since improved and has been offered a full time position.

“Now she comes to us and asks for help when she needs it. She has my number, she knows she can call me. I think working here has given her that confidence and she knows she’s part of our ‘family’ at work.”

“She’s fantastic with the kids. She talks to everybody, she’s really good at interacting with the customers. It doesn’t matter where they come from, China, Japan, she’s happy to talk to them all.”

“She’s a really good role model for Indigenous people. We often get customers commenting on her.”

“She’s been a real asset. The program provides lots of support to stop them falling, or help them if they are falling, but she’s exceeded our expectations and she’s a pleasure to work with. But it’s all about the individual. We were lucky to get her.”

“When she started we thought of her as just an extra pair of hands, but she’s not an extra any more. She’s one of the team. It’s not like having a work experience kid around. She’s one of us.”

“She never complains. You can assign her to anything. The training to be a cruise attendant involves ten different roles and she’s done most of them. We still need her to do some bar training, and she’s already shown an interest in it. She’s a good learner and very interested in progressing.”

“I think she can see this experience opening up doors for her as a long term opportunity. She can already see other jobs within Quicksilver that she’s interested in.”
“She’s doing a great job, but she’s still a bit shy. She needs to build her confidence. Sometimes she reverts back to not doing the routine things because a challenge will present itself and she doesn’t have the confidence to speak up or ask for help, but she’s getting better.”

“She has a great work ethic. We had an issue at the beginning when she had car problems and no credit on her mobile, and I couldn’t track her down. But I explained why she needed to let us know and once she realised the importance of it, she calls to let us know if she’s got a problem and can’t get to work. She got that straight away.”

“I think she didn’t call because she felt it was an awkward conversation she didn’t want to have, but I explained we didn’t know if she was OK, she could have had a car accident, and we were worried about her. Then she understood.”

RECOMMENDATIONS
The above examples of common challenges and success stories are not unexpected. Nor are the challenges and issues ever going to be completely resolved. However, they do highlight the importance of the following three elements in the program:

4. Cultural awareness training for the host employers, which should include the importance of effective communication in the workplace. However, this training must be undertaken by the relevant staff (ie direct line managers, or supervisors of the trainees) for it to be of any benefit.

5. Work readiness/work ethics training for the participants, which should be extended as necessary for individual participants.

6. The transition between training (Cert II) and full time work which, for some participants, might need to be a combination of part time work and further training, to ease them into a ‘real life’ work situation a little more gently.

In addition, it would appear that those trainees who had a ‘buddy’ at work (which was usually their direct supervisor, or a peer), seemed to overcome the challenges more easily than those who did not relate to their work colleagues as readily. While these are almost accidental relationships, and depend heavily on the unique characters of the individuals involved, it would seem appropriate to encourage and formalise a buddy system at work. This might include the following elements:

- Host employers to ask their staff who would be willing to become a ‘buddy’ – it must be voluntary.
- Buddies to be identified prior to participants starting work.
- Buddies provided with special training, in addition to cultural awareness training.
• Transition period between mentor and buddy prior to participant starting work, so that he/she gets to know and be comfortable with their work buddy before starting in the workplace.
• Host employers to put participant and buddy on same work roster wherever possible.
• Buddies brought together (ie a morning tea event) to meet, network, provide peer support etc.
• Buddies given priority access to program mentors.
• The implementation of the buddy system to be incorporated into the MoU with host employers.

SOLO PLACEMENTS V. GROUP PLACEMENTS
Four of the ten employers interviewed had taken on two participants each, while the other six had one each.

During the interviews, the employers of two participants were asked if they thought it was an advantage for the trainees to have a fellow participant at the same place of work.

Each of the four employers were large inner-city hotels where the participants were placed in a number of roles from kitchen duties, to gardening, and front desk to laundry/housekeeping.

None of the employers had given the question any thought previously and, while some of them could see the advantages of having a fellow participant at work, they didn’t think it applied in their cases as the participants had only met during their initial five week training and were not close friends.

Nor did they have much to do with each other on a day to day basis at work given the nature and size of the large properties they were working at.

One of the employers (who is retaining one trainee, but not the other) said that in their case she didn’t think it was an advantage at all, as one of the trainees was unimpressed with the way the other one was behaving. Another employer said she didn’t think it was an advantage for her trainees as they were both very different people.

RECOMMENDATIONS
There does not appear to be any significant advantage in group placements over solo placements, unless the two trainees were particularly close prior to starting the program and it was thought to be a benefit for both of them to be placed with the same host employer. Ultimately, this decision will come down to a ‘case by case’ basis.
**WOULD THEY DO IT ALL AGAIN?**

Only one employer said he would not do the program again, based on his experience with this one. Most of the others said they would be very happy to participate again; and a couple said they might, but with some reservations:

- One employer would like to do the program again, but would need a bit more clarity about the stakeholders’ roles: “It was a very muddy area around the roles of TTNQ and PTTF and who was supposed to do what.”
- Another said he would like to, but he would need to ‘sell’ it to his other staff. “I’m not 100% sure we’d do the program again. I might want to, but our supervisors and department heads would have to come on board. They’re the ones on the ground, doing the training and this program has burnt them slightly. They have to give up a lot of time to do the training. We were prepared for that, but it took much more time than we anticipated. We thought they would be more work ready than they actually were, and when they don’t turn up for work, the other staff have to do their job too.”

---

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the high proportion of host employers who would participate in the program again - even those who are not retaining their trainee – it has to be acknowledged that the fundamentals are in place, and the merits of the program are recognised.

It is recommended that the ‘good news stories’ and positive feedback from this program be utilised in the marketing and communications for future programs, as these forms of testimonials are powerful and genuine endorsements.
4.1.5 COST OF THE PROGRAM TO HOST EMPLOYERS

While the program did not cost the host employers anything from a financial perspective, each of them dedicated time and commitment to the trainees during their tenure.

Each of the employers interviewed was asked if they would have become involved in the program if they had been asked to make a financial contribution to the wages. The results varied between some who said they would have considered it, to others who said definitely not (especially given the tough economic situation the tourism and hospitality industry finds itself in at the moment).

One employer believed that the program might have worked better if the host employers had contributed. “I think it would have made us work a bit harder with them, be tougher on them and be more committed to their success.”

Other comments included:

“We probably would have if it had been within our resources at the time. However, things have been very tough in FNQ recently and we are trying to look after our existing staff and protect their jobs, so it’s unlikely we would have been able to pay additional salaries for the trainees.”

“We wouldn’t want to do it from Day One. You need at least three months to prove reliability and work ethics. We would need to establish a pattern of reliability before we were prepared to pay for them.”

“We’re just not in a position to do it. It’s too much of an unknown quantity and we’d want to prove them up for at least six months before we’d be happy to invest in them financially.”

“We probably would, but it depended entirely on how much, especially when you’re dealing with people with such raw skills base.”

“We do a lot of Indigenous training in the community through work experience, and we’ve had good and bad experiences. We’re happy to give anyone a chance, but with the state of the market the way it is, we have to think of the bottom line. If we had problems getting candidates we might consider contributing to the wages of a trainee, but it would have to be in a very different climate. As it is, we never have to advertise to fill the positions here. We’ve got a drawer full of applicants wanting a job.”

“If we were asked to pay we would have been much stricter about selecting the right candidates and we would have wanted more information about the whole program from the outset.”
This last comment about the employer’s ability to select the right candidate was a common thread when it was linked to paying for their salaries.

One employer said if he had been asked to contribute he would have paid more attention to the detail of the program in terms of roles and responsibilities. “Because we’re not paying for him, he is probably surplus to our needs on the island – an extra pair of hands. If we were asked to contribute to his salary I would have wanted to take someone on who was going to fulfil an actual function.”

Another said that he would certainly participate in the program again because he’s always willing to give someone a chance, but if he was asked to contribute he would want to see a selection of candidates and interview them with a specific role in mind, possibly someone with a cross section of skills so they could put them on the front desk to help with check-ins as well as assisting on the tours.

And another said she would consider contributing to the salaries of the trainees if they came on board with a really committed attitude. While she was given the option of interviewing the two trainees in advance of taking them on, she wasn’t given a choice of any other trainees. “I had the final say as to whether or not we’d take them on. I saw them before hand to make sure they were going to be a good fit, and they were both so keen at the beginning, so I was happy to give them a go; but if the hotel was expected to contribute to the salaries, we would want to have a choice of more candidates and would approach it as a normal recruitment process.”

Two employers gave very valid reasons for not expecting them to contribute to the salaries: One explained that she had to ‘sell’ the concept to her staff prior to putting the trainees on as it was, because the hotel only has a budget for a set amount of man hours worked, so if they had to pay for the trainees, the other workers’ hours would have been cut to fit them in. The fact that they got them for free meant no-one lost out and she was able to gain the support of her other workers for the trainees.

Another said they wouldn’t have contributed to the trainee’s salary if it had been a condition of the program, especially for the role she took on with no experience. “If it had been a normal job application I wouldn’t have looked at her without any experience. She wouldn’t have got a look in the door.” As it turned out, this trainee has now been offered a full time position.

RECOMMENDATIONS
While there is some merit in the notion of asking host employers to contribute to the wages in future programs, this needs to be balanced out against the negatives. The final decision should be made on a case by case basis depending on the economic climate, accessibility of funding and other influencing factors at the time:
### POSITIVES

- Host employers may be more committed to the trainee’s success if they are financially invested in that outcome.
- Employers would want to be more involved in the recruitment process and have a broader selection of trainees to choose from, which may have a beneficial ‘flow-back’ effect to the initial recruitment of trainees into the program.
- Less money would need to be sourced from external funding.

### NEGATIVES

- Loss of host employers willing (or able) to participate, resulting in a smaller pool to work with, and potentially less jobs available, especially in the current economic climate.
- Risk of some trainees being rejected due to their lack of confidence and experience, ie not being given a chance to prove themselves because they simply don’t interview well.
- Less tolerance and patience shown to trainees who may need a little more ‘hand holding’ than others.

#### 4.1.6 CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING

Most of the ten employers had sent representatives to the cultural awareness training, or had attended themselves. Those that went thought it was worthwhile, and a couple were really enthused by it. Those that had attended focused on what they had learned regarding the influence of family in Indigenous culture, and how this can effect Indigenous people in the workplace.

Those that didn’t go either said they just don’t have time for ‘that sort of thing” (ie anything that distracts them from the day to day operations of their business), or they couldn’t attend on the days/times it was offered. A couple said they didn’t go because they had already attended similar training, or they were familiar with working with Indigenous people. However, all the employers agreed that it was a good thing to include in the program.

"I really learned something from the cultural awareness training. You realise it’s not as clear cut as you think and that family is always going to come first, which can be a good or bad thing depending on the family. The problem is there is no acknowledgement from them that they have a responsibility to work. If it’s a family issue, they just don’t show up.”

"It was a real eye opener with regard to the influence of family. I found it very useful because it gives you empathy for their situation.”

"We were all getting jaded with the non-success rate of past experiences. It takes a lot of effort to take someone under your wing, but this program has opened their eyes to some of the issues the Indigenous trainees face and we’ll continue to send staff to the cultural training.”

“It gave me a really good insight into the family issues, the mob, that sort of thing. It was really good for me to know about the impact the family has with Indigenous people, and how important it is to them.”
Those employers (or their staff) who attended a cultural awareness training session agreed that it was worthwhile – some more than others. The challenge for future programs is how to make the cultural awareness training as effective as possible, and as meaningful as possible to those who attend.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Learning about Indigenous history – and the effect it still has on Indigenous people today - is important; but it is equally important to learn how to communicate effectively and empathetically with indigenous people in the workplace. While this message is best imparted by experts, it can be backed up, and made more compelling, by an employer who has been through the experience and is willing to share his or her story with other employers.

Some of the stories told by the employers interviewed for this report are everyday examples of what can go wrong and right for host employers and the trainees. They are also tangible and real situations that most other employers will relate to and remember when they find themselves in a similar situation.

Wherever possible, it is also recommended to conduct the cultural awareness training at the host employers’ place of work, especially for the larger employers. This would likely result in more of the employer’s staff being able to attend, and the sessions could be tailored to suit the particular employer.

However, all of the above recommendations ultimately come back to the commitment from the host employers and their understanding of the fact that there are some fundamental cultural and communication differences when it comes to employing indigenous trainees.

**4.1.7 MENTORS**

The employers were unanimous in their praise for the back up support of the mentors and agreed that it made all the difference to the program.

“Trevor went round to her house to see her, to help. The mentoring part of the program has worked really well”.

“Communication with TTNQ and the mentors has been good – there’s always someone to talk to if you need it”

“If they are mentored properly they can do really well. They have to be able to see what they can achieve.

“The biggest thing that sold the program for me was the support mechanisms they have in place. Trevor is there to focus on the issues behind the scenes like transport, housing and family. The program has good solid mentors and that’s what’s needed.”
“We have to start somewhere to break the mentality of the welfare cycle and the program has all the key fundamentals in place to make it work. It’s got the support networks in place to make sure, for example, that their families are supporting them.”

RECOMMENDATIONS
The mentor role is one of the most important features of the program and, since TTNQ appointed a second mentor in September, this support mechanism has proved to be even more effective.

This form of support, however, doesn’t need to begin and end with the program assigned mentor; nor should it be limited to support for just the trainees. Mentoring can be provided in the form of a ‘buddy’ system at work for the trainees, as well as peer-to-peer mentoring between employers. The transfer of knowledge from one host employer who has been through the experience, to another one who is just beginning the journey, could be an effective way of providing support for all the key players, not just the trainees.

4.1.8 STATE OF THE TOURISM MARKET/INDUSTRY
The state of the tourism industry in Cairns has definitely affected the decision making process for many of the employers. Even one employer who mainly services the local market, so is not as badly affected by the down turn in tourism numbers as some of the other host employers, has struggled over the past 12-18 months with the general down turn in the economy. He said that when TTNQ’s funding ceased, he might be able to offer his trainee employment for one day a week, but that would be the limit of it.

One employer said the state of the market would definitely play a role in their decision to retain their trainee at the end of the program: “Because of the state of the tourism market we’re not taking on a lot of new staff, and when we do I get to pick and choose. I get two or three emails a day from people who really want to work for us, so I get the pick the cream.”

Another agreed that the state of the tourism industry has played a part in their decisions. “Putting the trainees on and keeping them would be a way easier decision if the boats are full. Times are tough and we’ve had
to reduce staff as it is. We’re watching every dollar at the moment. The funding element of the program has definitely tipped the decision in her favour. It was money well spent in her case.”

If the market was more resilient, another employer said he may have decided to preserve with his training on the river because having a properly trained local Indigenous river guide would undoubtedly be a benefit to the business, but they are not training any new guides at the moment. “Having him as a river guide would definitely be an asset but it’s expensive to train them and it takes around 10 to 12 weeks to train a guide. They have to be the right type of person to start with, and they have to be motivated, they have to want to do it.”

One said they were still happy to support the program even though the tourism industry was in a slump. “We do our own job ready program aimed at Indigenous trainees. We do an intensive one week course and we recently interviewed 19 candidates, put 12 through the program and have placed nine at our properties around Cairns. But we’re still happy to support other IEPs.”

4.1.9 General Comments

Practical work experience: One employer suggested there should be more involvement from their end in the participants’ Cert III training, designing work experience around their training modules: “I think the program is a brilliant idea and we’d be happy to be more involved with their Cert III modules if they needed it. For example, if they are doing customer service in their training, we’d be happy to give them some experience in answering phones, things like that. We need to know what we can do to help more.”

While this sentiment is admirable, it is unlikely to be practical for some of the smaller operators, but should be encouraged for those who wish to get more involved.

Benefits of the length of the program: One employer believes the program is good in that it gives people a chance to really experience the work over several months, rather than just coming in for a week or two of work experience when they don’t really learn anything. “Over that period of time they have to be building skills and confidence. It’s a good chunk of time and I think that’s an important part of the program.”

Indigenous ‘face’ of tourism: Several of the employers agreed that it was a benefit to have Indigenous employees: “It’s hard to quantify the benefit, but I think it’s a great thing. Indigenous culture is all part of the experience of coming to Australia and if people have the time to stop and chat and find out more about them, it’s a great interaction for the tourists. We’d love to see more of it.”
Another said: “It’s definitely a benefit for us to have an Aboriginal person behind the counter. International visitors in particular are always looking for the Indigenous experience, and having the information they need given to them by an Aboriginal person means more to them.”

**Intangibles:** The employers’ feedback was peppered with comments about the program’s intangible benefits for the trainees. These were mainly expressed as the growth in confidence, evident in so many of the participants. “You could see it in some of the trainees even at the end of their initial training period. They had grown in confidence even before they started work. Most of them were ready for full time work, although a few had issues that I don’t think anyone could have foreseen.”

Another said: “The time he’s spent with us hasn’t been wasted, and he will have learned a lot over the period. He’s been dealing with up to 80 passengers a day on the boat, which has given him interpersonal skills he wouldn’t otherwise have been exposed to.”

### 4.2 Feedback from Participants

Six participants were interviewed during October. Their current status on the program is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Trainee still working with employer</th>
<th>Type of employer</th>
<th>Type of work</th>
<th>Trainee to retain job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Kitchen hand/waitressing</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Kitchen hand</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Housekeeping/cleaning</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Booking Agent</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dive/Tour</td>
<td>Deck hand</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3 still working</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2 Possibles</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of the participants may possibly retain their jobs. The host employers are certainly impressed with their progress and have expressed a desire to retain them, but it will depend on the final outcomes of their training, and the employers’ financial ability to provide a position.

### 4.2.1 Awareness of the Program

All six participants interviewed were referred to the program by their JSA provider, although three out of the six had first heard about it through family or friends. Two of the six were sisters, one following the other into the program.

One participant was referred by Neato, one by QITE, two by ITEC, and two by PVS. It is understood that ITEC has referred the majority of the 31 participants in total.
4.2.2 Reasons for Participating in the Program

None of the six participants were particularly interested in a career in tourism prior to starting the program. One of them had thought about applying to become a cook in the navy and thought that the program would be a good way to get some experience in a commercial kitchen without signing up for the armed forces. She has since revised her ambitions to be a cook and is glad she didn’t commit herself to the navy.

While there was no burning ambition to work in tourism at the start of the course, all six participants have enjoyed their time both training and working and most of them expressed an interest in exploring the possibilities of future work in the tourism industry – even those that no longer have a job with a host employer.

One of the participants – who never considered tourism prior to the program – now wants to become a dive instructor, but will have to complete his ticket first, which means finding the necessary funding to pay for the course. Another would like to pursue a career in tourism as long as it’s back office work, as she enjoys working with computers but doesn’t enjoy the interaction with tourists/general public as much.

4.2.3 Previous Work Experience

While most of the six participants were quite young (and a couple of them only recently out of school), only a couple had any work experience prior to the program, and both of these were in retail jobs. One had done a schools based apprenticeship in business administration. This same participant has been offered a full time job by her host employer.

4.2.4 Attitudes to Program

All six participants had positive things to say about the program, even those who have not been able to retain their jobs. In general they said they’ve learned a lot; the people they worked with were, on the whole, nice to them; it’s helped them to realise what they enjoy, and don’t enjoy, and what they might like to do in the future; and it’s helped to build confidence levels.

On an individual level, feedback included:

One participant who is working for a large inner city hotel, in housekeeping (and has been offered a full time position once the program
ends), said that she enjoys the work, “I’m always doing something”, and she’s learned about how the hotel operates from the perspective of housekeeping. She tried working at the front office first, but didn’t like it. “There was too much information to process, the phones were always ringing and they expected me to work on my own after two weeks. I didn’t like it”. She was moved to housekeeping at her request. The other staff at the hotel are nice to her, but they’re all quite a bit older.

Another also worked for a large inner city hotel and started in the kitchen, but didn’t enjoy it. She didn’t like being told to peel hundreds of carrots. There was only males working in the kitchen with her and, while they were nice enough to her, they were typical ‘boys’, trying to be funny.

She then worked as a waitress, which she enjoyed. In the future she thinks she would like to work in admin, or as a receptionist and she’s hoping to do a Cert III in administration at TAFE. While she hasn’t found a full time job through the program it has given her more ideas on what she would like to do.

She said there isn’t anything she would change about the program “I just like to go with the flow”, and she hasn’t found anything particularly hard. If she hadn’t had this opportunity, she thinks she would still be back at square one, looking for work. She said that her JSA provider hasn’t really helped her “I used to go in once a fortnight and just hang around. I wasn’t getting anywhere.” She hasn’t heard from them in the last 6 months.

Another participant has been dismissed from two hotels where she worked in the kitchens, which she enjoyed but “It’s not what I want to do”. The people were nice and easy to get on with. She is currently looking for a job and finishing the training. Ideally she would like to work in the bar and gaming industry.

A second participant who has also lost her job (as a cleaner in housekeeping), has never done a program like this before by has loved it, despite losing her job. Her biggest challenge through the program has been transport – getting to and from work.

The other participant who may be offered a full time position with her host employer (Visitor Information Centre) didn’t request to be placed with
them, but did say she didn’t want to go to a hotel “I didn’t want to do any front office work”. She has now done a little counter work for the VIC, and it has definitely helped with her confidence levels.

The other staff at the VIC are good to work with “They’re easy to get along with.” She did admit that the hardest thing about the program has been ‘being committed, turning up for work and the training.”

4.2.5 MENTORS AND OTHER SUPPORT MECHANISMS
Apart from one of the six participants who hasn’t needed the services the mentors (she comes from a very supportive family and her mother drives her to and from work each day), all the others were full of praise for the support given to them by Trevor in particular and TTNQ in general. One participant said that her biggest challenge on the program has been “Trevor and the others would give me a kick up the bum and tell me to get on with it. I wouldn’t have finished the training without their support and I’m really thankful.”

Another said she has found the mentors very supportive because “I need someone to push me because I’m the sort of person who gives up easily. I’m not very self-disciplined.”

4.2.6 GROUP PLACEMENTS V. SOLO PLACEMENTS
Only one of the six participants had been placed with a host employer along with a fellow trainee. The other trainee only lasted as long as the first orientation day. They hadn’t know each other prior to doing the initial training together. “I guess it could be good to have someone else there at work who’s going through the program, but it’s good to expand your horizons and meet other people too.”

The feedback from other participants was similar. On the whole they said that they didn’t think it would have made any difference to them having a fellow trainee at work, although in theory it sounds like a nice idea.

4.2.7 THE BEST AND WORST BITS
The participants were asked what they thought the best and the worst bits of the program were, and only one of them could come up with something negative: “The worst part about the program was having to get out of bed in the mornings!” The best bits were expressed as:

“I liked everything, it was way different and I got to go places. It wasn’t like sitting around and having to write stuff. I like getting out and doing things.”
“I’m more motivated now. Before, I didn’t want to work, but now I’ve got certificates.”

“I’ve enjoyed everything about the program, the training, everything. I can’t complain about anything.”

“It’s been a real life saver.” This particular participant said if she hadn’t had this opportunity she thinks she would just be back ‘drinking piss’.

“It’s taught me lots of skills”

“I can’t think of anything that’s been the worst”

“I’ve enjoyed everything about it.” This participant said that if he hadn’t done the course he probably would have gone back to Gove where he had been previously living, but he wants to stay and work in Cairns.

“My cousins want to do it now.”

4.3 FEEDBACK FROM PROGRAM PARTNERS

4.3.1 TTNQ

Funding/Outcome Payments: TTNQ advised that they had completed its review of its administrative overheads, and expended and anticipated funding dollars. As a result it had requested a variation to its contract with DEEWR to change the weighting of the outcome payments to better reflect the actual cash flow demands of the program.

TTNQ believes that if the program is to be repeated, the trainees should contribute a nominal sum to their Cert III training not just to assist with the budget, but also to get them to ‘invest’ in their own future, rather than view the program as “just another course provided by the Government”; and to commit to the term of the program.

Similarly, it believes the program should perhaps be structured differently to attract a higher calibre of trainees. If the recruitment process was conducted through schools, there may be less Stream 3 and 4 participants involved.

However, this would require a complete overhaul of the funding as the current funding arrangements require the involvement of the JSA providers, and their ability to provide $1,500 per participant through the Employment Pathway Fund for the initial Cert II training, as well as additional incidental costs such as work uniforms and one-off training needs. Other contributors to the Cert II training are the PPP and IEP funds, both of which require the participants to be registered with Centrelink.

Mentor: It had also requested additional funding from DEEWR for a second mentor, who joined the program in September.
Progress Report #1: TTNQ was also keen to correct what it believed to be misconceptions in Progress Report #1:

- The Program Coordinator was particularly concerned regarding the inference that Trevor Tims, the mentor, was not ‘tough enough’ with the trainees and was therefore lacked some of the necessary skills as a mentor. She believes that Trevor has displayed a well balanced approach in ensuring that the trainees learn how to do things for themselves, without leaving them out in the cold when they really need help or direction.
- The entire TTNQ membership was advised about the cultural training from the beginning of the program, not after the event once the participants had been placed with host employers.
- TTNQ met with all the JSAs at the beginning of the program, but the Program Coordinator acknowledged that they didn’t know at that time how the JSAs operated or what sort of information they would require as the program progressed.

It was TTNQ’s belief that the smaller host employers had been better able to build relationships with the trainees, where there is more opportunity for one-on-one mentoring and supervision; rather than the bigger hotels, for example, where the trainees can become ‘just another number’ in the system. All the success stories from the program to date have been because of support systems/buddies at work.

4.3.2 DEEWR

Don McLaughlin was the Senior Contract Manager for DEEWR and on the TTNQ IEP Steering Committee. In August 2011 he was moved into a new position and Sarah Brideson took over his role. Sarah went on maternity leave in October 2011, and DEEWR’s representative on the Steering Committee is now James Humpreyson.

Funding/Outcome Payments: According to Sarah, discussions were underway with TTNQ (in September) to amend the outcome payments to better reflect the reality of some participants not finishing the program, and TTNQ needing to cover its fixed costs. Lessons have been learned by all parties in the design of the payment structures with regard to this issue.

Mentor: DEEWR advised that at the program design phase it was assumed the services of the program mentor would be staggered/phased along with the intake of participants, ie by the time the second group was recruited, the first group would need less mentoring and so on.

The reality has been completely different, with some participants requiring less mentoring and others requiring more intense mentoring throughout the program, increasing as they completed their Cert II training and went in to full time employment, not decreasing. The demands on the mentor therefore did not match the hours or dollars it was assumed would be required.
DEEWR is involved in another project where the requirement was that the mentor must have specific mentor qualifications and training, and that this might be a good idea for future programs which included mentoring.

**JSA Providers:** DEEWR believes the JSA providers need to be involved in conversations with the host employers now (September 2011) to see how they can assist or what needs to be done to ensure that the trainees don’t ‘fall through the cracks’ at the end of the program.

### 4.3.3 PTTF

**Mentor:** As a result of Joy Harris coming on board as an additional mentor, Susan Hardy from PTTF is now paid – as was originally intended – to be a consultant to the program and provide answers and guidance to the stakeholders on an as-needs basis. She also remains on the Steering Committee. She is therefore not familiar with the day to day progress of the program in its final phase.

**Participant Recruitment:** Susan did not considered recruiting from schools, to broaden the ‘net’ when looking for appropriate candidates for the program, because she said it wasn’t possible under the existing funding which only covers people who are registered with Centrelink/JSA provider. This excludes people still at school.

**Progress Report #1:** Susan’s general feedback on Progress Report #1 included the following comments:

- According to Susan, the funding was increased from 30 to 31 participants with the sole intention of placing one of the trainees with TTNQ to provide administrative support to the Program Coordinator, or to free up another TTNQ staff member to do the same.
- While only 11 participants were recruited into the first group, there were several more who originally applied through the JSA providers. By the time the two day recruitment process started, some of these had dropped out, and by the time the two day induction process was over and the program was due to start, the numbers had whittled down to 11. So, while PTTF/TTNQ only had 11 people to put into group 1, the JSA providers did in fact refer several more than this number.
- Susan said that she had made presentations to all the JSAs long before the program started and told them everything they needed to know about the program, so she was surprised by some of the comments from the JSAs that the additional costs they were asked to cover were unexpected. She said since the beginning of the program, many JSA staff members have transferred to other JSAs, or left to be replaced by newcomers and that it’s next to impossible to keep everyone in touch all the time. One of the JSA managers, for example, had asked her to reduce the number of staff members she was emailing updates to and that she, the manager, would keep her staff in touch, which hasn’t happened.
4.3.4 **STEERING COMMITTEE**

A Steering Committee meeting was held on 26th October in Cairns. Attendees included:

- James Humpreyson: DEEWR
- Andrea Fogarty: TTNQ
- Lesley Dan: TTNQ (Program Coordinator)
- Trevor Tim: TTNQ (Program Mentor)
- Joy Harris: TTNQ (Program Mentor)
- Susan Hardy: Pathways to the Future
- Melanie Wicks: The 20/20 Group

Apologies came from Darren Bara of DEEDI, and Leon Epong from AEC.

TTNQ confirmed it had completed its review of its administrative overheads, and expended and anticipated funding dollars, and had requested a variation in its contract with DEEWR to amend the outcome payments to better reflect the actual cash flow demands of the program. It had also requested additional funding for a second mentor (Joy Harris), who joined the program in September.

The Steering Committee did not believe additional literacy and numeracy training was required, (as raised in Progress Report #1) as it was something that the trainers were delivering as part of the Cert III training anyway. It was also evident that sometimes the need for additional literacy and numeracy training does not emerge until the participants start in the workplace and are faced with specific industry/technical writing challenges. It would seem prudent, however, to allow for some additional training funds to cover this issue on an as needs basis in future programs, but the need can be very hard to predict with any accuracy until the program is well underway.

TTNQ has taken a much more proactive role with the JSA providers, keeping them up to date on the progress of each participant, providing them with copies of relevant documentation (pay slips etc), and discussing any issues which need to be addressed. Joy Harris has been accompanying the participants to their JSA appointments; and TTNQ has been assisting them with their resumes and supporting them to find employment as needed. TTNQ has also been educating the participants about the JSA providers and what services they can offer them, as it became evident that many of the participants were unaware of the JSA providers’ role.

Melanie Wicks ran through some of the proposed recommendations in the draft Progress Report #2 and asked for the Steering Committee’s feedback.

**Buddy System at Work:** The Steering Committee agreed that a buddy system at work was a beneficial addition to the program, and suggested ways in which the concept could be structured and improved (ie special training for buddies, a transition period between the mentor and buddy, etc).
Placement of Trainees with Host Employers: The Steering Committee acknowledged that not every trainee placement was a successful one, and that the host employers were not given a selection of trainees to recruit from, but the major issue was one of timing. TTNQ had a responsibility to find positions with host employers for 31 Indigenous people over a relatively short period of time. The Steering Committee agreed that in future programs the Program Coordinator needs to be appointed well before the participants are brought in to give her/him time to build relationships and commitments from JSA providers and host employers.

Ideally, the host employers should be identifying specific roles/jobs for the participants to fill, rather than the other way round (ie the participants being matched to the host employer, who were then asked to find roles for them).

Cultural Awareness Training: The Steering Committee suggested that the cultural awareness training should ideally be conducted at the host employers’ place of work, especially for the larger employers. This would likely result in more of the employer’s staff being able to attend, and the sessions could be tailored to suit the particular employer.

The agreed that cultural awareness training should have as much emphasis on learning how to communicate with Indigenous people in the workplace, as it does on Indigenous history. However, ultimately it comes back to the commitment from the host employers and their understanding of the fact that there are some fundamental cultural and communication differences when it comes to employing indigenous trainees.

Trainees Wages Funding – DEEDI and QAS: Under the funding agreement, DEEDI pays for around 80% of the trainees’ wages until they finish their Cert III training or for six months (the balance comes from QAS through User Choice). There was concern raised by some of the stakeholders in Progress Report #1 that if a trainee finished their Cert III training before the six months was up and the host employer was unable to retain them, there would not be any funding available to provide them with employment/work experience for the balance of the program. This situation has not eventuated.

At the time of writing, there are 16 participants who have completed Cert III: Five of them have been offered full time positions with their host employers and no longer require funding contributions towards their wages. The balance have not achieved a Completion Certificate from their employer (TTNQ) because they have either elected to do further modules, or they are not considered to be fully work ready and have the required practical skills in the workplace. As such they will continue their traineeship until TTNQ believes they qualify for a Completion Certificate.

However, another issue which has only recently come to light is the trainee wages contribution provided through QAS/User Choice which was budgeted at $4,000 per participant. In some cases, the TTNQ IEP program
is deemed to be a continuation of training, which means that some participants have not qualified for the full $4,000. This, again, has reduced TTNQ’s ability to access all the funding it originally thought it would receive.

TTNQ could have checked with QAS prior to signing up the participants for the program to ensure they qualify for the full funding amount, but this was overlooked at the time. It is recommended that if the program is to be repeated this becomes a condition of the initial selection process for participants.

Other Funding – DEEWR. TTNQ has requested a variation to its contract with DEEWR which will change the weighting of the outcome payments, increasing the payment generated at the completion of Cert III training, and lowering the payment generated at the commencement of employment post traineeship. This will provide TTNQ with more surety of the income and cash flow required to cover commitments such as the initial training costs, wages and on-going administrative expenses.

Budgeting Issues: The original budget was calculated using a standard trainee award wage, Monday to Friday, @ 38 hours a week for 26 weeks. The reality is that trainees in the tourism industry are sometimes required to work more than eight hours a day (especially on the boats), and more often than not at weekends. In other words, the budget did not take into account the overtime and other additional wages costs involved in working in an industry such as tourism, and this again has impacted on TTNQ’s funding and cash flow demands.

4.3.5 JSA PROVIDERS
Two follow up meetings were conducted with JSA providers: ITEC and PVS. ITEC referred 19 participants to the program and PVS referred four, which represents around 75% of the entire cohort.

At the time of writing, the outcomes for the JSA providers are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JSA Provider</th>
<th>Gained Work</th>
<th>Still with Host Employer, Awaiting Outcome</th>
<th>Not working/Job Seeking</th>
<th>Not completed Cert III</th>
<th>Not working/Job Seeking</th>
<th>Dropped out of Program</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITEC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QITE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Find</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neato</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ITEC**
ITEC has nine out of the 10 drop-outs, but has six of its job seekers still employed, two of whom have been offered full time jobs by their host employer.
Stakeholder Communications: The manager of ITEC said that the flow of information coming from TTNQ had definitely improved over the last few months, and he was now getting everything he needed to fulfill his reporting requirements, which had been an issue with some of the JSA providers earlier in the program.

Value for Money: When asked if he still thought the program was not delivering value for money from ITEC’s perspective, he said this was still his view, but to a degree, and he acknowledged this was ITEC’s problem as much as the program’s. “If we were to do it again we wouldn’t refer as many job seekers as we did. I think our previous manager got a little over excited at the beginning of the program and sent too many, some of who just weren’t up to the standard required. If I was to do it again I’d be a lot pickier about who we chose and referred into the program. You can never be 100% sure about the outcomes, but I would definitely send those that I thought had the best chance. If we are more selective about who we put up, then it’s going to be a better outcome for TTNQ as well.”

Outcomes: At an initial meeting in July, the manager was concerned that ITEC wasn’t going to be able to demonstrate the outcomes it needed to receive its funding because many of the trainees were not doing 30+ hours a week. His perception now is that those who are still working are probably doing the required hours, so he saw this as an improvement.

While he wasn’t sure of the exact status of all 19 trainees that ITEC had referred, he believed that only a handful were still working, and three or four might get a full time job at the end of the program. While this isn’t a great outcome from a starting gate of 19, he acknowledged that ITEC was at fault and hadn’t thought the whole thing through from the beginning, sending too many inappropriate trainees into the program in the first place.

Those that had dropped out (and still remain in Cairns) are now back in the Centrelink system and back with ITEC, seeking work. He said these ones had definitely picked up some skills and experience through the program, but were in effect back to square one. “They will definitely be easier to place. The Cert III training will certainly help, as well as the regular work hours. They got into a routine, a working mentality, and they’re much more motivated than they were.”

The manager was asked if the program was delivering on the 13 and 26 weeks of consecutive work requirement and he said he thought it probably was. JSA providers only have 5 days leeway to re-place job seekers during those two periods if they move from one job to another, which caused a bit of a problem with one of the trainees, but he thought that most of them were now approaching the end of the 26 weeks. Obviously, for those that dropped out of the program, it has cost ITEC the original $1,500 with little or no return.
Host Employers: According to the manager of ITEC, TTNQ had not facilitated any meetings between ITEC and the host employers, but he didn’t think that was necessary while they were still doing their traineeship. “I don’t think it would be appropriate. There would be too many people involved and it would get too complicated. As long as TTNQ is keeping us in the loop with the trainees’ progress, that’s fine.”

However, he thought that it would be beneficial for ITEC to meet with the host employers who were going to (or had) offered their trainee a full time position at the end of their Cert III training, as ITEC could assist them with wage subsidies and other support mechanisms that they might not be aware of.

Improvements to the Program: When asked what improvements he would make if he could redesign the program to work better from the JSA’s perspective, he said that if the program funding for the Cert II training could all come from the PPP or IEP fund, it would save the JSA providers having to take it from the EPF (the current set up is around 33% of the Cert II training costs come from the EPF).

He was asked how the program could recruit participants from schools, as the current funding structure requires them to be registered at Centrelink. He thought they would definitely get a better calibre of participants from schools, but he wasn’t sure how it would be practical from a funding perspective. He wondered if the Department of Education might be able to assist. He did say that young people still at school could register with Centrelink, even if they were not eligible to receive benefits, which would give them access to the JSA network and the associated funding and programs through the JSA providers.

He also suggested that TTNQ who whoever was going to run the program in future, should engage/consult with someone who has an understanding of how Job Services Australia operates. “It’s very complicated. I’ve been doing this job now for four or five years, and I’m still getting my head around it all.”

“The program is a good concept. Promoting Indigenous people to work in tourism is exactly what we should be doing in Cairns. I think it should certainly be repeated, but with a few tweaks to improve the program. I think we’ve all learned lessons from it, and you couldn’t expect it to run perfectly the first time around. I think we would certainly be involved again if it was to be repeated, but we wouldn’t put up as many participants.”

PVS

PVS referred four participants to the program, all of whom have completed their Cert III training. Two of them have been offered a full time job, one is still with their host employer, waiting for an outcome, and the remaining participant is not currently working, but actively looking for a job.
Stakeholder Communications: The manager of PVS said the communications from TTNQ have definitely improved and she is now getting the information she needs for her own reporting requirements. In the early stages there was a problem when PVS wasn’t being informed about the participants’ placements with host employers until after the event, which meant that PVS could not enter them onto their system to qualify for their outcome payments.

Value for Money: She still believes the program is expensive. “When we help job seekers, it’s about getting them out of the welfare system mentality. They need to learn to budget and become self-reliant when they start working and earning their own money, but they keep coming back to the JSAs with their hand out for all the extras. The program needs to educate them more about budgeting. We’re not a bottomless pit of money.”

When asked if she thought the participants should contribute a nominal amount towards their Cert III training she said it might be difficult to manage because not all of them were in full time work while they were doing their Cert III, but they should be paying for their own incidentals and extras. “Some of the extra tickets we were paying for cost around $120 and they can afford that while they’re working. It puts a value on the end result for them, otherwise people do course after course just for the sake of it because someone else is paying”.

Outcomes: All four of her participants exited the Centrelink/JSA system during the program, but she thinks at least one has now re-registered, and there’s a question mark over a couple of others. “They are definitely better trained now as a result of the program, and better qualified, but we have got a lot of Indigenous people with a lot of qualifications on our books, and no jobs for them. The program has certainly made them easier to market to employers, but IEPs need to provide jobs at the end of them.”

The manager said she has seen so many Indigenous trainees grow in confidence and optimism, only to ‘crash and burn’ when there’s no job at the end of it. “I understand that the host employers can’t guarantee them long term jobs when they take them on, but once they have trained them, even some casual work would be better than nothing.”

The program has delivered on the 13 and 26 weeks employment outcomes, and her job seekers have also fulfilled the requisite number of hours worked each week.

Host Employers: PVS hasn’t met with any of the host employers, and the manager thinks it would have been a good idea for TTNQ to facilitate these meetings as the JSAs can provide additional support which the employers may not know about.

Improvements to the Program: If she was to suggest any changes, it would be that the program funding should reflect the actual costs of the
program. “We were happy to pay the initial $1,500 because we could see the potential in the program, but we weren’t happy when they kept constantly coming back to us for all the extra costs to do things like a marine safety ticket.”

She explained that PVS budgets $500 per job seeker, so paying the initial $1,500 potentially meant they had less to spend on someone else, and the participants on the program had essentially ‘used up’ their allocation of funding. “It’s swings and roundabouts, so we might be able to find the funds for them if they come back to us after this program, but what do you do with them next if the jobs just aren’t there?”

PVS would be involved again if the program was to be repeated, if they were confident there were going to be jobs at the end of it. “I’ve seen the development of the four guys we put up and it’s been awesome, but they have to have a job at the end of it, and if their employment outcome is looking iffy, we need to know about it so we can help to keep them on track.”

The other improvement she would make is to ensure that the participants are better educated about budgeting their own money. “Some of them are earning good money in their jobs, but the program needs to better educate them about not expecting endless handouts.”