

Central Australian Aboriginal Buying Service Des Rogers, ATSIC

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen. I would first of all acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Elders for this area. The Aranda People.

Indigenous people want better health, better education, better employment outcomes, and YES! we do want to become economically independent.

So it is very pleasing to see that the current Northern Territory Government has initiated this forum to look at the issues of economic independence.

It is all the more pleasing to see that the government acknowledges that calls for greater economic independence by Aboriginal leaders in the Territory have been made for many years.

The first principle objective of this forum is, let me quote from the 'Issues Paper'

****SHOW "ISSUES PAPER"****

These are your words not mine. "The promotion of Indigenous capacity to participate in, and initiate, economic development."

One of the most important foundations of this development is for Aboriginal People to gain genuine control of their community stores.

Community stores not only reflect the lifestyle within a community but are the main "Hub".

That is why it is so appropriate for me to talk about one of my key passions – CAABS- the proposed Central Australian Aboriginal Buying Service.

It is worth repeating that the conference "ISSUES PAPER" has stated in its opening paragraph, that Aboriginal leaders have been making calls for greater economic independence for many years. Many years.

We can keep on talking for many more years. But what good is that ?

So today I'm going to outline the history of CAABS and show you why it is something that we can easily act on now.

More than that, why it is something that it is vital to act on now.

Now let me tell you the CAABS story.

We recognize that poor store management has a devastating and lasting impact on the well being of our people. Under your law we are prohibited from shooting store managers.

I don't mean to be rude by making these accusations, but it is true.

Our people suffer from exorbitant pricing of goods, poor Quality, lack of Variety of goods in stores, No Indigenous involvement, No employment, No training and have very poor health and nutrition. PLUS! they are at the mercy, and suffer the consequences of poor store management.

Indigenous people have learnt the art of being patient.

We know the store manager, the town clerk and the community adviser will eventually go.

I persist-----while my people suffer.

In 1999 Indigenous people made a presentation to the parliamentary select committee enquiry into Northern Territory food prices.

****SHOW PRESENTATION****

This enquiry received numerous complaints about the poor management and lack of structure in community stores.

One of the recommendations to come out of that enquiry was for the, then, N.T. Government to hold a further enquiry into Community store operations.

However, out of all of the recommendations, this, was the only one they later rejected.

I persist-----while my people suffer.

We recognized that we needed to develop a strategy that embraced Indigenous ownership and true participation.

We formed a steering committee that has been involved, at varying stages with this project.

I'm not going to list those organisations that have had representation, but I can assure you, that it has been a cast of many.

Our strategy was to focus on improving health, nutrition and providing dry goods at cheaper prices.

In 2001 we engaged a consultant to carryout feasibility study.

****SHOW STUDY****

This study not only identified that a buying service would achieve significant savings in dry goods but planted the seed for us to embrace a much bigger aspiration. Economic Independence.

The vision of CAABS is:

****SHOW POSTER****

To provide the management and organisational support need to establish the Central Australian Aboriginal Buying Service.

The CAABS OBJECTIVES are:

****SHOW POSTER****

Improve the Quantity, Quality and Variety of goods in stores
 Lower the costs via better purchasing
 Ensure savings are passed onto the consumer
 Improve health outcomes for communities
 Achieve Training and Employment opportunities for Aboriginal People
 Ensure accountability in store management and structure

In November last year (2002) I, on behalf of Indigenous People, made a presentation to the Northern Territory Round Table here in Alice Springs.

****SHOW PRESENTATION****

I asked for Government assistance to push the concept of CAABS from an idea, a report, to an outcome. It is now March 2003.

I persist-----while my people suffer.

Due to time constraints I'm unable to present to you all of the detailed background, where we are at now, and our detailed vision for the future. But it's the future I want to highlight.

The Central Australia Aboriginal Buying Service, or CAABS, is simply that, a buying service. This is nothing new. Buying services have existed in the past and a number operate today in various States and Territories.

Stores purchasing alone are unable to attract the best price. Combining buying power enables stores, or the group, to negotiate a far better deal.

The feasibility study identified the dry goods wholesalers took part. One of those wholesalers is a Company called United Star.

This is the only company that has been proactive in pushing this process forward. And why wouldn't they be, we are talking about 20 to 30 million dollars worth of business in dry goods alone.

Some members on the steering committee for CAABS, have met on a number of occasions with Board members from United Star.

We have negotiated a deal where participating stores will receive a 1% rebate and CAABS will receive a 2% rebate.

Working on the minimum of 20 million dollars of business this would generate 400,000 dollars of income for CAABS.

Ladies and Gentlemen

CAABS is the GOLDEN EGG. We have found the HOLY GRAIL.

Let me repeat that:

CAABS is the GOLDEN EGG. We have found the HOLY GRAIL.

CAABS is about the local economy.

CAABS is about creating an economic resource for the local, Indigenous and non Indigenous people, of Central Australia.

Dry goods need to come from interstate. All of the other goods will be purchased locally. Meat, Bread, Fruit and Vegetables Variety goods and a whole range of everything and anything that a community store provides, creates an opportunity for local business.

It is our belief that everything that goes in and out of a community Indigenous people must have equity or participation in.

Let me give you a couple of simple examples:

CAABS puts out a contract from an N.T. based supplier, for the supply of fresh meat for 30 community stores. I won't go into the details such as quality and cut. The contract is worth, hypothetically, 15 million dollars. We negotiate further that to gain and retain this contract we want 2% equity within your business and we want real employment and training outcomes ect. ect.

98% of fruit and vegetables in Central Australia come from interstate. Go to the supermarket and stand in the fruit and vegetable section. What ever people buy that's your market. Urban, rural and remote Indigenous people are in a prime position to take advantage of this opportunity.

All of the things we love to talk about, Horticulture, Poultry, Indigenous Freight, Bush Tucker, Employment & Training, Health & Nutrition, will happen under CAABS.

CAABS will play a primary role in the employment of store managers and community staff.

CAABS will facilitate all programs that impact on our people.

Give Indigenous People equity, ownership and true participation and I guarantee we will see results.

Let me give you another couple of examples:

Indigenous people love tin meat particularly
 What/Which brand-----

HANDOUT TIN to LUCKY SHOPPER

Much to the horror of THS we love this stuff. I'm walking evidence of that.

HANDOUT HAMPER TINS

Not only do we have bargaining power in purchasing but we have bargaining power in labelling.

We can have an Indigenous banner, such as Coles, Woolworths, Foodland and 5 Star. Not only will CAABS control the Purchase price, but we will have control over retail pricing.

We can have labelling in language.

HANDOUT MUNA TINS

This is what I mean. On one side of the tin we have in Aranda language:

Relha-Kenha	Aboriginal People
Muna	Food
Store	Store

On the other-side of the tin we have:

Kera	Meat
Tjampete	Tin
Marre	Good

I would love to say "I have a dream" but someone beat me to that.

So I will say "this is not a dream, this is an opportunity"

An, "opportunity" for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people to come together for the benefit of economic and social issues in not only Central Australia but throughout the whole of the country.

Deloitte's have investigated the structure of a Company for CAABS. The preferred option is for a CO-OP. This CO-OP can be duplicated wherever i.e.: Broome, Cairns, Broken Hill or Tennant Creek.

It is free to be a member of CAABS.

Together we can take advantage of each others buying power to further decrease prices.

There are many, many positive outcomes with this proposal and I have mentioned but a few.

I believe we are at a stage where a Ministerial is now being prepared. More talk, more consultation, more waffle. Six years of blood, sweat, tears and frustration.

I persist-----while my people suffer.

We dealt with the previous N.T. Government and now we deal with the current N.T. Government.

For those in the audience who missed out on a tin of meat. We do have a gift.

****HAND-OUT CHUBA, CHUB'S****

Come with me to any community and I'll show you a sense of loss, hopelessness, anger, and despair.

I pose the question:

Are the Government and the Ministers here today serious about improving the outcomes for health, education, employment and economic independence.

Well, are you?

Of course you are. You want the microphone. You want to say how passionate and committed you are. You will use such words as Holistic, capacity building, participation and make even more promises.

If you are really serious about all of these things, do away with the red tape, forget the waffle and give us action.

Ladies and Gentlemen I once again refer you to the Forums "Issues Paper"

**** HOLD IT UP****

Study the introduction:

The CAABS concept addresses, EVERY sentence EVERY paragraph and every dot point.

We the Indigenous People call upon the N.T. Government to take action.

The time for rhetoric has expired. Six years is long enough. If you want us to trust you, and believe in you. You must "Implement a radical change in approach"

These are once again, your words not mine.

****HOLDUP "ISSUES PAPER"****

I will not go away. I will be at the next meeting, seminar or conference.

I will persist--while my people suffer

Thankyou
Des Rogers