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HILTU, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND 
DHS-CENTRELINK: THE PRAXIS OF GOOD

My brief is the "how to do" community development especially in relation to Homeless, Indigenous and Long term Unemployed (HILTU). I want to make four brief comments before we look at some specific examples.

It is not what you think you are – but what you think – you are. I understand that Department of Human Services (DHS) - Centrelink is moving further towards a community development model. Social Work as a whole, at least in the west, has been dominated by individual models of service delivery. This may have arisen from the concept of the “person-in-the-environment” (I prefer the term “participants-in-the-environment”), notions of individual freedom, client self-determination and the general move towards privatisation – whether that be of public assets or of private space, and public thought. We have privatised child care, aged care, social care, parks, education and schools, prisons, power and most importantly, the way that we think.

The challenge for Department of Human Services - Centrelink Social Workers in moving to a different model – in moving to community development - will be in changing a mindset. My old organization of Community Corrections faced a similar challenge. Was community development simply casework and case management done in the community - that is the only change was in the setting – no longer casework/case management in the goal but casework/case management in the community? Was it about taking old structures and approaches, such as a command and control structure in the prisons and imposing the command and control structures in the community? Or was it about a radical way of co-partnering in the communities to achieve both the community and the organization's goals and objectives? I use the word co-partnering quite deliberately for I do think that the best outcomes will occur with a genuine partnership not an imposition of either community or organizational goals. John McKnight (1997) in "A 21st Century map for Healthy Communities and Families" contrasts real partnerships with outreach, volunteering and co-option possibilities in community and family development.

My second brief comment: the groups we are thinking about today (Homeless, Indigenous and Long term Unemployed – HILTU) have many differences and some similarities. I will not be able to do justice to the differences in the time allowed. I would also like to recognize that they are not necessarily discrete issues – but can be found in the same homeless, Indigenous, unemployed person. The issues can be very much interconnected. Hulse and Saugeres (2009) write: “Housing insecurity, in its various dimensions, is linked to insecurities in other areas of life, such as finances, employment, and health, insecurity of self and family instability” (p1).
I want to consider the concept of a "wicked problem" for it is relevant to much of the work in Department of Human Services - Centrelink and a community development approach. It must be said that a "wicked problem" has nothing to do with morality. The term was used by social planners in the 1970's to describe problems that are highly resistant to solutions. While individuals may move in and out of (any) unemployment or housing, there have always been people who are deprived, homeless, marginalised.

In 2007, the Australian Public Service Commission in a paper called "Tackling Wicked Problems: A Public Policy Perspective" identified the characteristics of a wicked problem as:

- Wicked problems are difficult to clearly define.
- Wicked problems have many interdependencies and are often multi-causal.
- Attempts to address wicked problems often lead to unforeseen consequences.
- Wicked problems are often not stable.
- Wicked problems usually have no clear solution.
- Wicked problems are socially complex
- Wicked problems hardly ever sit conveniently within the responsibility of any one organisation.
- Wicked problems involve changing behaviour.
- Some wicked problems are characterised by chronic policy failure.

The paper states:

"Wicked policy problems are difficult to tackle effectively using the techniques traditionally used by the public sector. Traditional policy thinking suggests that the best way to work through a policy problem is to follow an orderly and linear process, working from problem to solution. .......The consensus in the literature, however, is that such a linear, traditional approach to policy formulation is an inadequate way to work with wicked policy problems. This is because part of the wickedness of an issue lies in the interactions between causal factors, conflicting policy objectives and disagreement over the appropriate solution. Linear thinking is inadequate to encompass such interactivity and uncertainty. The shortcomings of a linear approach are also due to the social complexity of wicked problems. The fact is that a true understanding of the problem generally requires the perspective of multiple organisations and stakeholders, and that any package of measures identified as a possible
solution usually requires the involvement, commitment and coordination of multiple organisations and stakeholders to be delivered effectively.

The handling of wicked problems requires holistic rather than linear thinking. This is thinking capable of grasping the big picture, including the interrelationships between the full range of causal factors and policy objectives. By their nature, the wicked issues are imperfectly understood, and so initial planning boundaries that are drawn too narrowly may lead to a neglect of what is important in handling the wicked issues. ……There is a variety of ways that organisations try to tame wicked problems by handling them too narrowly. The most common way is locking down the problem definition. This often involves addressing a sub-problem that can be solved. ……If policy and performance measures are limited to the sub-problem rather than the wicked problem; the problem can appear solved at least in the short-term. ……Unintended consequences tend to occur even more frequently if the problem has been artificially tamed, that is, it has been too narrowly addressed and the multiple causes and interconnections not fully explored prior to measures being introduced.”

My third brief comment is in relation to social contracts and covenants. It is relevant to the Department of Human Services - Centrelink and notions of social contracts and mutual obligation. Jeremy Rifkin in The Age of Excess writes “traditional relationships are born of such things as kinship, ethnicity, and geography and shared spiritual visions. They are glued together by notions of reciprocal obligations and visions of common destinies…Commoditised relationships on the other hand are instrumental in nature. The only glue that holds them together is an agreed upon transaction price...a strong community is a prerequisite for a healthy economy because it alone produces social trust” (Sacks, 2002, p. 142).

Sacks (2002) continues:
Covenant is a bond, not of interest or advantage, but of belonging.
Covenants are made when two or more people come together to create a “we”. They differ from the contracts in that they tend to be open ended and enduring. …They involve a substantiative notion of loyalty -of staying together even in difficult times. They may, at times call for self-sacrifice. People bound by a covenant are obligated to respond to one another beyond the letter of the law rather than to the limit their obligations to the narrowest contractual requirements ....Covenantal relationships is where we develop the grammar and syntax of reciprocity, where we help others and they help us with our calculation of relative advantage - where trust is
born, and without that there would be no selves and no contracts. Contracts, social or economic, mediate relationships between strangers. But if we were always and only strangers to one another, we would have no reason to trust one another...A world, systematically bereft of fidelity, or loyalty would be one in which neither states nor markets would ever get underway. Fukuyama correctly observes that “if the institutions of democracy and capitalism are to work properly, they must co-exist with certain pre-modern cultural habits that ensure their proper functioning. Law, contract and economic rationality provide a necessary but not sufficient basis for both the stability and prosperity of post industrial societies; they must as well be leavened with reciprocity, moral obligation, duty towards community and trust which are based in habit rather than in rational calculation. The latter not anachronisms of a modern society but rather the synonymous of the latter’s success... Markets depend on virtues not produced by the market, just as states depend on virtues not created by the state (p.151).

In “The Crisis of Global Capitalism” George Soros (1998) notes that when he began his career in the 1950’s, business depended on the slow building of relationships. Now it has become transactional; a series of one off encounters controlled by contract or deal which depends not on trust but on the presence of lawyers: “In a perfectly changeable transactional society the individual is paramount. From the point of view of the individual it is not necessary to be morally upright to be successful; indeed it could be a hindrance...in a society where stable relationships prevail it is much less of a problem because it is difficult to be successful if you violate the prevailing social norms. But when you can move around freely, social norms become less binding and when expediency becomes established as a social norm society becomes unstable (Sacks, 2002, p.154).

The challenge for Department of Human Services-Centrelink and community development will be to establish enduring covenants with individuals and communities rather than instrumental contracts.

My fourth brief comment relates to consilience. Consilience is a word coined by the Anglican priest/scientist William Whewell in the 1800’s to mean the “jumping together of knowledge. Gould (2003) writes:

Wilson revived Whewell’s forgotten word and extended its meaning far beyond the original authorial intention into a scheme that Whewell himself had strongly rejected—for Wilson wished to incorporate
the humanities into the topmost sciences of a singular reductionist chain, thereby achieving a ‘unification of knowledge’ under an empirical rubric, whereas Whewell regarded the humanities (particularly moral and religious reasoning) as a set of logical and inherently separate ways of knowing. Serious attention to all members of the set may well unify our mental lives by forging a consensus of values and results. However, such a consensus could only emerge from independent contributions, knitted together by serious and generous dialogue among truly different, and equally valid, ways of knowing, each responsible for a swatch on wisdom’s quilt, with the swatches abutting and infringing in gorgeous complex patterns of interaction. The unification cannot occur… by Wilson’s strategy of establishing a single efficacious way of knowing for all disciplines, based on the methods and successes of science, and ultimately devaluing the ‘humanities’ not for any intrinsic difference from other factual domains, but for the status as the most complex empirically study of all. (255)......

The intellectual beauty of Whewellian consilience lies largely in the thrill, even the eeriness, of what fashion calls an ‘aha’ experience—the sudden conversion of confusion into order, not by systemic, stepwise, deductive sequences of logical extensions from existing hypotheses followed by predictions and tests, but rather by an immediate insight that we usually cannot reconstruct in our own psyches because the consilience hits us all at once from the blue, leading us to emote ‘Omigod—all these unco-ordinated facts that have tortured me for years in their miscellany do cohere after all’—the ‘jumping together’ that Whewell called consilience. (257–8)

The challenge for Department of Human Services - Centrelink in adopting a community development approach will be in utilising knowledge that may incorporate the traditional knowledge, common-sense knowledge, experiential knowledge, scientific/empirical knowledge and spiritual/sacred knowledge (Durst, 2004) in a way that creates unique and local solutions to “wicked problems”.
Practical (or impractical) Examples of Community Development – my aim here is to be provocative.

Homeless people: Do we actually have “homeless people”? What constitutes a “home”? It seems like silly questions don’t they? It seems to me that every homeless person has had a home. In a student placement more years ago than I care to remember, I was asked to live on the streets for couple of days in a similar way to the nine months that John De Hoog spent on the streets. It was a great experience – very instructive – but no risk analysis was done. Interestingly – everyone I came across had had a home. Some were on the streets through mental health reasons, some for financial reasons, some for relationship reasons, and some through choice.

What if we were to start to think of homeless people as “displaced persons”? We know that there are, across the world, millions of displaced persons and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Suppose we were to change our thinking on homelessness to consider the alternative (reframed) definition of a displaced person. Would that change our goals and approaches? As a Probation Officer, I was faced with a number of men going to Grafton Prison because they had been domestically violent to their wife or partner and were legally prohibited from living “at home”. They were judicially internally displaced and by default institutionalised. They had no other option. My solution was to negotiate with a boarding house for rooms and to develop an “adult fostering scheme” in the community. It worked well.

Now, NSW Corrective Services are developing COSPs (Community Offender Support Programs) which:

“offer a non-custodial, community-based service, providing re-settlement support and crisis accommodation for offenders on parole, extended supervision orders or a community based sentence. COSPs are based on the premise that an offender who is well supervised, intensively managed, continually assessed and encouraged to take responsibility, is less likely to re-offend (Corrective Services NSW, 2009/10, p12)”.

Some of the COSPs are former periodic Detention Centres with outward opening doors, fences, communal showers etc. While it remains to be seen whether these premises will result in less re-offending, the legitimate question is whether this is a community development approach to issues of homelessness and institutionalisation and what genuine contribution communities play in the development of approaches to homelessness with legal offenders.

What of our homeless young people that are “couch surfing”? Some have a home – with family – but choose not to be there or are unsafe there. They are internally displaced. There is a scheme that allows you to travel the world and stay in safe and approved homes at no cost. There are youth hostels around the world. What if the community developed a safe house scheme that provided clean, affordable, overnight accommodation as an alternative to sleeping out or couch
surfing or squats? What if every community had a motel set aside to provide accommodation? Some young people would not want this. For, their "home" is the streets – for home is a concept that is about community not simply a roof. It is about inter-relationships (and sometimes avoidance of inter-relationship) not only about infrastructure and programmes.

As the Director of Child and Family services, I asked a young person who was being removed from his home – what he would miss about his family home in his new foster care home. It was not mum or dad, or the house or the neighbourhood – it was the dog. We negotiated for the dog to go with the young person to the foster placement. A home may mean that which is significant and to which people have a connection – however tenuous.

Twenty five years ago, I was secretary of an organization Community Youth Support Scheme (CYSS) that assisted young people who became homeless (or perhaps more correctly, roofless). We rented a property from the Council who were owed 20 years of rates by the owner. It was badly in need of repair. We rented at a very low rent for a number of years – until, despite maintenance and repairs – it failed to pass the annual inspections for safety and was condemned. The Council wanted to work with us in locating a new place to house our service. Concurrently, the council was about to pull down some old centrally located water towers. The cost was going to be significant – so we approached the council to convert the water towers into our accommodation by cutting windows and doors into the .3 metres of concrete and putting in a mezzanine floor and steps inside the tanks. A piece of community infrastructure that had stood idle for years became the pivot for a programme aimed at unemployed youth and a key piece of the community social fabric. It still stands as such today.

We may need to consider some very different approaches to housing and housing affordability. Some homelessness is due to finances. And here there is a philosophical issue related to capital and community. This relationship is potentially contradictory as the community’s tendency is to preserve housing as a ‘use value’ for the services of community members while capital’s tendency is to convert housing into ‘exchange values’ that can be speculated on for profit or income stream. This may set up an antagonistic relationship. Capital’s conversion of housing into exchange values can drive up rent, destroys green space, eliminates neighbourhood based commerce and disrupts neighbourhood patterns. Capital (and economically-driven local government) is less willing to invest in housing which maintains housing as a use value because this would prevent speculation, profit accumulation or income streams.

Housing Corporations manage, but do not invest for either profit or income streams. They manage housing projects but within the constraints set by the funders. They endeavour to be community-oriented while the funding strings are held by outside bodies. They are pressured by capital and service providers to produce exchange values in the form of rental housing. They are pressured by communities to produce use values in the form of services, home ownership and
liveable space. It is the internalisation of this capital-community contradiction
which leads to non-payment of rents, non-servicing of communities and significant
lack of capital to acquire and improve infrastructure. For many people in the
housing market, the chief value is the economic or market value. For many others,
the chief value is the user value. That is, there is an intrinsic difference in the way a
house or home is perceived. For an investor, the house/home is a market
commodity. For the occupier of a home, it may represent stability, memory,
comfort and non-commodity concepts. It may be that communities may need to
consider “social housing” – not as a “second-best” for poor people but as an
intrinsic covenant of commitment to an area and to a community. This may be able
to be achieved through work-housing exchanges or co-operative skill sharing. It
may be obtainable through new co-operatives (revised Starr-Bowkett type
schemes) or through employer subsidised schemes or co-investment schemes (say
philanthropic trusts and local people who have a co-ownership arrangement).

How might this work? In a rural community (about 11000) with high
unemployment and low investment, a large Shire council building was to be done.
All the work went to outside of the town contractors. The community was
concerned, the media was frenetic and a number of us looked into why this had
occurred. The reasons were many. The local builders were too small for a big job
and did not have the liquidity for it. The estimates of material needed were grossly
overstated as the locals did not have quantitative estimate skills for a job of this
size. Many quotes involved buying formwork that would likely sit idle for many
years following the project. The successful tenders hired the formwork. The
community formed a Skill Sharing Panel. When the next big job occurred (the
Catholic Church) local co-operatives of builders developed and skills were bought
in that were not available. Over 80 per cent of the work and the employment and
the money stayed in the town from that job.

At Maclean in northern NSW, the Nungera Indigenous co-operative, the
local Lands Council, the TAFE, the ACTU/Lend Lease Foundation, local council
and others have built community housing that has also involved pre-apprenticeship
skills. The process has been continued at least at Woodenbong and Bowraville.
As a probation officer, I visited a number of communites or communities – some
based on religion and faith, some not. There were varying successes. There were
varying rules and establishment fees. I have personally used, with great success,
the “Sherwood Cliffs” Christian Community at Glenreagh which has been
operating for over 20 years and has been providing a home to many that were
physically, socially and spiritually homeless. I have used a small Catholic
community on the South Coast for a homeless man with significant disabilities and
who needed support and health care.

A community development approach to homelessness may involve
addressing a wicked problem in a new and joined up way that sees the community
not as the site of the solution but as also integral to it.
Indigenous People and Community Development

By way of a segway between homeless people and Indigenous people, many Indigenous people are displaced. Many have a country, a place – but our displaced physically, socially and spiritually from that country. Writing as far back as the late 1960’s in the 1968 Boyer lectures – After the Dreaming, Professor WEH Stanner said:

“No English words are good enough to give a sense of the links between an Aboriginal group and its homeland. Our word “home”, warm and suggestive though it be, does not match the Aboriginal word that may mean “camp”, “hearth”, “country”, “everlasting home”, “totem place”, “life source”, “spirit centre” and much else all in one. Our word “land” is too spare and meagre. We can now scarcely use it except with economic overtones unless we happen to be poets. The Aboriginal would speak of “earth” and use the word in a richly symbolic way to mean his “shoulder” or his “side”. I have seen an Aboriginal embrace the earth that he walked on. To put our words “home” and “land” together into “homeland” is a little better but not much. A different tradition leaves us tongueless and earless towards this other world of meaning and significance. When we took what we call “land” we took what to them meant hearth, home, the source and locus of life, and everlastingness of spirit. At the same time it left each local band bereft of an essential constant that made their plan and code of living intelligible (p. 206)”.

I shall refrain from any comment about “The Intervention”, but the “Ampe Akelyernonmane Meke Mekarle” (The Little Children are Sacred Report) starts with:

“In the first recommendation, we have specifically referred to the critical importance of governments committing to genuine consultation with Aboriginal people in designing initiatives for Aboriginal communities, whether these be in remote, regional or urban settings.

We have been conscious throughout our enquiries of the need for that consultation and for Aboriginal people to be involved. Mr Fred Chaney, in retiring from the National Native Title Tribunal, was asked why successive governments have failed so comprehensively to turn the story of Aboriginal deprivation around. He was being interviewed on the ABC’s 7.30 Report on 19 April 2007 and replied:
“And one of the things I think we should have learned by now is that you can’t solve these things by centralised bureaucratic direction. You can only educate children in a school at the place where they live. You can only give people jobs or get people into employment person by person. And I think my own view now is that the lesson we’ve learned is that you need locally based action, local resourcing, and local control to really make changes.

But I think governments persist in thinking you can direct from Canberra, you can direct from Perth or Sydney or Melbourne, that you can have programs that run out into communities that aren’t owned by those communities, that aren’t locally controlled and managed, and I think surely that is a thing we should know doesn’t work.

So I am very much in favour of a model which I suppose builds local control in communities.... Not central bureaucracies trying to run things in Aboriginal communities. That doesn’t work.”

The challenge for Department of Human Services-Centrelink as a National organization in adopting a community development approach will be to follow this blueprint. It will be to enter genuine partnership with communities—not simply having a (perhaps) token consultation. It may mean relocating staff to live in communities and to develop community worker skills. It will involve covenants rather than contracts.

*Indigenous Example 1*

There are many successful examples of community development in Indigenous communities. Some of them relate to specific issues concerning education of children, immunisation rates, early childhood intervention, housing co-operatives, employment services, work and co-operative development.

In the mid 1990’s, I visited Ernabella with South Australian Corrective Services and observed a student placement. Sadly, it was a short visit. It was a sad visit. I saw the church broken and in disrepair. I saw great community infrastructure built up in the days of the Presbyterian mission laying in ruin (the vineyard and the farm). A few of the old people I was able to speak with (English is not a first language generally) longed for the “mission days” and spoke about the singing and the choir and the place of music in their society. I have not been back since. But I was delighted to see a recent edition of Compass (http://www.google.com.au/search?hl=en&lr=lang:en&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&q=ernabella) that was focussed on Ernabella and to see the Church building - repaired and restored - and to hear the singing was back and to hear that children went to school and to see people standing proud. As I watched the program, I thought of Mary Lean’s community development book on “Bricks, Bread and Beliefs” (1995) and thought
how real community development must lock into the ethos of communities and bring out the very best in them.

The challenge for Department of Human Services-Centrelink will be to know the history, the stories, the songs of the Indigenous people to whom you are sent to serve and to relate in a way that enhances and helps.

*Indigenous example 2*

As a probation Officer, my area covered the sites of the infamous Myall Creek and Slaughterhouse Creek massacres. Little was spoken of them and Stewart’s (2007) narrative/historical novel that would bring substance to the name *Demons at Dusk* had yet to be written. It was wonderful to recently walk the Reconciliation track at that site and see the names of Tingha people that I have had previous good working relationships with. Working in the significantly Indigenous community at Tingha was challenging. My organization was predominately individual-based in its services and had a conservative approach to corrections which essentially saw crime as an individual problem. Correct the individual so that s/he fitted into the community. But Tingha (at that stage) had 131 working aged Indigenous people and 130 were not employed. The community was not serviced by public transport. Housing was generally poor. I had 20 people on my corrections caseload which represented an extraordinary proportion of the Indigenous community and by comparison to the State rates of community corrections. Working individually with clients was not proving to be productive. This was structural disadvantage not simply individual.

After spending some time in the Northern Territory on an Indigenous community, I returned to the north-west of NSW. My approach to Indigenous people and corrections changed. Whereas I had previously been committed to a view of corrections that was individually based, where Indigenous offenders were now involved, my approach became much more community focused, small group focused and participatory. I was less concerned about individual confidentiality and more concerned about talking with the people that could influence change and using the informal grapevine that worked rather than formal processes that did not work. The development of work collectives, a focus on housing, and group and community approaches were evidence of addressing the issues at a structural level as well as at the individual level. I was involved in forming and playing in a cricket team and had a distant hand in forming a football team. I watched as the offending rates went down. We moved whole groups (usually three to five) friends who were offenders to educational locations and they generally moved forward as a re-enforcing group of learners. In short, to address structural issues involved changing from caseworker to community worker. It was not without problems. Organizations often support advocacy and community consciousness-raising more
in the rhetoric than in the reality. Building alliances with some groups in the community can be risky for all concerned.

**Indigenous Example 3**

I was involved in developing, overseeing and evaluating a project that focused on Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett that was undertaken by a community agency and a most outstanding community development worker. This project aimed to build the community capacity of Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett in dealing with families (particularly Aboriginal families) that have been impacted upon by legal drug misuse and illicit drug use. The project was designed to have very practical and tangible benefits including to assist communities to establish **innovative and culturally appropriate** support and advice mechanisms for families; provide **information** on how to link and co-ordinate pathways to health related counselling, community and preventative services; **link to** other services funded under the National Illicit Drug Strategy (where those services exist in the targeted communities); **research** the current dynamics and resources of communities; **identify** the options available to support families in the community in the absence of many services; **assess** the appropriateness, viability, and applicability of existing community resources for use in Western areas of NSW; **and deliver, and where necessary develop**, community education on licit drug misuse and illicit drug use through existing networks.

The heart of this project was to find ways of reaching people with creative and innovative approaches of a community nature that may have significant impact on the drug and alcohol usage of the districts.

As a practical example, some creative work done by the Family Support Service at Brewarrina that included making picture books (without any words) from newspapers and encouraging mothers to orally tell the story. These were bound in plastic “glad bags” and tied with wool which ensures a measure of longevity that would not be available in the community if they were paper based and unprotected. The reading level in the community was low and there is a history of the oral tradition. It is crucial to keep the community in focus as mass produced, written based approaches will not find a ready reception in communities whose traditions are narrative and oral. The self-made books carried healthy eating, non-smoking and no alcohol while pregnant messages.

The project did participatory diagramming and mapping. These were instructive to the communities who were able to develop their own definitions (for example of wealth and poverty) and their own responses. The pairwise and preference rankings, an approach for comparing students performance across schools, was applied, allowing strategies to be developed for targeting young people requiring assistance who were still in school.

Approaches to licit drug misuse included meso-level policy issues such as the licensing of premises. There have been community compacts formed between the police, communities and licensed premises which have restricted access

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particularly to alcohol. There appeared to be no desire or demand, from whole communities, to restrict alcohol on certain days such as has occurred in the Tennant Creek area. There is an argument that the restriction of alcohol in public places simply drives the consumption of alcohol to private homes and thereby increases both the risk and severity of assaultive behaviour to women and children. In Walgett, for example, no alcohol is served after 9pm. Hotels are closed at 6pm and pub take-aways are available up to 9pm. Clubs are open to serve alcohol up to 9pm.

One particular small group maintained that heroin was a very significant problem and was identified as being more significant than any other. This may be a reflection of reality, or may be acquiescence to the widespread use of alcohol and nicotine and marijuana. Using triangulation, we sought corroborating evidence from a variety of sources to support the comment or view. In this instance, the official reports (Police and Court records) and others with a possible avenue to knowledge (e.g. Garbage collectors/street sweepers who may have been seeing needles) and statements from others did not support the assertion. But it should also to be noted that for a number of service providers, they did not see nicotine as a drug until it was specifically raised. One service provider in the health sector commented “You know, it’s so widespread that I don’t even think about that now – but I should”.

A number of innovative approaches have been tried and developed in respect of drugs and alcohol within the three communities.

Within Walgett young people took part in a mural and photographic approach which has created links to the learning program for ten young people particularly young women through the Department of Education. This is precisely in line with the project outcomes which attempted to link current drug and alcohol users to other services and in this particular instance to educational services.

At Bourke there have been a number of significant and innovative programs. Most outstanding was a video produced with and through the auspices of Big Art (The “Getting Smashed Competition”) which related to the drinking behaviour of young men and young women in the Bourke area. The video was selected as one of six finalists in a state wide competition and young people were able to travel to Sydney for the judging. A consequence of that project has been the Imparja Television (an Indigenous Television Station) broadcasting two advertisements from the video to the Imparja viewing area of Western New South Wales, Southern and Western Queensland, the Northern Territory and eastern West Australia.

The video depicts a young person from the Bourke area being a responsible driver, being breath tested by local police (and passing the breath test) and subsequently going on to a party. The messages of the videos are clear and highly applicable to this group. Of particular significance is the fact that the persons in the video are members of a group known as the BLB (Back Lane Brothers). The key informant indicated that this was a group of about fifty young
men who are often reputed to be excessive consumers of alcohol and significant trouble makers within the community. The five young men in the group on the video are reputed to be leaders of that group. Indications are that their participation in the video has caused at least some of the young people to reconsider their consumption, has changed some attitudes towards the police and law enforcement and has given encouragement towards developing new video programs. Two members of another group known as SWAs (Sisters With Attitude - which numbers about fifteen) were also in this video and are also looking at becoming involved in other creative approaches. The video was originally done for the "Getting Smashed" Program and there was keen interest in a new program "Your Shout: Young People and Alcohol".

One further project in the Bourke area had been the development of a CD by young men at Bourke. This was essentially a rap CD. Of particular interest was that the dress, accent, gestures and even words conveyed an American approach. In some respects the CD and the accompanying Video Clip was indistinguishable from that which could be seen emanating from the United States. This was of interest as the local culture and approaches are being overlaid by a globalised culture and approach.

A further development on the CD involved producing a live show for the national Message Stick program in Sydney.

Programs in relation to drugs and alcohol aimed at school aged students at the High School level may not reach those who are most in need. Indications from a number of sources were that many young people of Aboriginal background are not proceeding to high school on a regular basis, beyond the ages of twelve or thirteen years. Approaches that reach them through art or music may be more effective as community development approaches.

Indications are the Life Education Van rarely visits any of the three communities as the Life Education Van depends upon a co-contribution from the community. Social exclusion means that low incomes can directly translate into not having resources for the co-contribution. So, services such as the Life Education Vans do not come to the communities with arguably the greatest need. This was a serious and significant issue, in that the development of drug and alcohol knowledge from an early age is denied to children and young people.

Mediums that use television and speech are more likely to be effective, given the literacy levels and the reading capacity of some communities. During the course of this project there appears to be good reason to have community film nights with short but visual messages targeted appropriately to the Aboriginal communities in relation to alcohol and nicotine.

A key informant suggested that, given the occurrence of teenage pregnancies, there may be opportunity to utilise programs that involve dolls in order to teach the responsibility of care that parents have for children. This approach however may not be as successful as in other areas, for the reality is that many teenage young women are already responsible for their younger brothers or sisters.
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THE PRAXIS OF GOOD

A family support project attempted to deposit and embed information, knowledge and skills within members of the community through the family support workers in each of the three communities. A training program was produced and made available across the three communities. The program was designed primarily for family support workers, some of whom have limited education and no qualifications. The program was designed to be photocopied and used as and when the need arises. Training was undertaken in each of the three communities. The training program gave the front line information necessary for family support workers working with families affected by drug and alcohol use.

The project undertook ethnobiographies (life stories) of four persons from the three communities. The purpose of the ethnobiographies was to ensure that local people with local stories in relation to drugs and alcohol were heard by other locals and particularly by young persons who may be experiencing or at the risk of developing drug or alcohol problems. Regrettably centralist, bureaucratic interference meant that those ethnobiographies had to be rewritten in third person form in order to avoid possible (but very unlikely) litigation. Given that each of the persons interviewed signed an informed consent and, given that they are and were aware of the purposes of the life story, it seems incredible that the very purpose of the life story could be subverted and destroyed by decisions made outside of the community. The concept of “think global - act local” had been destroyed. The very purpose of localising information and using local persons and their stories is consistent with good marketing principles, the oral and narrative tradition of Indigenous people and the purpose and intent of the program. Central organisations need to carefully review their overriding and distorting of social development, programs and projects for either political, legal or other purposes which in reality disempower and contribute to social exclusion rather than community capacity. Local self-determination, local control and outcomes ought to be considered more highly than bureaucratic needs.

Many services were provided on a casework model and need to be provided on a whole-of-community development model in the public and private places accessed and frequented by those most in need. The web of disadvantage was extensive and current service provision models have been ineffective over the long term. This project attempted to develop innovative approaches and develop materials that were both culturally appropriate and accessible in an environment where literacy is not high. There are many positive developments in these three communities, often small scale and dwarfed by the totality of need. Changing entrenched approaches and beliefs will be difficult. However this pilot suggests that creative, innovative, appropriate and “community owned” approaches are both possible and feasible.

Social workers (including Department of Human Services - Centrelink Social Workers) have a particular commitment to the marginalised and oppressed. They need to take account of the programme/organizational objectives but also need to be cognisant of the context and the desires of the community. This project
resulted in the depositing of physical resources (hand-made books, appropriate training manuals, three service directories) but the even greater significance, was the conscientiousization, a partnership between local knowledge and “outside” knowledge, a re-emphasis on positive changes that can be made, the use of techniques and approaches that are community-building rather than community-diminishing, an empowering of some members of the community to take control of their affairs and links and avenues to other sources of knowledge and power.

**Long Term Unemployed People and Community Development**

Australia’s current unemployment rate, by standards of the last 20 years is comparatively low. In the early to mid seventies an unemployment rate in the low 2% was considered as full employment. The long-term unemployed are however a “wicked problem” in the sense that I am using it here.

What constitutes being employed? What is the nature of work? What does one have to do to be productive? If the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, Feb 2001) definition of employment is one hour of paid work per week – I suspect that there would be very few unemployed people, especially if work was defined to include child care, volunteering and attending to family or cultural duties.

When visiting Canada, I was told of a remote rural first nation community that had no unemployment. The person I was speaking to had a paid job in the community from September to November. Then he did not have a paid job for the rest of the year and the job he was doing was done in a rotation by 3 other people on three monthly schedules. Each person had a paid job for three months of the year. No person was undervalued and none of the four saw themselves as unemployed. The very small number of jobs was rationed out in the community. I was interested in this approach because in some parts of Australia there are few paid jobs. Some people in those areas are unable, or indeed unwilling to move away from home, family or kin to relocate to where there are jobs. Those that are forced to leave the land as property owners were able to access $45000 in Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) structural adjustment funding. The unemployed, however, who relocate to jobs do not receive that amount of incentive. What would it be like if we valued contributions in economic terms for non-market based work? Suppose we set child care as a minimum wage paid job and required people to meet minimum educational, social and environmental standards of care. Suppose we valued the role of carers as a minimum wage equivalent.

Notwithstanding these musings of madness, there remains a core of people who are long-term unemployed. There are a range of programs – some aimed at stimulating growth and growth in employment and some aimed as alternatives to the market economy. Programmes like work/employment centred-initiatives (work for the dole as an example), local business creation initiatives (such as the New Enterprise schemes) are examples of stimulating growth and growth in employment opportunities and employment skills. Programs like food
co-operatives, community currency schemes, Local Energy or Economic Trading Systems (LETS), eco-villages, truly alternative community approaches that develop community economic development that may lay outside normal capitalist parameters (see Boulet New Community Quarterly August 2010).

Taking a community development approach may mean being involved in both employment-centred initiatives and alternative community approaches. Confronting the reality of long term unemployed ex-offenders often meant working with the individual and working with the community. Ready acceptance by the community is not a feature of some communities when their offenders return. Work needs to be done with both the individual and with the community. It is insufficient to concentrate on addressing the criminogenic factors of the individual offender unless there is not a similar concentration on addressing the biases and prejudices and real fears and significant ignorance of the community to which the person seeks re-entry.

Community development for the long term unemployed will mean Department of Human Services - Centrelink social workers advocating for those that they seek to serve as servants of the public in the communities that they seek to work in. It may mean a rigorous assessment of likely employment opportunities and a rigorous assessment of the barriers to employment both within the community and within the individual.

I was seeking to get employment for a client with a major employer who was known to be particularly conservative and with a particular philosophy regarding offenders. It was very much a case of working with the employer to see what checks and balances were needed in order to access the employment. Success in getting the employment rested on the service's credibility as much as on the individual's situation. For some unemployed people, there is a need to work with their confidence. For others it will be working with their weight loss issues and/or physical health. For others it will be overcoming the fear of the employer or the employment community.

In working with a group of long-term unemployed, we (through a community agency) developed a series of collectives and co-operatives. Two were textile collectives (Girree Girree and Nuccoorima) and focussed upon providing some part-time hours per week in a culturally appropriate environment that focussed upon Indigenous stories. Skills in design and production were uncovered among the participants. The number of hours was not full-time. There were no set required hours but rather people were paid on an hourly rate. Some worked for enough time to pay off a Court fine or another bill. For some, a 40 hour week was a particularly unattractive and unattainable goal. The way that the collectives were designed meant that people could still attend to their cultural and family responsibilities. It would be great to see a casual work exchange (a day labour type exchange) in every community.
Another collective related to gem cutting and developed skills in the individual and involved a contract with a local manufacturer. Again, the importance of local was emphasised.

In each of the examples of collectives, the initial and on-going consultation revolved around a rigorous assessment of the individual and a rigorous assessment of the community and very careful listening to both.

A very small group of offenders were recruited during an intense period of bushfires. These men were assigned to very experience local fire-fighters. The offenders gained much from the experience and for some it was the re-entry into the community and the re-establishment of their sense of belonging.

In my role as Director of Child and Family Services for Western NSW of the Department of Community Services (DoCS) and with many, many communities in the area, I would often use a tool developed within DoCS Western as a quick way of assessing a community.

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<td>Having few opinion makers; power vested in few people; few services and/or fragmented services; little information, or the information is held by the few; a lack of social cohesion; a lack of acknowledgment or respect for diversity; vandalism/violence/lawlessness; visible drug and alcohol issues; social isolation/disempowerment, low employment/high unemployment; cultural and spiritual</td>
<td>Mechanisms to stimulate leaders/catalysts and opinion makers; small scale/practice; few services—emerging coordination—gap identification; information access points clearly identified and information broadly available; responsive to community; increased tension; developing mechanisms for and exercising of community voice; groups and</td>
<td>Dynamic and diverse range of catalysts, opinion makers and ambassadors; advocates; mixed service systems; coordinated collaborative reinvigorating, regenerative responses to need; creative and challenging outcomes focused on clients and the community; information readily accessible in multiple formats; community profile to which the community is responding; community</td>
<td>Formal processes for community representation; participation from all sectors of the community; service systems that are operative including funding and service provision; a healthy market economy free of monopolies and oligopolies; charity models</td>
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<td>Communities of shared values, beliefs and expectations that are articulated in behaviours; a focus on shared community responsibility and recognition of community members contribution to wellbeing and health of the community; community action strategies; alternate employment/ training; community participation with diversification of opportunities emerging; community identification/ belonging with confidence and pride; and emerging cultural and spiritual connectedness.</td>
<td>Participation mechanisms and community visioning processes which are integrated into general community life; organisational and social constructs that support effective use of community resources, harnesses energy, builds diversity and solution building that is based on inclusion; formal and informal community organisation for wellbeing and health of all members; organised and spontaneous community solution building; and relationships and interrelationships emerge that are celebrated/strengthened; a dynamic economic/social interface; preventative and diversionary processes prominent in the law and order and tertiary systems; and independence moving to interdependence.</td>
<td>Formalised into fundraising; sophisticated community and social constructs; tolerance of diversity; inclusion of difference; information available that is current, targeted or responsive; accessibility of information to all; community expectation for increased government visibility and action in a partnership with the community responsibility and care; enhanced informal care systems; community Reconciliation approaches and Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms; interdependence and co-operation; and community confidence and shared vision of the future.</td>
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Constructing a skill set for community workers is difficult and contentious. I think the skill set required of a community development worker includes personal attributes of being such as genuineness, empathy, respect, confidentiality, neutrality with respect to power group’s determination/resilience, vision with respect to the future; willingness to listen, optimism and friendliness/sociability.

Additionally, social workers operating from a community development perspective will need knowledge and skills in at least the following: an understanding of the nature and background of community work, community practice frameworks and issues confronting community work; research and planning skills in local needs assessment, evaluation, policy analysis, programme planning, social impact assessment; communication and education skills including consultative techniques, case presentation, basic approaches to educational programme development, report and submission preparation, social marketing techniques, use of media, use of equipment and technical aids, written and verbal; organising skills in neighbourhood work, group formation and maintenance, participation and decision-making techniques, meeting skills, networking and coalition work; management skills in staff recruitment and development, industrial relations, equal employment opportunity and affirmative action implementation, budgeting and financial management, legalities and contracts, incorporation, planning; advocacy, interviewing and counselling, preliminary assessment and referral; knowledge of political processes including parliamentary and local processes, relevant legislation and administrative provisions, lobbying skills, public interest advocacy, negotiation and mediation skills, social action campaigns; a good knowledge of local government, local planning and politics; a general knowledge of the debates and discourses in education, environmental studies, history, philosophy, politics, social psychology, sociology and so on; understanding of sociological theory as it relates to class, power, gender race/ethnicity social development and deviance; knowledge of local history and the key events in the community; networking skills; understanding of finance and funding; and an understanding of key informants and community influencers.

As Department of Human Services - Centrelink continues to work with HILTU - but in a community development way - social workers will need to continue to consider how they engage with, respond to and influence communities and the “wicked problems” that are within. I believe that it will only be as they adopt new ways of thinking, new ways of doing and new ways of being – that they will really make the differences.

Two sayings are worth repeating: The first is by Mark Twain, if you always do what you have always done – you will always get what you have always got! Abraham Maslow said – if your only tool is a hammer – everything looks like a nail. (Lockward, 2012; Brainyquote, 2012).
DHS - Centrelink, Community Development and HILTU – this is the praxis of good. As you think, do and be different – it is an exciting time to see real change in what have been “wicked problems”.
A W (BILL) ANSCOMBE - HILTU, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND DHS-CENTRELINK - THE PRAXIS OF GOOD

REFERENCES


A W (BILL) ANSCOMBE – HILTU – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND DHS-CENTRELINK
– THE PRAXIS OF GOOD


