Careers, aspirations and the meaning of work in remote Australia: Torres Strait

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Director, CAEPR
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Summary

The Indigenous Policy Unit of the Department of Family and Community Services (DFaCS) has commissioned the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Research to carry out research aimed at determining how the aspirations of young indigenous people in remote regions match the Department's income support programs for the unemployed. The project is to be carried out over five years and focus on locations in the Kimberley and Torres Strait. The principal methodology for the project will be surveys of indigenous people aged 15 to 24 years. This paper is a scoping exercise for the Torres Strait section of the project.

It is argued that the concepts of 'career' and 'orientation to work' provide useful analytical tools, allowing us to consider the impact of the surrounding social and economic milieu on people's approach to work and other activities. Using data from preliminary fieldwork and the Australian Bureau of Statistics' census, the paper suggests how people might be spending their time at the moment, what labour market options are open to them and how they are taking these up.

Women appear to be taking advantage of the scope for careers in health and education. In general, men seem to lag behind women in moving into skilled, professional and managerial positions. The apparently entrenched nature of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme (CDEP) is noted. However, it is also suggested that there may be some appropriate fit between the scheme and people's involvement in commercial fishing, giving them some degree of autonomy. A link between school attendance and commercial fishing is also noted. In addition, the apparently high level of mobility is considered.

It is suggested that although some may view welfare-derived programs, such as CDEP, negatively, it is not clear that the participants share this view. Also, as career options in remote regions are limited, it is proposed that there may be some value in considering this and other programs more as developmental devices and subsidies than as representing welfare dependency.

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Introduction

The Indigenous Policy Unit of the Department of Family and Community Services (DFaCS)[1] has commissioned the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Research (CAEPR) to carry out research aimed at answering the following questions for the *remote* regions of Australia:

- To what extent do the objectives of the 15–24 year-old indigenous clients match the objectives of the Commonwealth Government's programs related to income support for the unemployed?
- What are the particular local conditions which might be limiting or affecting the program objectives?
- In what ways might the programs be modified to make the objectives more compatible?

In effect, the questions are aimed at assessing the relevance of the Department's programs and at proposing how they might be made more relevant. The particular programs under consideration are Newstart and Youth Allowance.

The project is longitudinal: it is scheduled to run over five years (1999 to 2003) and will consist largely of an analysis of data obtained from standard surveys of a sample of indigenous males and females aged between 15 and 24 years in two remote locations, the Kimberley and Torres Strait. The sample will be surveyed three times over the five years.

Career and orientation to work

As this project is about assessing people's objectives with relation to labour market type programs it can be informed by a consideration of the two related notions of 'career' and 'orientation to work'. Career has been defined as the evolving sequence of a person's work experience suggesting a pathway or a staged course that people might take through their life (Arthur, Hall and Lawrence 1989: 8; Dalton 1989: 89, 91). It has been suggested that careers can take several different forms. These include the 'linear career' in which a person may select a field early in life and then progress upward, from a lower to a higher status position (a path commonly followed by managers); the 'steady state career' where the individual selects a job or field of work early in life and stays in that for all of their working life (professionals such as doctors and dentists, or skilled trades people are typical here); or the 'transitory career' where the individual moves from job to job without any particular pattern being established (Dalton 1989: 94). This last type of career is often followed by semi-skilled workers. Although people may have some choice about the career they follow, it is also thought that this is influenced significantly by their surrounding social and economic conditions (Bell and Staw 1989: 232). A person might be directed or attracted to a certain career by their individual skills and qualifications, or by environmental factors such as

social class, social milieu, culture and race (Dalton 1989: 90; Derr and Laurent 1989: 465; Nicholson and West 1989: 182; Thomas and Alderfer 1989: 133). Structural factors such as the job market and the level of unemployment also affect notions of career (Arthur, Hall and Lawrence 1989: 16; Derr and Laurent 1989: 458; Watson 1995: 132).

Orientation to work is the idea that people may approach work in different ways depending on a variety of factors such as the social or economic value that it holds for them. It largely comprises an investigation of the factors that encourage people to work, or not to work.

Work can provide the major source of satisfaction in people's lives, giving them their social status and identity (Watson 1995: 118, 144). Alternatively, it can simply be a means to an end, with activities outside of the work place, such as hobbies and pastimes, providing the real purpose and meaning to life (Watson 1995: 145). For many people, work structures their day and provides the principal means of social contact (Watson 1995: 164) and without work they can feel socially isolated. However, it can be argued that this depends largely on social norms. For example, indigenous people often prefer to socialise with one another, and may actually experience a form of isolation if they are the only indigenous workers amongst a number of non-indigenous people. Similarly, if many of their peers are unemployed, they need not necessarily feel socially isolated when they are unemployed and at home. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that employment represents a social attraction, and that unemployment represents a social cost for indigenous people.

In a similar way, the scale of employment or unemployment can affect people's orientation to work. For instance, Hunter and Gray (1999) propose that the presence of other adults who are either employed or unemployed may impact on the way people approach the labour market. Accordingly, if a significant proportion of the population are unemployed—that is, the norm is unemployment—this can reduce the incentive for other people to attempt to engage with the labour market. Therefore, orientation to work can be influenced by the labour market status of the majority. Indeed, some would argue that family and regional circumstances are more important for determining employment outcomes than personal characteristics (Miller 1998: 247).

Gregory (1999) has shown that the number of families in which both parents are long-term unemployed is increasing and suggests that this may have a knock-on and negative effect on the children of such families—though what this effect might be is not yet known. Historically, in much of remote Australia, indigenous people experienced very high rates of unemployment. However, they are no longer formally classified as unemployed as they perform part-time work on the Community Development Employment Projects scheme (CDEP) in which they earn the equivalent of their unemployment benefits (CDEP is often referred to as a work-for-the-dole scheme).[2] The scheme is well entrenched in remote areas and seems set to continue indefinitely. It is unclear what career paths such a scheme offers, but experience suggests that they are extremely limited. This, it

can be argued, is because having people work for their unemployment entitlements does not change the characteristics of their remote location nor produce a labour market with a variety of career options.[3] Therefore, we can argue that the effect of long-term CDEP, or work for the dole, may not be too different from the effect of long-term unemployment. That is to say, following Gregory (1999), it may have a negative effect on both the families involved and possibly on their surrounding society.

For the majority, work or paid employment tends to be the principal means of providing the necessities and norms of life, and therefore, unemployment represents a critical loss of income (Sayers 1988: 741; Watson 1995: 165). However, this is also a relative issue, and if unemployment is high and intergenerational then people may eventually attune their economic life to suit a welfare income. In such an environment, paid work may not have the same financial imperative.

Considering how people approach work and their ideas about possible careers may help to provide a view on indigenous aspirations. Although both appear to be influenced by personal abilities and skills levels, they are also conditioned by social and environmental factors such as the norms, values and economic life of the majority.

Torres Strait Islanders and career

How Torres Strait Islanders approach their work and their careers is yet to be revealed by this project. However, previous research provides some indicators. In Torres Strait Islander society, the notion of gaining status from possessing personal skills is well known. Men can achieve status by being skilful dancers and choreographers, good hunters or by being industrious (Davis 1998: 280). In pre-contact society, an Islander's notion of career might have included the change in status from boy to warrior. Later, this change in status occurred when young men were recruited to pearling boats by their elder brothers or uncles and when qualities such as masculinity and a work ethic were reinforced (Davis 1998: 246).[4] Recruitment and work on these boats was seen positively, with young men indicating to Beckett that 'You feel proud to be a diver. You are somebody—you feel a man' (Beckett 1987: 108). In a similar way, Islander boys are sometimes introduced to commercial fishing by their relatives today. Also, a contemporary ceremony celebrating a boy's 'first shaving' may now mark his change from boyhood to manhood when, as in earlier times, certain qualities are extolled. Some of these qualities are traditional, such as aspiring to be a good hunter while others are more contemporary, such as becoming a good Christian, and obtaining a formal education (Davis 1998). Although some of the above refer to life changes rather than chosen career paths, they would have engendered in people the idea of moving from one status to another, and, in many cases, included moving from an inferior to a superior status. This can be one of the features of some career types, for example, the 'linear career' described above.

As in other regions in the Pacific composed of small islands, the career path of some Islanders includes leaving the islands on either a temporary or fairly permanent basis.[5] Islanders began leaving Torres Strait for the Australian mainland in the 1950s. This move was stimulated by the desire to obtain the jobs and the conditions of employment and education not available to them in Torres Strait and to escape the social controls imposed by the government (Beckett 1987). Some Islanders now view relocating to the mainland as part of their career, and as a strategy to obtain skills and work experience, their ultimate aim being to obtain work in the government sector in Torres Strait (Davis 1998: 289). The careers of several prominent and active Islanders have taken this form. They have typically spent periods on the mainland working in the Royal Australian Navy or the merchant marine, the Queensland railways and in various sections of government bureaucracies, before returning to work in the Strait. Others may move on a more regular basis, between the Strait and the mainland—particularly to the northern towns of Cairns and Townsville—for either social or economic reasons. [6]

Competitiveness is also a feature of Islander society (Beckett 1971). There are stories of pearling boats racing each other to the pearling grounds and demonstrations of competitiveness in present day life are likely to be characterised as 'everyone wanting to be a skipper'. In addition, Islanders appreciated the difference in status between skippers and divers in the pearl shell boats. In the 1950s, when men went south to work on the railways as fettlers, they competed with each other to lay the most track and this form of competition was known as 'going for name' (Beckett 1987).

For a girl, the change to womanhood is marked at their first menstruation by a small private ceremony held by her aunts (Davis 1998). In the past, whereas men's careers could include working on the Community Council or in the church, women became members of the Mother's Union and the Girl's Friendly Society (Davis 1998: 96–7). The local perception is that girls are now more successful in finding work than boys. One reason for this success may be that many of the available jobs are in education and health and these are the types of jobs often filled by women in the labour market. However, there is also the perception that girls approach both work and education more positively than boys do. For example, they are considered more confident, they are more likely to ask questions about things they don't know and they generally do better at school. However, some of these perceptions are not entirely supported by the data, which show that men are more likely than women to have jobs in Torres Strait (see below).

The programs

The Commonwealth Government's income support payments most related to labour market programs are Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance. DFaCS has responsibility for Newstart and Youth Allowance, while Centrelink

administers these payments on the Department's behalf. Newstart is a payment for unemployed people aged 21 and over and its aims are to 'ensure that people who are unemployed receive an adequate level of income and participate in activities designed to assist their employment prospects' (Centrelink 1998: 30).

To receive this income people must formally agree with Centrelink to engage in activities that will improve their employment prospects. Appropriate activities include (part-time) vocational training, job search training, voluntary work, and any other activity that might increase their prospects of finding suitable paid work. Participants must also maintain a Jobseeker Diary (Centrelink 1998: 45, 46). Although failure to comply with these conditions can result in penalties, in assessing compliance, Centrelink staff are required to take account of such factors as a person's education, skills and experience, the conditions of the local labour market and the availability of training facilitates (Centrelink 1998: 30, 45). Youth Allowance is a payment available to younger people aged between 15 and 25 years. Its objective is to ensure that they are:

> able to move between looking for a job, training and full-time or part-time study, … creating incentives for young people to complete or further their education and training (Centrelink 1998: 44).

Youth Allowance is available to three major categories of person: those who are looking for work (job seekers); those who are studying full time; and those who are classified as independent. The program is flexible, allowing recipients to move between these categories (Centrelink 1998: 44).

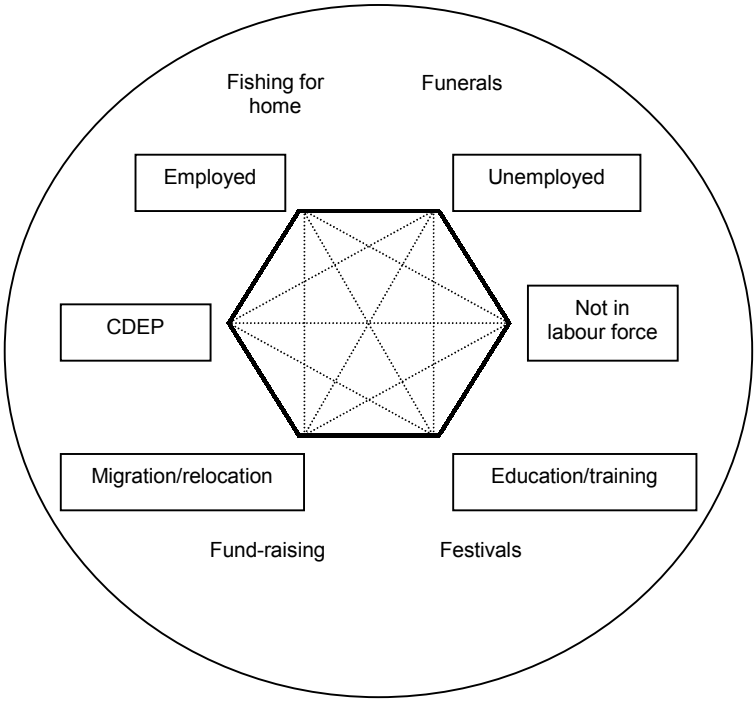
A schema for inquiry

These programs aim to help people to achieve a goal or goals. However, they tend to assume that the government and their clients have the same general aim: to move from unemployment to employment, largely through searching for work and/or through education and training. This could be described as the career path of a job seeker situated in a developed labour market. In addition, the programs are generated from the point of view of the cultural majority. However, this particular project is an inquiry into the relevance of programs for *indigenous* people in *remote* Australia. In these areas, where indigenous people may have different cultural and social values from the majority of the Australian population, and where the formal labour market is less robust or is non-existent, DFaCS' clients may have other goals.[7] Therefore, the programs—in their standard form—may have less relevance. For these reasons, this project will consider a variety of goals that people might choose. Six primary goals or activities have been selected and are represented in Figure 1. These are:

i. employment in the formal labour market;
ii. tertiary education;
iii. CDEP work;
iv. unemployment;

v. being outside the labour force; and
vi. migration/relocation.

Figure 1. Possible career-oriented activities



We know that people do other things. These include gardening, fishing and hunting for food for private consumption and for selling to others, fund-raising, attending festivals and funerals and performing community based or voluntary work (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997: 22). Some of this voluntary work was recorded in the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS) and is shown in Table A1 (Appendix A). It is clear from Table A1 that a significant proportion of indigenous people in Torres Strait do one or more types of voluntary work. (As will be shown below, similar types of work, such as caring for the aged or children, form some of the CDEP projects.) Although it is not known at this stage whether people do this to the exclusion of other non-voluntary work, earlier research has indicated that in some cases they do both voluntary and non-voluntary work (Arthur 1990). To the best of the author's knowledge, none of this voluntary work represents a permanent goal. For example, evidence to a recent Parliamentary inquiry noted that Islanders were not enthusiastic about gardening, preferring to utilise the local retail outlets (Arthur 1990; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 1996, 1997). The project will attempt to determine the extent to which younger people view forms of voluntary work as a career path.

All of the six major activities listed above and in Figure 1 can be linked to each other, but at this stage there is no suggestion that people are more likely to choose one goal over another. This is because preliminary investigations show

that people, particularly younger people, may move rather randomly and in any direction between the activities. For example, they may move back and forth between CDEP and unemployment or between CDEP and employment. This suggests that for those involved, all the activities have a similar value. That is to say, it is possibly as acceptable to be unemployed or not in the labour force as it is to be in education, or in employment. This orientation would not necessarily match the intent of the government programs, as described above, because these have employment as their goal. However, the objective here is not to investigate whether the aims of the programs are being met but to see how these coincide with the aims of younger people.

Figure 1, like the programs, tends to suggest that people will have one principal activity. This, in fact, may not be the case. We already know, for example, that people on the Outer Islands mix CDEP with commercial fishing (see below). They may carry out commercial fishing on the days they are not required to work on CDEP or they may move on to CDEP for the slack part of the fishing season. Therefore, it is possible that people will be involved in several activities over a period.

Some of the goals in Figure 1 can also be classified as strategies. For example, people may be involved in education or training or may migrate or relocate to the mainland as part of a strategy to achieve some other goal.

A brief profile of Torres Strait

There are an estimated 7,500 people in Torres Strait. Indigenous people comprise 80 per cent of these, making the Strait, on the basis of population, the most 'indigenous' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission region in the country (Arthur 1999a). Of the indigenous people in the region, Torres Strait Islanders are almost 95 per cent. There are almost equal numbers of indigenous males and females and, overall, the indigenous population is young when compared to the non-indigenous population.[8]

A summary of key socioeconomic data are in Table A2 (Appendix A). These show that, over several of the standard indicators, indigenous people have a lower socioeconomic status than the non-indigenous population. It is estimated that many of the non-indigenous people in the Strait are temporary residents who are there for work (usually in government administration and the construction of infrastructure) (Taylor 1997: 9). As will be shown below, these people are often highly qualified and skilled, and form the professional and managerial strata of the society. This suggests that there is a demand for a certain type of labour that is not being met locally. The major non-service industry in the region is commercial fishing.

There are established indigenous bodies such as the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and the Island Coordinating Council (ICC),[9] and indigenous people are quite well represented in the management of the region's fisheries.[10]

'Ailan Kastom', or culture, and identity are strong in the region. Furthermore, over the last twenty years, some Islanders have made several demands to be given greater control over their own affairs. This led to a Commonwealth Parliamentary inquiry and a report that recommended several changes in governance for Torres Strait (see Commonwealth of Australia 1997; Sanders 1999).[11]

Figure 2. Torres Strait Region

Very few of the indigenous people are involved in the two DFaCS programs. In 1998, an estimated 180 were in Newstart and eight in Youth Allowance. (Administrative data may underestimate the numbers receiving these payments.) This compares with 1,672 participants in CDEP. Centrelink on Thursday Island administers Newstart and the Youth Allowance, and it has agents on some islands. Because there are reckoned to be few jobs available in the formal labour market, Centrelink clients are not required to complete a Jobseeker Diary. It is less clear if they must apply for the necessary two jobs per period though it appears that this requirement may be waived.

A Jobnetwork office, opened in 1998, operates on Thursday Island but not on the Outer Islands. All Centrelink and Jobnetwork staff are local indigenous people who know their clients and their families. A Torres Strait Regional Employment Council oversees and advises Jobnetwork.

Like other Pacific archipelagoes, economic activity and development are limited by a number of factors. These include: a shortage of water and land (many of the islands are very small); a small economic base with few industries (predominantly government services and fishing); inaccessible islands; and a history of out-migration. Also, based on socioeconomic features, the region has two sub-regions the Inner and Outer Islands (Figure 2). These sub-regions have very different characteristics as follows.[12]

The Inner Islands:

- include Thursday Island, the administrative and government centre;
- have a multiracial population of which indigenous people are 62 per cent;
- have a formal labour market based on provision of government and other services;
- have Centrelink and Jobnetwork offices; and
- have only 9 per cent of their population involved in CDEP.

The Outer Islands:

- have a population that is 92 per cent indigenous which lives in small villages, participates in commercial fishing under concessional licensing, and has easy access to subsistence fishing;
- have virtually no formal labour market;
- have few Newstart participants;
- have some Centrelink agents;
- have no Jobnetwork presence; and
- have 42 per cent of the population involved in CDEP.

The Inner Islands can be characterised as the labour market domain where people may be in waged employment. The Outer Islands form a domain where people may work on CDEP and, at the same time, be part-time self-employed undertaking commercial fishing from their own dinghies (Arthur 1991a).

A career in employment?

As indicated above, it is considered that people might choose one or more of six principal goals or activities. One of these is employment. This section of the paper will consider the prospects for a career in employment in the formal labour market in Torres Strait.

How people envisage a career will be coloured by the employment opportunities that are available. These include:

- taking over some of the jobs now held by non-indigenous people;
- expanding the present industries; or
- introducing new industries.

As noted in earlier research, the options for expanding the regional economy are rather limited (Arthur 1990, 1991b). The major non-service industry is commercial fishing and its expansion is limited by the catches allowed for sustainability. However, there is some room for further expansion under the present catch limits and this is discussed below. The potential to introduce new fisheries seems limited (Arthur 1990). On the other hand, Islanders tend only to be involved in the productive aspects of fisheries and not in marketing, much of which occurs outside Torres Strait. This is an area into which Islanders could possibly move into.[13]

There is a small tourism sector, located principally on the tip of Cape York and on Thursday Island (see Altman 1995; Arthur 1990). The potential for expanding this sector is not clear. However, whereas in the past, Islanders have been ambivalent about tourism there is some anecdotal evidence that they may now be more interested in introducing it to the Outer Islands.

Small retail outlets have existed on the Outer Islands for some years, often operated by women (in 1990 there were an estimated 24 of these outlets). However, development of this sector has been limited in part by the fact that operators must compete with the government owned Islanders Board of Industry and Service (IBIS) which operates stores on each of the Outer Islands under a near monopoly (Arthur 1990: 33, 1999b).[14] In many cases these outlets were quite informal, purchasing goods from the IBIS store and trading outside IBIS trading hours (Arthur 1990). It should be added that indigenous people are represented on the IBIS Board and they are also managers of, and employees in, IBIS stores (see IBIS nd).

The relative remoteness of Torres Strait and its distance from markets make it difficult to attract new industries. Strategies which have been adopted in other regions to overcome this and similar problems include providing tax concessions. These can be applied either directly, as in the case of Norfolk Island, or indirectly through establishing trade zones, as in the case of Darwin (see Taylor 1991). These options are worth exploring for Torres Strait. In some other parts of the world rural communities have industrialised. For example, as an economic

necessity, the rural kibbutzim in Israel introduced small factories producing mechanical parts for assembly elsewhere. However, such options are difficult for Torres Strait Islander communities where skill levels are not high, and where the dispersed islands present additional transport problems.

Other strategies for introducing new industries or increasing Islander involvement in industries can include joint venturing. It is notable that one of the local non-indigenous hoteliers involved in tours of Thursday Island, has recently approached one of the Outer Island Councils to establish tours there on a joint venture basis. The TSRA has also been approached recently by an Indonesian fish processor to explore the possibility of establishing a processing plant in Torres Strait.

However, one feature of the region is that a proportion of the labour force is made up of non-indigenous temporary residents who are in the area principally for work (Arthur 1990; Taylor 1997). This work is often in the government sector and in the construction of housing and other infrastructure. Many of these positions, at least those in government, are on the Inner Islands. One career path for indigenous people would be to increasingly move into these positions. The following section explores this option as it applies to Thursday Island.

Thursday Island (in the Inner Islands)

The situation on Thursday Island is considered here, as this is the centre of the formal labour market. In 1996, non-indigenous people had 458 jobs, 274 of these were held by men and 184 by women. If this distribution was maintained, there are likely to be more new employment opportunities on Thursday Island for indigenous men than for indigenous women.

Table A3 shows the industries in which people are employed. Those industries that employ a significant proportion of non-indigenous people are, for males: construction, transport, government, retail and education. For females they are health, education, accommodation and the retail sector. Indigenous people are also represented in some of these industries, especially in construction and transport, although to a lesser extent. The significance of the health and education sectors in the regional labour market is evidenced by the fact that together these account for $27 million, or 67 per cent of the Queensland Government's recurrent costs in Torres Strait. Regarding occupations, Table A4 shows that non-indigenous males fill most of the managerial, professional, and trades positions, and non-indigenous females are in many of the professional, and clerical jobs. Again, indigenous people are less well represented in these occupations. It would seem therefore, that there is some scope for indigenous people to be involved more in some of these types of jobs and industries—a finding of earlier research (Arthur 1990).

What indicators do we have that indigenous people want to move into these jobs? A school-to-work survey of Year 10 to Year 12 students in 1997 suggested that indigenous male students aspired to be tradesmen (Table A5) and this would

certainly match the demand for trades positions shown in Table A4. It is also likely that many of the trades positions are in the region's construction industry which is largely centred on government funded infrastructure and housing projects. Commonwealth policies imply that agencies conducting major tenders must consult with the TSRA to 'consider the capabilities of local indigenous suppliers, and employment opportunities for local community members' (Commonwealth and Queensland Governments 1998: 12). However, local perceptions are that agreements made with the major construction contractors to include local employees do not always eventuate.

A public sector career strategy

Regarding indigenous careers in the public sector, a joint Queensland/Commonwealth public service 'career strategy', designed to raise the numbers of indigenous people at all levels in the public sector, operated on Thursday Island from 1994 to 1998.[15] The numbers of people involved in the strategy are shown in Tables A6 and A7.[16] The first observation from these data is that more women (66 per cent) than men were involved in the strategy. The data also show that many of the placements were in State government departments, possibly reflecting the fact that the Queensland State Government is a major employer in the region.[17] What is also noticeable is that almost 60 per cent of the placements were in health and education and this again reflects the significance of these two industries in the region.[18] Furthermore, of those participating in health and education, 154 (77 per cent) were women. The strategy also involved people in quite a wide a range of other government departments, although the numbers were generally much smaller (Table A6).

Arranging the career strategy data by occupational categories (Table A7) shows that almost 80 per cent of participants were placed with departments as associate professionals or as clerical workers. Again, of the 278 participants at these levels, 192 (almost 70 per cent) were women. Furthermore, women made up 80 per cent of the associate professionals, and these were in the health area.

These data suggest that indigenous people are interested in careers in both health and education. This is particularly the case for women and appears to reflect another of the findings of the school-to-work survey, in which females expressed a preference for jobs in education or in clerical work (Table A5). Therefore, we can see some correlation between women's aspirations, the career strategy, and the demand for female labour in health and education noted earlier. On the other hand, the data may also reflect other circumstances. As noted above, there have been significant moves towards achieving a greater degree of autonomy for Torres Strait. The Executive Officer of Thursday Island Hospital is a Torres Strait Islander and there is an active Torres Strait Islander Regional Education Council (TSIREC). In furthering increased autonomy, both the Executive Officer in health and the TSIREC are committed to Islanders having more control over health and education and have been instrumental in facilitating indigenous people into these areas; the data from the strategy are

probably also an indication of this commitment. Of course, health and education are traditionally (in the sense of the labour market) very much the domain of women, thus it should not be seen as surprising that women predominate in these industries in Torres Strait. Health and education also present some of the few career opportunities that allow women to remain in Torres Strait where they can be close to their immediate families.

We have already seen how indigenous people in Torres Strait are less likely to have managerial positions than non-indigenous people (Table A4). This situation has remained largely unchanged since 1990 (see Arthur 1990). Despite this, the data indicate that only just over 2 per cent of participants were involved in the career strategy at the managerial or administrative level (Table A7). It is unclear why this should be the case. However, it does indicate that, for whatever reason, indigenous people are not seeking to become managers or are not being selected to these positions. This situation may be compounded to a degree by the functions of the Jobnetwork office. Table A8 shows the vacancies handled by Jobnetwork during 1998, arranged by the standard ABS industries. These vacancies mirror to some extent the non-indigenous employment profile in each industry, or put another way, the various employers in Torres Strait appear to use Jobnetwork to fill their vacancies. However, when the vacancies are classified by occupation (Table A9) we see that although Jobnetwork handle many of the associate professional, clerical and labouring positions, they deal with very few managerial and professional positions. These made up only 5 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively, of the Jobnetwork vacancies. Earlier it was noted that many of the managerial and professional positions on Thursday Island were in government, and in health and education. It may be, therefore, that these jobs are advertised internally, within the government departments, rather than through the Jobnetwork system. If this is the case, it may lessen the opportunity that local people have to apply for these types of jobs.

CDEP workers appear to have little contact with Centrelink and Jobnetwork. Some approach Centrelink when they want to leave CDEP to go the mainland. Cray fishers also approach Centrelink if they stop fishing for seasonal or other reasons. In these cases, they appear to have difficulty in accurately declaring their seasonal or casual fishing incomes accurately on the necessary forms, and risk incurring a penalty. It is suggested that this may discourage people from taking up casual work in the fisheries. On the other hand, people can take up casual, part-time or temporary work and still, under an income test, receive a reduced Newstart or Youth Allowance.[19] The extent to which casual workers are able to comply with the program requirements is not clear at present and will be considered in this project. In any event, it appears that CDEP and Newstart are seen as being in competition. For instance, informants on Thursday Island proposed to the author that there should be some provision to increase the Newstart Allowance in much the same way that CDEP wages can be 'topped-up', thus enabling Newstart to attract more clients.[20] An alternative approach would be to design the two programs so that they complement one another, with

Newstart facilitating any changes people might make to their labour market status.

The Outer Islands

Career options on Outer Islands are limited, one reason being that there is practically no labour market there. However, Islanders are employed in the Outer Islands in a number of ways (Table A10). A small number of waged jobs (usually part-time) on each island are held by Islanders. These include jobs as monitoring officers for the government departments with responsibility for quarantine and immigration and associated with the management of the Torres Strait Treaty.[21] There are also a few jobs available in the medical aid posts, the island primary schools and the island stores.[22] By far the largest number of waged jobs are with the island councils. Most of these jobs are under the CDEP scheme, in which people work on a variety of council projects (see below). As noted, a large number of all of these waged jobs are part-time. There is virtually no or very limited room for expansion of any of these positions. The only jobs filled by non-indigenous people that might be taken over by indigenous residents could include those of the school principals and some of the council office workers.

Other jobs (which should be classified as self-employment) are in commercial fishing, the private retail sector, the production of artefacts, and in subsistence gardening and fishing. Current details of these activities are not available at this stage and will be clarified during the project. However, earlier research indicated that there were very few people producing artefacts, in part because there is no system to manage production and marketing (Arthur 1990). As noted above, the private retail sector has, in the past, been quite small and has had to compete with the Queensland Government-run island stores (Arthur 1999b). Subsistence activities are significant, and in 1990 were estimated to make up 10 per cent of all Outer Island incomes. However, this is a part-time activity for most Islanders. Hence, although it is unlikely that many Islanders would consider a career solely in subsistence gardening or fishing, they may see these as forming an important part of their working life.

By far the largest contributor to Islander self-employment is commercial fishing. There are concessional licensing arrangements for Islanders and this, together with their affinity with, and experience in, some of the fisheries has led to them being quite well represented in the industry. For instance, it is estimated they make up a significant proportion of the cray fishery and the entire trochus shell fishery (Arthur 1991b; Altman, Arthur and Bek 1994). However, fishing is seasonal and for most it is not a full-time activity. Indeed, the norm is for people to fish on the days when they are not required to carry out council CDEP work. It has been suggested that having to work on CDEP reduces people's availability and access to fishing (Arthur 1991a). However, it is possible that an accommodation has been reached between the two forms of employment. Indeed, it can be argued that CDEP now subsidises people's involvement in commercial

fishing. It can also be argued that such an arrangement reduces the likelihood of increasing the number of full-time commercial fishers working independently of the CDEP scheme. On the other hand, allowing people to mix CDEP and part-time fishing may actually increase the total number of people who are involved in the industry (Arthur 1991b).

The size of each fishery is regulated by a catch limit. However, these are often not met and there appears to be room for some expansion, particularly of the crayfish catch (Altman, Arthur and Bek 1994). In some cases expansion is limited by skills and by the available infrastructure such as freezing plant. But there are also indications that crayfish have become less plentiful and some people may prefer a stable but low income from mixing fishing and CDEP, to a higher but uncertain income from purely commercial fishing. Also, in the past, there was no means of monitoring Islander fishing effort and income. Now, fishers are required to produce a tax file number at the point of sale, and it has been suggested that this may have reduced the incentive to fish.

Islanders are not part of the most valuable fishery, prawning, despite the fact that they were granted three free prawn licenses some years ago. Currently around 88 prawn boats operate in Torres Strait and this fishery could present some career options (Turnbull 1997). It has been suggested that Islanders will not enter the prawn fishery because this requires them to be away from home and to work at night. However, it is not clear that these conditions fully explain their possible reluctance as in the pearling days fishers were also likely to be away from home for extended periods. On the other hand, fishing for pearl shell took place in the pre-welfare era, and Islanders may be less interested in this form of employment now that they have other sources of income (see Arthur 1998). It is the case, however, that most Islanders do not have the skills to manage a prawning operation, nor the significant capital required to purchase a prawn trawler, and these factors may also help explain their reluctance to enter the fishery. There is now to be a concerted effort to rectify this situation; in May of this year, the Island Coordinating Council advertised in the national press for expressions of interest from those keen to take up prawning licenses.

It is not clear what proportion of those involved in commercial fishing are women. As cray fishing is a 'dive fishery' possibly few of the fishers are women.[23] However, there is now evidence from loan applications to the TSRA, that married couples may be jointly involved in commercial fishing, including cray fishing, with women doing the necessary paperwork (see McDonnell 1999). Also, historically, women have taken part in various stages of both the trochus shell, and beche-de-mer fisheries and this may still be the case.

CDEP and career

On the Outer Islands there are 1,286 CDEP participants who form 55 per cent of the working-age population. On the Inner Islands there is one CDEP

scheme of 137 participants (on Thursday Island) where it represents almost 14 per cent of the working-age population.[24]

In the majority of cases, the type of work that people do on CDEP is associated with the functioning of their communities (see Table A11). This is largely because community councils have responsibility for local government functions, *and* for managing CDEP. It is possible that involvement in these projects will increase people's work skills though it is less likely that this will also lead to the creation of other jobs outside the area of local government. This is principally because, as noted earlier, there is little opportunity for expanding island economies. The exceptions here might be where people gain trades and construction skills and start to take over some of the private sector jobs in construction on the Outer Islands. Table A11 also shows that several CDEP projects are in arts and crafts and the retail sector. Again, skills learned here could stimulate private sector jobs in these two areas, although this would be subject to the restrictions noted earlier. Therefore, we could suggest that the career options within, or stimulated by, CDEP, are limited.

However, stakeholders, such as Centrelink, Jobnetwork and the ICC, believe that CDEP has become a career option for many young people. Indeed, it is thought that in some cases Islanders may prefer CDEP and may leave other formal employment to join the scheme. This may be partly the result of peer pressure, with those already on CDEP encouraging their employed friends to join them (Thursday Island Jobnetwork pers. comm.). It is also suggested that community councils may encourage people to join CDEP simply to maintain their numbers and the associated resources.

Several reasons have been put forward as to why CDEP may have become an acceptable career. These include that it may suit some people's lifestyle. For example, students in the school-to-work survey said that they wanted part-time jobs when they left school, and CDEP presents this opportunity. Further, we have already noted how the part-time aspect of the scheme makes it a suitable complement to commercial fishing. Also, we can imaging that, following Gregory (1999), as more young people come to experience a life where both their parents are, and have always been, on CDEP, they may come to view this as their natural 'career path'. This is confirmed to an extent by an observation, made by the Jobnetwork, that the scheme now carries little or no stigma and is considered as good as a 'real job'. On the other hand, that young people might consider CDEP a valid carer option is of concern to some regional leaders who feel the scheme has taken on a permanence that they did not envisage when it was first introduced.[25] This has prompted the Chair of the ICC to suggest to the author that he would prefer to see the scheme removed and replaced with some other device which would be designed for local conditions and controlled locally. Such a change would accord with Islander ideas of regional autonomy that include having a greater say over the design and implementation of policies and programs at the regional level.

It is not clear, at this stage, what precise objections leaders might have to the CDEP scheme. Possibly it is the negative connotation of welfare dependency inherent in the scheme. However, if, as suggested above, the scheme provides a platform from which people can exploit the commercial fisheries (which are subject to the seasons and the climate) then the overall result could well be characterised as a form of welfare autonomy.

Approaching education across the Strait

One of the activities shown on Figure 1 is education and training. Considering how people approach education and training may also provide an indication of how they might approach their work and their careers. Outer Island schools only provide primary education. Secondary level education is available from one school on Thursday Island, one on Cape York at Bamaga, and from a number of schools at centres on the mainland. The school-to-work survey identified 23 different secondary schools on the mainland that students might attend. Therefore, although no data on attendance and location are available here, it is likely that a significant number of students move to the mainland for their secondary education.

Secondary education

The age at which students leave school can provide some indication of their interest in, and commitment to, education. The 1996 Census data suggest that indigenous students are less likely to stay on at school after the age of 15 than their non-indigenous counterparts (Table A12). Several factors may contribute to this situation. At a workshop on Thursday Island in 1998 a local resident stated that 'There is much truancy ... many kids do not see the relevance of their education, they hate the restrictions and the discipline of school and prefer to be out fishing or on the beach'.

Similar issues have been noted elsewhere. For example, the secondary school on Thursday Island has observed that the attendance of Year 11 and 12 pupils can fall by as much 30 per cent at the height of the cray fishing season. The school believes that this is because students break their attendance to help their older relatives in the fishery. Earlier research noted that school students fish commercially during their school holidays (Arthur 1990) and the above suggests that this also happens during school term. Furthermore, the school-to-work survey showed that students might give up their schooling completely because they want to earn money (Table A13) and given the accessibility of the commercial fishery and its ability to provide cash, it is not difficult to imagine how many might prefer it to staying on at school.

The school-to-work survey data suggest that girls may leave school because they become pregnant—a factor also identified by the Jobnetwork on Thursday Island. Early pregnancy is not unknown amongst non-indigenous girls. However,

the 1996 Census data show that indigenous females (aged 15 to 24 years) are almost four times as likely to have a child than their non-indigenous counterparts. Therefore, it is possible that early pregnancy has a significant effect on the retention of female students at school. There is also some evidence that students may change schools several times in their secondary career. For instance, one student in the school-to-work survey attended four different secondary schools between Year 8 and Year 12 and three of these were on the mainland. If this level of inter-school mobility is common it may also contribute to low retention rates.

Although all of the above may contribute to low retention rates, it is instructive to note that, overall, the data in Table A13 indicate that factors outside of the school environment (such as the desire to earn money, and the pressures in students' homes and from their peers) may be as likely to result in students leaving school as those factors inside the school environment (such as difficulties with teachers and being expelled).[26]

Tertiary education

Jobnetwork find that it is hard to place their indigenous clients in the formal labour market, and suggest that this is because they have few of the skills demanded by the labour market. This is reflected in the 1996 Census data which show that indigenous people are much less qualified than non-indigenous people in Torres Strait (Table A14). In particular, indigenous people are less likely to have vocational qualifications, diplomas and degrees. This may help to explain why it is non-indigenous rather than indigenous people who occupy the professional, managerial and skilled trades niches in the local labour market (Table A4).

A Technical and Further Education (TAFE) campus and an annex of the University of Queensland on Thursday Island provide tertiary training aimed at bridging the qualifications gap and providing a pathway to the formal labour market. For example, in 1997 and 1998, diploma level courses were provided in the areas of childcare, teacher education and health.

As well as this, some TAFE courses are designed to meet the demands of the CDEP labour market and have included: instruction in community management, the use of power tools, and prevocational engineering and carpentry (Table A15). TAFE consults with island councils, as CDEP employers, over course selection and although TAFE views its relationship with the councils and the CDEP scheme positively, they also note that not all councils encourage their CDEP labour force to take up training. Indeed, there is the perception that TAFE and CDEP may compete for participants. Furthermore, it can be argued that if training is tailored too closely to the needs of CDEP, this can limit the range of skills that people are introduced to and thus limit their career options. As one example of this, it appears that CDEP workers are less likely to take courses that are more office based, such as computer studies.

TAFE receives mixed messages about students' *own* orientation to education and training. For instance, it is often the case that many more students enrol for courses than ever turn up and, traineeships and apprenticeships offered by local employers are also not always taken up.[27] Also, as with secondary education, there appears to be a relationship between commercial fishing and the students' approach to training. Student numbers are invariably lower in TAFE's second semester, which coincides with the height of the fishing season. During 1998, students dropped-out of a prevocational engineering course specifically to go commercial fishing. Of course, it may be that students prefer the relative freedom of commercial part-time fishing to certain kinds of training and employment. As noted earlier, this was suggested by one finding of the school-to-work survey which was that some secondary students aspired to part-time rather than full-time employment. These observations point to the possibility that people's approach to training and employment may be influenced by their desire for a certain lifestyle.

On the other hand, even when students do aspire to careers in formal employment, it is not always understood or appreciated that this may entail training. For instance, the school-to-work survey found that many of those who said they wanted a job that required skills, for example in the trades area, had little understanding that this would require them to take additional training after they left secondary school.

Migration, mobility and career

Migration, or relocation, is a common strategy that people adopt to find employment or to just generally improve their living conditions and is a strategy synonymous with small islands states in the Pacific region (Connell 1993). Migration is also a well known strategy for Torres Strait Islanders who have migrated or relocated from Torres Strait to the Australian mainland in search of work, education, and an improved lifestyle. This movement has been going on since the late 1950s, to the extent that, as noted earlier, more Torres Strait Islanders now live outside than inside Torres Strait (Beckett 1987; Taylor and Arthur 1992).[28] However, there are suggestions that, as jobs have become harder to find on the mainland and as living conditions in the Strait have gradually improved, the movement out of the Strait may have lessened and some earlier migrants may have been encouraged to return (Taylor and Arthur 1992). In addition, some of those who leave may only do so to improve their education and training with a view to eventually returning to the Strait. It is thought that, as a rule, young people are now keen to remain in the islands and are less likely to leave to look for work in other locations.

There is anecdotal evidence that one of the reasons people leave the Strait is because housing is in short supply. Similarly, it has been suggested that many younger people are very mobile principally as a strategy to escape the tensions caused by overcrowding within family households. An analysis of the 1991

Census data indicated that it is, in fact, likely that indigenous people in Torres Strait experience overcrowding (Jones 1994).

In other cases, movement may be linked to the high rate of pregnancy amongst young girls already noted. For example, it would appear that young girls might wish to leave home and move in with relations living elsewhere if they become pregnant. This can result in them moving to another island or to the mainland depending on where they have relatives with accommodation.

The above suggests a possible link between social factors, such as the availability of housing, early pregnancy and people's mobility and, their articulation with work and training. However, it must be stressed that the pattern of movement within the Strait, and between it and the mainland, and the cause and effect of this movement, are poorly understood at the present time (Taylor and Arthur 1992).

Incentives and necessities

One of the features of work, or paid employment, is that it is the means by which the majority of people obtain the finances necessary for their lifestyle. Looked at from another perspective, approach to work will be influenced by lifestyle and financial commitments.

The Jobnetwork on Thursday Island observes that even when young people get a job, they do not always turn up for work. One explanation given for this is that they only want to work long enough to earn an amount of money necessary to cover an immediate need. Peterson has noted a similar practice in central Australia and termed it 'target working' (Peterson 1977). As well as this, people in Torres Strait tend to rent rather than purchase housing. In part, this is a feature of the housing market in which councils or governments own much of the housing in the Strait. In any event, someone with a twenty-five year mortgage might approach work in a different way from another person with a smaller target—an aluminium fishing dinghy for example. Similarly, the ability to meet targets will influence people's approach. Those with ready and reliable access to the means of making money will be likely to have a different approach to work from those who do not.

Some Torres Strait Islanders have indicated to me that when they need cash they go fishing. In fact, one reef is named Dollar Reef because, as I understand it, one might fish there when one needs a dollar. The following case notes are also instructive. Two young men from an Outer Island who were planning to attend a football carnival on Thursday Island caught enough crayfish on the way there to cover their expenses for the weekend; people borrowing funds to buy fishing dinghies appear to have little trouble repaying their loans; Islanders sometimes fish to fulfil requests for cash from their relatives on the mainland; and some Torres Strait Islanders living in Cairns now travel to the Strait specifically to undertake commercial fishing (Arthur 1990). All of these

examples suggest that commercial fishing might provide a means of meeting immediate financial targets at the present time.[29]

Islanders also have the option to increase their available cash by reducing their food costs through subsistence fishing and gardening. In the early 1990s it was estimated that these activities might account for 10 per cent of incomes on the Outer Islands (Arthur 1990). On the other hand, Islanders appear reluctant to do more of this, stressing that they prefer to buy goods from their island store, or that they only do subsistence fishing when their income from other sources runs out (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 1996, 1997). Again, the above case notes suggest that people are able to meet their targets under their present system. For many this system is a made up of a mix of CDEP, commercial fishing and subsistence activities.

It is not clear exactly what Islanders' financial targets are in Torres Strait. Food and other such items are undoubtedly more expensive than in southern parts of the mainland.[30] However, some other costs, such as rents on Outer Islands, may be lower. There are no good data on home ownership, but experience suggests that people, especially those on the Outer Islands, do not purchase their houses but, because these are on what they consider *their* land, they view them as their own and do not always pay rent.[31] In any event, it is not clear whether people, especially those living on Outer Islands, have large financial targets to meet in Torres Strait. Those targets they do have are possibly met within the framework of CDEP and commercial fishing. If this is the situation, it will no doubt influence people's approach to work and to career.

Conclusion

This discussion paper describes a longitudinal research project which is concerned with the aspirations of younger indigenous people in remote regions and the way these aspirations may, or not may not, match the aims of the Commonwealth Government's mainstream employment related polices. The structure of the project implies that remote regions have particular characteristics that influence the relationship between people's aspirations and government policies in a particular way. It is suggested that notions of 'career' and 'orientation to work' present ways of exploring this issue. These approaches require that a number of factors that might influence people's aspirations are taken into account, including educational levels, the norms of the surrounding society, interests outside the formal labour market and the shape of the local labour market. The purpose of this paper has been to discuss some of the conditions and issues that apply in Torres Strait as preparation for carrying out field surveys there. (A note on the fieldwork methodology is in Appendix B.)

Torres Strait is a remote region that has particular characteristics. These include that it is an archipelago of small islands situated on the international

border with Papua New Guinea. It is the homeland of Torres Strait Islanders—Australia's Melanesian indigenous people—who make up the majority of the regional population. Like many small island regions, the Strait has an extremely limited economic base consisting largely of a service sector and a commercial fishery. Again, like many archipelagoes, the region is made up of two sub-regions, the Inner and Outer Islands. The social and economic conditions of these two sub-regions are quite different. The Inner Islands are multi-racial, are the focus for the region's services and include the only formal labour market. The Outer Islands are almost totally occupied by indigenous people, and the labour market is primarily CDEP and part-time commercial fishing.

Generally, there appear to be few opportunities for significantly expanding or diversifying the local economy and this restricts the career options and most probably people's aspirations. There is some room for Islanders to increase their participation in the commercial fishery; for example, to increase their crayfish catch and to take up prawn trawling. Also, it is noticeable that Torres Strait Islanders are under-represented in the region's managerial and professional positions—many of which are in government health, education, administration and trades. These are presently often filled by non-indigenous people from the mainland.

Some effort is going into redressing this situation, and in the move for increased regional autonomy, indigenous people are being introduced into the health and education areas—women seem to be taking the lead here. There is less evidence that indigenous men are interested in filling the senior managerial, professional and trades positions presently held by non-indigenous people. It may be the case that younger males prefer the relatively freer lifestyle of part-time fishing and CDEP to other work in the more formal labour market, especially as it is not clear that their present career paths present any great financial hardship. Certainly, there is some evidence that young people will, at times, opt to take part in the commercial fishery rather than in education and training. Some leaders may view CDEP negatively and want young people to move from this into other careers. It is not clear whether young people share this aim. Also, it must be remembered that for Outer Island residents to take up work in the formal labour market, they would have to relocate to the Inner Islands. Apart from anything else, this would present them with some accommodation problems. In any event, if it is the case that there is now a working relationship between the CDEP scheme and the commercial fishery it may be advisable to ensure that the scheme operates to encourage participation in the fishery. In this regard, CDEP could be viewed as a form of regional development subsidy. Further, if the CDEP scheme allows people to utilise the opportunities in their area, it can be viewed as creating a form of welfare autonomy rather than representing welfare dependence (Arthur quoted in Peterson 1999: 852). In addition, the scheme may allow people to give attention to those areas that interest them outside what we normally think of as the labour market, such as their families or their communities. However overall, such a situation would suggest a tension between considering certain

programs in remote areas as a developmental device as against viewing them as a form of welfare dependence (see Pearson 1999).

Migration to the mainland has been part of the career path of many Torres Strait Islanders since the 1950s. It is not clear at this stage to what extent this remains the case. Other forms of movement now also appear to be common. For instance, it would appear that younger women may move to the mainland if they become pregnant and that young people may move between islands and/or between residences in the Strait to escape family tensions and overcrowding. Indeed, mobility may be a feature of the life of younger people and so for many, contact with the DFaCS' programs may well be limited and intermittent—occurring mostly as they move between activities such as fishing and CDEP, and/or between various localities. This would appear similar to the actions of people following transitory careers, noted at the beginning of the paper. If this is the case, an important feature of the Commonwealth Government's labour market programs could be to facilitate this form of transitory career.

In the main, the evidence suggests that there are few career options in Torres Strait and that the impact of CDEP on people's aspirations is significant. There is possibly a fit between CDEP and commercial fishing. However, Gregory (1999) indicates that children may be effected in some way if their families experience intergenerational unemployment. A similar situation may arise from intergenerational involvement in the CDEP scheme. It is not clear what this overall effect is, but it is not too fanciful to suggest that it could lead to significant levels of boredom (Peterson 1999: 859) which, in turn, may be the trigger for the high levels of alcohol abuse and youth suicide experienced in some indigenous communities in remote regions. The argument being made here is that if people have no career prospects this may lead to social dysfunction. By extension, having the prospect of a worthwhile career and future, contributes to social harmony. Given that attachment to place is an important aspect of indigenous culture, it is likely that there will always be considerable numbers of indigenous people in remote regions. This should encourage us to consider additional strategies for creating meaningful futures for indigenous youth. Of course, what constitutes a worthwhile career is not known and will be explored in this project.

Notes

1. DFaCS replaces the former Department of Social Security. DFaCS now has the responsibility for designing and assessing the programs administered by Centrelink.
2. CDEP should not be confused with the Work-for-the-Dole scheme administered by the Commonwealth Government.
3. Labour markets are the product of the demands of capital and industry. The CDEP scheme does not, of itself, attract capital and industry to remote communities and locations.

4. At a recent meeting on Thursday Island, a prominent female Islander referred to up-and-coming Islander lawyers as the 'new warriors' and as 'warriors without canoes'.

5. For many of the small island states of the Pacific, migration to a more developed nation state is a principal labour and development strategy.

6. It is estimated that more than 80 per cent of those identifying as Torres Strait Islanders are located on the Australian mainland.

7. For example, in such areas, attending funerals or ceremonies may take precedence over turning up for work. Generally, and often because of kinship obligations, such events involve large numbers of people from disparate locations.

8. Using the 1996 Census, it is estimated that 58 per cent of the indigenous population is under the age of 25 years, compared to 30 per cent for the non-indigenous population (see Taylor 1997: 9–10).

9. The TSRA was established under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Act 1993* and the ICC under the Queensland *Community Services (Torres Strait) Act 1984*.

10. The Treaty between Australia and Papua New Guinea established the Torres Strait Protected Zone Authority which manages the Strait's fisheries through a number of committees. Torres Strait Islanders are represented on several of these committees (Arthur 1999a).

11. Following this inquiry, the Chair of the TSRA had further discussions with the Prime Minister regarding the matter of increased autonomy (see *Torres News* 26 March–1 April 1999, p. 8). Negotiations with the State and Commonwealth Governments are ongoing.

12. In fact, the administrative region of Torres Strait takes in two Torres Strait Islander communities on the northern tip of Cape York, namely Bamaga and Seisia.

13. In a press release on the 16 July 1999, the TSRA stated: 'We aim to ensure that all revenue raised through our fisheries stays in our region so that we can develop a self-sustaining economy. We want to be the sole buyers of our produce and plan to develop a centralised marketing body.' Such a body would no doubt deal with the national and export markets (Arthur 1990).

14. IBIS replaced the former Island Industries Board in the early 1990s.

15. Research in the early 1990s indicated that few Islanders were employed at the managerial level in any branch of the public sector (Arthur 1990).

16. It should be noted that there were seven different programs in the strategy and that these were not primarily recruitment programs. The data therefore indicate the number of people involved in the programs and not the number of people who eventually found jobs.

17. Using the 1996 Census, Taylor (1997: 25) deduces that approximately 18 per cent of those employed are in the Queensland State Government.

18. For the purpose of this analysis, the data have been arranged into ABS census categories.

19. The rate of Newstart and Youth Allowance reduces for income above $60 per fortnight.

20. It is possible for CDEP participants to be allocated a wage top-up and so receive an income higher than that available from the standard unemployment benefit.

21. The Treaty between Australia and Papua New Guinea created the Torres Strait Protected Zone. Traditional inhabitants of the region are allowed to make cross-border visits and to trade without formal customs and migration restrictions. This free movement increases the risk that exotic and potentially harmful pests and diseases present in Papua New Guinea might be introduced to Australia. The Zone is designed as a buffer, to lessen this risk. The Islander monitoring officers are employed to assist the departments (located on Thursday Island) to manage this aspect of the Zone.

22. Each island has a store owned and operated by the IBIS, a State Government instrumentality.

23. The species of crayfish in Torres Strait will not enter pots and must be speared or caught by hand (Turnbull 1997).

24. Overall, males form the majority of the CDEP participants.

25. An expression of this, was that one Islander leader was concerned that having CDEP on Figure 1 suggested it as a possible a goal.

26. I acknowledge the assistance of Dr Jerry Schwab of CAEPR in this analysis.

27. Of the 12 students of Prevocational Carpentry at TAFE in 1998 it is estimated that 11 were offered traineeships or apprenticeships.

28. As a point of comparison, it is estimated that almost 40 per cent of Cook Islanders live outside the Cook Islands and around 80 per cent of all Torres Strait Islanders live outside Torres Strait. These data suggest that migration has been a significant feature of Torres Strait Islander life.

29. Data from 1997 indicated that the price paid to fishers for crayfish varied between $15 and $35 per kilogram. Catch rates varied between 20 and 40 kilograms per diver, per day. A fully professional diver may fish between 90 and 100 days per year (Arthur 1990; Pitcher et al. 1997: 13–14).

30. In 1990, the Consumer Price Index between Thursday Island and Brisbane was 1.57 (Arthur 1990: 10).

31. Houses are usually owned by community councils or the Queensland or Commonwealth Governments.

Appendix A

Table A1. Voluntary work by those aged 15 years and over

Voluntary work [a]	Strait Islanders Per cent	National indigenous Per cent
Hunting fishing or gathering bush food	61	39
Community or sporting organisations	40	33
Committees	30	30
School or youth groups	16	21
Caring for sick or aged	4	15
Other	2	7

Note: a. People gave more than one answer.

Source: ABS/CAEPR (1997: 22).

Table A2. Summary data for the TSRA, 1996[d]

	Indigenous	Non-indigenous	Not stated	Total
All persons	6,064	1,297	254	7,615
Age 15–24	1,046	173	137	1,356
Median age	20	33	24	23
Employed CDEP	713	0	3	716
Employed CDEP[a]	1,672	0	0	1,672
Employed other	1,072	803	11	1,886
Unemployed	187	42	0	229
Not in labour force	1,406	223	27	1,656
Unemployment rate[b]	9.4	4.9	0	8.0
Participation rate[c]	58.4	79.1	34.1	63.1
Mean individual Income $/week	195	510	420	241

Notes: a. Administrative data from TSRA (1998).

b. Number of unemployed as a percentage of labour force.

c. Number of persons in the labour force as a percentage of the population aged 15 years and over. Excludes the not stateds.

d. Excludes those who did not state income.

Source: 1996 Census.

Table A3. Employment by industry on Thursday Island, 1996

ABS Industries	Indigenous		Non-indigenous	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Agriculture, Forest, fishing	7.7	0.0	4.4	1.6
Mining	2.7	0.0	1.5	0.0
Manufacturing	2.3	1.3	3.3	2.2
Electricity, gas water	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.0
Construction	6.8	2.9	14.6	0.0
Wholesale	0.0	0.0	2.2	0.0
Retail	11.3	11.3	10.6	10.9
Accommodation, cafe, restaurant	3.2	5.9	5.8	12.0
Transport storage	5.0	2.5	12.8	3.3
Communication service	2.7	0.0	1.5	0.0
Finance, insurance	1.4	1.3	1.5	4.3
Prop. bus service	2.7	7.9	4.4	2.7
Government admin. defence	18.6	15.9	12.0	7.1
Education	4.1	15.1	8.4	21.7
Health community service	18.1	27.6	6.9	24.5
Cultural rec. service	1.8	1.4	0.0	1.6
Personal/other service	3.6	2.9	4.4	3.3
No class	1.4	1.3	2.9	1.6
Not stated	6.8	2.9	1.1	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	221	239	274	184

Source: 1996 Census.

Table A4. Employment by occupation on Thursday Island, 1996

ABS Industries	Indigenous		Non-indigenous	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Managers administration	4.6	1.6	11.6	3.9
Professionals	7.8	12.1	23.2	44.4
Associate professionals	11.0	14.5	19.7	13.9
Trades and related	17.0	2.8	21.6	1.7
Advanced clerical	0.0	4.4	0.0	2.8
Intermediate clerical	11.9	33.5	5.8	19.4
Intermediate prod/transport	17.4	1.2	9.3	0.0
Element sales	6.9	11.3	1.5	7.8
Labour and related	13.8	12.5	6.2	2.2
Inadequately described	3.2	1.2	1.2	1.7
Not stated	6.4	4.8	0.0	2.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	218	248	259	180

Source: 1996 Census.

Table A5. Employment desired by Year 10, 11 and 12 students on the islands of Torres Strait, 1997

Desired employment	Male Per cent	Female Per cent
Trades		
Motor mechanics	50.0	nd
Carpentry/joinery	24.9	nd
Electrical engineering	8.5	nd
Boiler making	8.3	nd
Marine engineering	8.3	nd
Intermediate clerical sales and services		
Teacher aides/child care	nd	14.0
Office/clerical work	nd	12.5
Total number: male and female	126	126

Notes: nd = no data.

Source: David-Petero 1997.

Table A6. Placements in State/Commonwealth public sector career strategy by functional department, 1994–98

Department	No. of Males	No. of Females	Total No.	Per cent
Health Department/hospital[a]	27	90	117	34.7
Education[a]	19	64	83	24.6
Torres Shire	7	8	15	4.4
Australian Quarantine Inspection	11	3	14	4.1
Dept. Emplt. Training Indust. Rln.[a]	3	9	12	3.5
Australian Customs	9	2	11	3.2
Justice Department[a]	3	6	9	2.6
DETYA	5	4	9	2.6
Australian Fish Management Authority	4	3	7	2.0
Dept. Family Community Services[a]	3	4	7	2.0
Q'Build (construction)[a]	6	1	7	2.0
Centrelink	0	3	3	0.8
IBIS (wholesale/retail)[a]	1	2	3	0.8
Island Coordination Council[a]	0	3	3	0.8
Queensland Boat/Fishing Patrol[a]	3	0	3	0.8
Queensland Transport[a]	0	3	3	0.8
Queensland Police[a]	1	0	1	0.2
Department of Immigration	0	1	1	0.2
Not classifiable	13	16	29	9.9
Total	115	222	337	100.0

Notes: a. refers to State government departments.

Source: Department of Training and Industrial Relations, Thursday Island.

Table A7. Placements in State/Commonwealth public sector strategy, by ABS occupations 1994–98

ABS Occupations	No. of Males	No. of Females	Total No.	Per cent
Managers and administrators	6	2	8	2.2
Professional	6	17	23	6.6
Associate professionals	11	46	57	16.3
Tradespersons and related workers	9	1	10	2.8
Advanced clerical/service workers	21	74	95	27.2
Intermediate clerical/service workers	54	72	126	36.2
Intermediate production and transport	5	1	6	1.7
Elementary clerical sales/service	6	16	22	6.8
Labourers and related workers	1	0	1	0.2
Total	119	229	348	100.0

Source: Department of Training and Industrial Relations, Thursday Island.

Table A8. Non-indigenous employment 1996 and vacancies posted with Jobnetwork for Thursday Island, by ABS industries, July 1998 to March 1999

ABS Industries	Thursday Island, non-indigenous Per cent	Jobnetwork vacancy Per cent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	3.3	0.5
Mining	0.9	0.5
Manufacturing	2.8	1.8
Electricity gas, water	1.1	0.0
Construction	8.7	2.3
Wholesale trade	1.3	0.0
Retail trade	10.7	20.1
Accommodation, cafes, restaurants	8.3	15.5
Transport, storage	9.0	10.0
Communication	0.9	0.9
Finance, insurance	2.6	0.0
Property, bus., service	3.7	5.5
Government administration, defence	10.0	6.4
Education	13.8	7.8
Health, community service	14.0	16.0
Cultural, rec. service	0.7	1.4
Personal, other service	3.9	3.7
Non-classifiable	2.4	7.8
Not stated	2.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Total number	458	219

Sources: Jobnetwork; 1996 Census.

Table A9. Non-indigenous employment, Jobnetwork vacancies posted for Thursday Island, by ABS occupations, July 1998 to March 1999

ABS Occupations	Non-indigenous Per cent	Jobnetwork vacancy Per cent
Managers and administrators	8.4	5.1
Professional	31.9	3.2
Associate professionals	17.3	12.5
Tradespersons and related workers	13.4	8.3
Advanced clerical/service workers	1.1	2.8
Intermediate clerical/service workers	11.4	30.6
Intermediate production and transport	5.5	1.9
Elementary clerical sales/service	4.1	6.0
Labourers and related workers	4.6	28.7
Inadequately described	1.4	0.9
Not stated	0.9	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Total number	458	216

Sources: Jobnetwork; 1996 Census.

Table A10. A typical profile of Islander part-time employment on an Outer Island

	Waged employment[a]	Self-employed[a]
Council		
Non-CDEP workers	8	
CDEP	30	
Non council		
Quarantine Inspectors	1	
Immigration Monitors	1	
Medical Aid workers	3	
School aides/workers	4	
Island Store workers	2	
Airlines agents	1	
Commercial fishers		30
Retail operators		2
Artefact producers		1
Subsistence fishers/gardeners		nd[b]

Notes: a. All part-time employment.

b. nd = no data.

Source: Arthur 1990.

Table A11. Council CDEP scheme projects on 14 Outer Island communities, 1998

Project	Number
Roads/drainage/sanitation/municipal works/airstrip/seawall	27
Market garden/nursery/tree planting/horticulture/landscape	15
Guest house, ferry, freezer, fuel depot, canteen	15
Housing and building repair/maintenance	11
Sport and recreation, radio and TV	10
Child care, aged care	7
Arts and crafts	6
School aides/workers, medical aides	5
Take away kiosks, island store,	5
Workshop, welding, furniture making	5
Community police, rangers	3
Quarry	1
Outstation	1
Church	1
Total number of projects	112

Source: TSRA administrative data, 1998.

Table A12. Year those aged 15 years and over left school in the TSRA, 1996

	Indigenous		Non-indigenous	
	Males Per cent	Females Per cent	Males Per cent	Females Per cent
14 or under	14	13	11	9
15	15	12	19	13
16	20	20	22	18
17	19	20	22	34
18	10	9	13	15
19 and over	5	6	4	2
Still at school	5	6	3	3
Never attended	1	1	1	1
Not stated	12	13	5	5
Total 15+	100	100	100	100
Total number	1,696	1,874	676	420

Source: 1996 Census.

Table A13. Reasons why indigenous students may leave school, Torres Strait, 1997

Reason	Per cent
Issues outside school	
Pregnancy	12.9
Need to earn money	12.9
Self-confidence, self-esteem	9.6
Peer pressure	9.6
Home difficulties	6.5
Funerals	6.5
Issues inside school	
Trouble with other students	22.5
Difficulties with teachers	6.5
Expelled[a]	6.5
Homesickness	6.5
Total	100.0
Total number	31

Note: a. Often due to problems with attendance.

Source: David-Petero 1997.

Table A14. Highest level of qualification of those 15 years and over, Torres Strait, 1996[a]

Qualification	Indigenous		Non-indigenous	
	Male Per cent	Female Per cent	Male Per cent	Female Per cent
Higher degree	0.0	0.0	0.5	1.9
Post grad. diploma	0.2	0.2	1.9	4.7
Bachelor degree	0.4	0.6	11.2	20.0
Undergrad. diploma	0.7	1.2	7.3	9.5
Associate diploma	0.8	1.6	3.6	1.9
Skilled vocational	4.9	0.5	24.4	1.9
Basic vocational	1.2	2.1	2.2	2.1
Inad. described	0.1	0.3	1.0	1.1
No qual.	77.5	77.8	35.9	46.4
Not stated	13.7	15.3	11.5	10.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	1,698	1,874	676	420

Note: a. Those who did not state their identity are excluded.

Source: ABS 1996 Census.

Table A15. Thursday Island and Cape York TAFE, courses and estimated student numbers, 1997 and 1998

Course	1997	1998
4–6 year diploma courses		
Community sport/recreation	28	30
Child care	nd	19
Remote Area Teacher Education Program	nd	12
Community management	nd	nd[a]
Health worker	nd	nd
Short courses (5 days–16 weeks)		
Computing	44	nd
Tutor training	33	nd
Pre-voc. engineering	19	12
Office administration	15	8
Art	14	0
Pre-voc. carpentry	12	12
Office Studies	nd	12
Welfare	nd	7
Aged care	nd	7
Diploma of management	nd	nd
Diploma of Justice	nd	nd
Work ethics	nd	nd
Chainsaw operation	nd	nd
Welding	nd	nd
First aid	nd	nd
Workplace Health and Safety Induction	nd	nd
Horticulture	nd	nd
Ranger training	nd	nd
Coxswains	nd	nd
Master Class 5	nd	nd
Literacy and Numeracy Needs Analysis	nd	nd

Notes: a. nd = no data.

Source: TAFE, Thursday Island.

Appendix B

Proposed methodology

The procedure for the field surveys is to interview a sample of 60 males and 60 females aged 15–24 years. The sample will be stratified by age with ten males and ten females sampled aged 15–16 years; 17–19 years; and 20–24 years. Given that there are two very different environments in the Strait (the Inner and Outer Islands), the sample will be drawn from Thursday Island—representing the Inner Islands, and one Outer Island. However, it is recognised that there is no 'typical' Outer Island and indeed there is considerable variation between them, especially with respect to their involvement in the commercial cray fishery. A local assistant

will help with the interviews, which will not include extensive questionnaires, but rather will take the form of structured interviews. The questions will be aimed at finding out what people have done in the past and want they want to do in the future, and their strategies for achieving this.

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