

Primary Industries & Community Services

Vocational Education and Training

March 10, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Letter of Support

I have been involved with Group Training NT continuously for the past four years in my capacity first as director of the NT Rural College and continuing through to my role as NT Manager for Primary Industries and Community Services VET training at CDU. Our interaction has been in the area of VET delivery of pastoral and rural training. My primary contact throughout this period has been Jon Harris and we have developed a strong working relationship. Jon is committed to success and has a keen interest in helping his trainees and apprentices to achieve success in what they do. His commitment is not only on a work level but also on a personal level and he invests a great deal of energy in assuring that his supervisees are well looked after by all parties involved.

Initially CDU and the NT Rural College began our interaction with GTNT through Jon Harris and developing a base of apprentices in Agriculture. Over the past two years this has expanded into an additional program which is in partnership with a variety of government and non-government entities. The Indigenous Pastoral Program (IPP) is coordinated by the NT Dept of Primary Industries, Fisheries and Mining but also includes groups such as DEEWR, the Northern Land Council, Indigenous Land Corporation, Central Land Council, NT Cattlemen's Association, GTNT and CDU.

The IPP has developed two streams of complimentary training and employment for Indigenous people wishing to work in the pastoral industry. An initial pre-employment course has been set up which serves as a "basic training" course over a six week period. From that point the participants are placed into paid positions in the pastoral workforce on cooperating cattle stations. Simultaneous with their work placement they are enrolled as trainees in the Certificate II in Agriculture (Beef Cattle Production) through GTNT and CDU.

As the GTNT project field officer Jon Harris has been instrumental in mentoring the participants during their pre-employment course and then once they are out on stations with the overarching goal of getting them to continue with their employment and studies. In combination with a field officer from NLC, Jon promotes the program, mentors the students and encourages their continued participation. The IPP has been successful because of his frequent visits to the apprentices. This sounds like a relatively simple task but is complicated by the vast distances Jon must travel to make these visits coupled with the remoteness of the stations at which the IPP participants are located. Jon has literally had to cover the entire Northern Territory in his travels, from Darwin to Alice Springs and Timber Creek to Borroloola with all points in between. He has racked up tens of thousands of kilometers in his efforts to support IPP participants.

GTNT_LtrOfSupt_6Mar08.doc

An additional level of complexity has been added by the presence of cultural differences between the IPP participants and personnel on cattle stations. Due to a lack of Indigenous cattlemen in the workforce for many years, much of the mid-level management on stations have had little interaction with Indigenous people. Jon has been instrumental in smoothing over these differences and creating and maintaining an harmonious work environment for all involved.

The IPP program is growing in its success and will continue to do so in the future. A strong labour demand for pastoral workers and a shortage of supply has led to a great outlook for placing Indigenous people in this area of work. Given the strong background of Aboriginal stockmen in the Northern Territory it will remain a viable and useful program well into the future. CDU and GTNT have agreed to continue the program for at least three years and I expect that it will go on long after that.

The IPP program represents a well constructed pathway from training to long-term employment for Indigenous people. Because the participants gain not only skills but qualifications they have the ability to move between stations with relative ease and are presented with a developed career ladder from jackaroo to head stockman and beyond. The interaction between GTNT and CDU as well as all of the other players is strong and continues to grow. GTNT's influence and persistence, especially that of Jon Harris, has been a major contributor to the immediate success and prospects of long term success of the program. The initial pre-employment training coupled with on-the-job training is successful because participants gain immediate employment while they are still learning, thus adding to the economy and giving Indigenous people a meaningful employment outcome.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Brian J. Heim
NT Manager