

THE cairns regional CDEP NEWSLETTER

NEW CONSTITUTION REGISTERED A YEAR AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

Cairns Regional CDEP new constitution was registered under the federal Corporations (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 in May 2008, a full year ahead of government requirements.

The Governing Committee, now a Board of Directors with accompanying responsibilities, approached this project proactively as they realised the existing constitution did not accurately reflect the new business and private funding focus of the organisation or meet the legislative requirements of the new Act (replacing the Aboriginal Councils & Associations Act 1976).

Local Cairns firm Preston Law (formally Gadens Lawyers) was engaged to assist the Governing Committee and CEO Chris Martin with the project.

Partner at Preston Law Stephen Devenish explained that writing a new constitution was like writing a new rule book for the operation of the organisation.

“This was a very complex project with a lot of detail and different levels of application. To meet the new legislative requirements this ‘rule book’ included three parts”, he said.

Stephen explained “The Constitution as it existed (being the rules special to this organisation that needed reviewing) was part one; new rules offered by the new legislation that had to be accepted into the constitution or rejected were part two; and then the rules set by the new legislation that must be included were part three.”

“The Governing Committee worked intensively on the process, reviewing each rule point by point, discussing, clarifying and deciding the best direction”, he said.

“They now have a very comprehensive understanding of their administrative and governance accountabilities.”

CEO Chris Martin was also very impressed with the focus and outcomes of a difficult project.

“Preston Law were very involved in the process offering excellent advice and leadership, and I take my hat off to the Governing Committee who stuck with them throughout, on even the most complex of discussions”, Chris said.

“By making sure our membership had plenty of information about the changes we were able to pass the changes at the first Special General Meeting called – this was a great vote of confidence in the Governing Committee”, he continued.



Directors at the May Board meeting in Kuranda (L-R clockwise from back) Tommy Brim, Vince Courtney, Chris Martin (CEO), Alf Richards, Victor Maund, Maria Richards, Julie Go-Sam, Dawn Hart, Kali Sailor.

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NEW OFFICES FOR CAIRNS REGIONAL CDEP

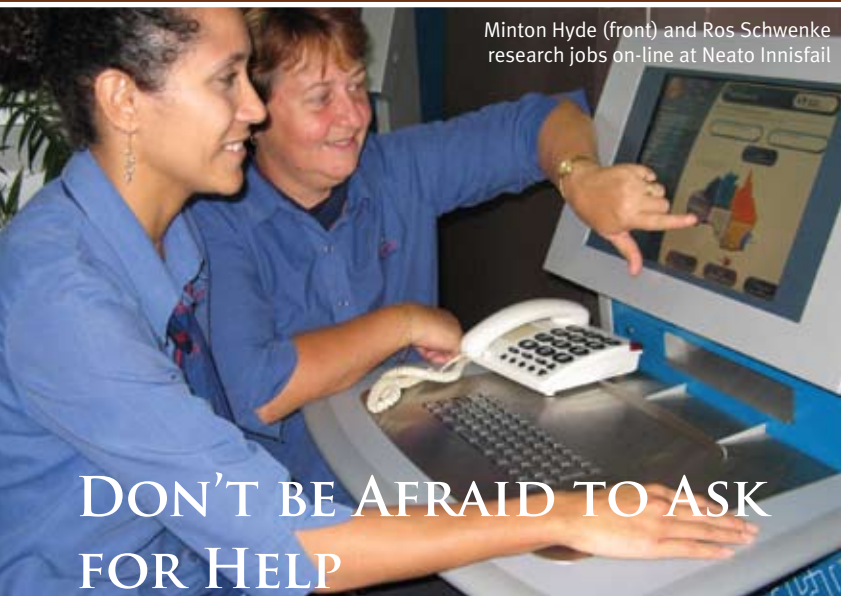
After its initial six years, Cairns Regional CDEP bought its first major asset in July 2008 – a reflection of the new commercial focus of the organisation.

The old Queenslander at 23-25 Victoria Street Cairns (between the Showgrounds and St Joseph's Primary School) will be new offices for the organisation once head trade trainer Mal Pask and his trainees have completed the renovation.

Operations are expected to move here in October.



Cairns Regional CDEP new home
23-25 Victoria Street Cairns



Minton Hyde (front) and Ros Schwenke research jobs on-line at Neato Innisfail

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP

Neato Innisfail receptionist Minton Hyde knows what it's like to be on the job seekers side of the counter, having looked for work for two years before finally earning her position as receptionist.

Minton had been getting experience and training in administration jobs through the CDEP program but she was determined to get a full time job.

"I had taken so many knock backs I was just about ready to give up, when I saw this job and thought this is it" Minton explained.

"I actually didn't get the job at first but I still wasn't prepared to give up, and asked the interviewer for feedback on what I needed to improve", she said, "I also kept in contact, following up all the time – and then the lady selected was promoted and they rang me - I was over the moon!"

Minton's boss, and team leader at Neato Innisfail, Ros Schwenke was very impressed by Minton's attitude and persistence.

"Minton had been improving her skills through CDEP but didn't stop there. She was in our office as a regular, keeping her resume up to date, talking with the support team here and kept a really positive attitude", Ros outlined.

"Since Neato took her on, Minton hasn't looked back. She's learned the role well and is particularly good with clients as she understands how they feel. We were very pleased to confirm her permanent position in June."

Minton had a few hints for job seekers and those who had difficulties getting into the workforce.

"Don't be embarrassed or scared to go into the job networks like Neato, the people who work there have often been unemployed and had hard times in their lives as well."

"It's okay to ask what seems like silly questions, mostly they are not silly but sensible, and need answers."

"It was a real challenge after years of only casual work, to get into a routine of getting to work on time, being organised with the kids, meals, washing, shopping and all that; but it gets easier and my family – my mum and sisters and my partner - have been really supportive. Just ask for help", she said.

Ros reinforced this, "It's our job at Neato to support job seekers get into work however we can. We want them to feel comfortable and safe; to encourage them, building enthusiasm and self confidence so they can do a job properly".

Anyone wanting help with traineeships or employment in the Innisfail area can contact Neato Innisfail on 40619644 or call in to their offices at ANZ Building. It's most likely Minton will greet job seekers on arrival.

STEPPING STONES IMPORTANT

Julie Go-Sam knows how important it is to have a go at a few things to find your place in life. She has travelled and lived across Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory, working in roles as different as making ironing boards, running a women's shelter, driving trucks and picking bananas. And with a family of four kids (and now one grand-daughter) that's some challenge.

Settled in Innisfail for the last 11 years, Julie is the co-ordinator of Innisfail Community Justice Group and an active member of the Cairns Regional CDEP management committee. She sees her main role as finding alternatives for people to keep them occupied and give them a purpose in life; keeping them out of mischief and bad company.

NGOONBI FARM TRAINS FOR SUCCESS

Ngoonbi farm has been in existence for 20 years but has started training through the Cairns Regional CDEP over the last two years.

Alf Richards (affectionately known as Buddie) is the main co-ordinator and very proud of his graduates. Two are profiled here.

Roy Morris has worked all over North Queensland and in the Northern Territory as a builder's labourer, landscaping, making cement and even diving for trochus shell. Through CDEP at Ngoonbi farm he has extended his already substantial skills through completing a Certificate II and III in Forest and Forestry Products (Forest Growing and Management).

He now has skills in tree pruning and removal, poisoning, chainsaw and milling equipment, and operating slashers, ride-on mowers and whipper snippers.

Roy plans to use his skills to find a long term job that he can keep til retirement.

"I've got an older son and my wife has four younger kids that I love spending time with. It's a chance for me to show them leadership and how rewarding hard work can be", he said.

"If I'm lucky I might even land a supervisors position", he added with a smile.

Fay McInerney has given up the comfort of an office and an admin job to complete the same course as Roy.

She explained the office work was not bad, it just wasn't where her natural interests lay.

“We’ve got lots of projects on the go for our people here”, Julie explained. “I’m mentoring four young women in small business traineeships, we have a mob learning landscaping, mowing, bobcat driving, etc and some guys working on their security tickets”. “CDEP offers a great opportunity to get off the banana farms and into skilled work. It’s 15 hours a week for a year and by the end you’ve got skills that people want”, she said.

The Innisfail Community Justice Group’s main job is providing support for indigenous people who have to deal with the justice system. But that’s not all they’re involved in.

Julie’s understanding of the needs of her people, particularly in supporting them to get on in life, and giving them options – steps to succeed - has seen her set up a series of different programs in Innisfail area.

“We’ve got a small company set up to help our men with their paperwork once they’re out on their own as contractors”, Julie explained.

“Most people who are good at grounds maintenance, running mowers, whipper snippers, mulchers – you name it – are not naturally interested in paperwork and doing the books”, she continued.

“So once the guys learn their skills through CDEP and get out working for people like Ergon and the Council they still have to do their books as a contractor - get the money in, and pay their bills.”

Julie has also been involved in setting up a kid’s activity program run on donations of time and product.

“The kids get isolated and bored”, she said. “If we can get them out seeing how the world works, they learn about new stuff and have fun at the same time”.

“We try and run regular outings – it might be to the beach or to a farm or a sporting event. It’s all about giving them options too”.

The Innisfail Community Justice Group is at 139 Edith Street Innisfail and can be contacted on (07) 4061 1693.



Fay McInerney gets ready for a day out on the tractor.

“I love the variety of the outdoor work, being out in the environment and in a community working with people, and seeing the difference at the end of the day”, she said.

“If I was to give someone considering learning a new skill any advice it would be – even though you think you can’t, if you put your mind to it, you can do anything.”

She went on “Be proud of who you are and be confident to be yourself”.

“I look back at myself in the past and have trouble believing I’ve done so much – I’ve got a licence and a car, a house and a job – and I’m not special, I just keep trying”.

“Look at me now, I’m not a big person but I’ve learned how to handle dangerous and heavy equipment. It’s a matter of learning the right techniques and working as a team supporting each other – nothing else matters, whatever you are doing”, Fay expanded.



Roy Morris (left) and Ngonbi Farm Trainer Alf Richards.



Victor Maund (right) with Cairns Regional CDEP CEO Chris Martin

CHAIRMAN VICTOR MAUND A QUIET ACHIEVER

Cairns Regional CDEP Chairman Victor Maund has been involved on Boards and Management Committees on behalf of the MaMu people for the past 27 years and gives generously of his broad experience and business memory.

Victor explained one of the biggest challenges the organisation faced is the constant change that has to be handled.

“There are so many changes to the way things are done by government - we just get our heads around how things are to be done and reported and they change the rules”, he said.

“Having some long term Governing Committee members brings some continuity to our progress and helps us stop repeating ourselves.”

“It’s really important to me that we keep achieving the good stuff for our people – like training and jobs - and not get bogged in too much paperwork”, he said.

“I remember way back, finally getting the vote in 1970. We’ve come a long way, but there is still so far to go – and I want to see it happen”.

Victor keeps his representation work balanced with quiet time getting back to country, fishing in the local creeks, gardening and spending as much time as he can with his grandchildren.

“I find it relaxing and also productive to grow a vegie patch and the grandkids love getting in there with me”, he explained. “And I go fishing as much as I can, pottering around in the creeks and keeping an eye on things”.

KEEPING THE DJABUGAY CULTURE ALIVE

Elder Rhonda Brim firmly believes that sharing her culture with younger generations helps both keep the traditional skills alive and build bridges to healing.

She has been working for the survival of her community all her life - holding public roles, negotiating with government and politicians, and working with both white and indigenous people to make a difference.

Rhonda explained she was very active in political life in her early days, taking on well known politicians like Bob Katter Sr and winning, but these days she is more focussed on helping her community through passing on the skills being lost from memory as everyone gets caught up in modern life.

“I grew up around Kuranda at Mona Mona and Mantaka learning both the white man ways – I used to travel down to Cairns High on the train each day – and my own people’s ways – especially from my Grandma Wilma Walker, who I hold very dear in my heart”, Rhonda said.

“Grandma taught me to weave the Dilly Bag, and I also weave the Pandanus Basket and the Bicornial Basket”, she said.

“I’ve put together a basket weaving course that I’m running in conjunction with some other elders out here at Mona Mona. By teaching the younger ones these skills they will learn about the environment, how to identify, collect and prepare the plants themselves, how to weave the baskets and the traditional uses of the baskets; all the while learning our people’s stories and bringing us back together as a community and family again”.



“It’s only by uniting and sharing that I believe we can heal and get our motivation back”.

“And the courses that teach both indigenous and non-indigenous people will use the basket weaving as a common ground, a basis to share knowledge and build understanding of differences being good”, Rhonda finished.

Fourteen participants are involved in this first course. It was originally intended to finish at the end of August but the course has created so much interest it has been extended for another three months with the aim of holding a public exhibition at the end. Interest has already been shown in future courses from schools as far away as Brisbane and Melbourne.

Rhonda Brim with two of the dilly bags being made at the weaving course.