



# KIJA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Kija project was initiated in 2006 by Ricky Drill, eldest son of Shirley Drill, elder of the Kija people and traditional owners and custodians of the Bungle Bungles (Purnululu N.P.), Western Australia. While completing a “Learning Pathways Program” with the Swinburne University, Ricky floated a proposal to provide industry skills training opportunities for the younger members of his community. Ricky’s concern was in providing employment opportunities for his people “in country” in order to help preserve their cultural heritage and to stem the decline of social degradation and the migration of his people into a marginal existence in the larger towns and cities.

In response, Swinburne staff developed a multi-pathway training model to deliver a range of learning outcomes depending on the demand and employment opportunities that were identified. While this model was designed to provide the education and training necessary for social and economic development, the existence of local businesses and employment opportunities necessary for a sustainable future was unclear.

Ricky also sought the help of others to help formulate a long term goal for his people in order for them to take control of their own future, without the long term need for government and other interventions. Colin McKinnon, Director of the Mia Mia (Aboriginal Art) Gallery, Templestowe, worked with Ricky to engage the local community and others to assist in realizing a sustainable future for the Kija community. They have established links with a number of philanthropic and non-government organizations including Rotary International and Brock Foundation.

A Reference Group was convened in early 2007 comprising Swinburne University, the Rotary Club of Eltham, the Peter Brock Foundation, Colin and Ricky to establish the scope and direction of the project. Kija elder Shirley Drill flew to Melbourne in May 2007 to meet with the reference group and to seek support on behalf of the Kija people of the Bungle Bungles.

The first stage of the project is to work with the Kija community to develop a Community Development Plan which provides a practical template for integrated development across all facets of the community to achieve the Kija community’s objectives.

This stage is being undertaken by the Reference Group in three parts:

1. A fact-finding process to identify and document the current circumstances of the Kija community, a current “Community profile”;
2. Meeting with and listening to, the Kija people at Turkey Creek to understand and document their “Vision” for the future of their community; and
3. Developing an integrated “Community Development Plan” based upon:
  - A. the identification of needs and priorities to bridge the gaps between the current circumstances of the Kija people and their vision for the future;

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- B. better utilization of existing support programs provided by government and non-government organizations in the region; and
- C. the development of new project proposals where needs are not met by existing programs.

On completion of the Community Development Plan, the Reference Group will partner, mentor and assist the Kija leadership to access and manage programs and projects and support the ongoing implementation of all aspects of the plan. This is a long term relationship of 5 to 10 years which will have many mutual benefits to all participants. It will make a significant contribution to cross cultural understanding, reconciliation and empowerment of the Kija community.

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