

The Best of INTENTIONS

**Mainstreaming, the Not-For-Profit
Sector and Indigenous Australians**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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March 2014

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Abstract

This study investigates interconnections between government approaches to policy in Indigenous affairs – characterised by mainstreaming of services for Indigenous Australians – and the ways in which the not-for-profit sector (NFP) has responded. In terms of both policy and practice it offers a window on the intercultural and interpersonal challenges for organisations and individuals working in the cross-cultural spaces evolving between mainstream (white) organisations and Indigenous Australians.

The thesis offers a detailed case study of Australian Red Cross – one of Australia’s oldest and most prestigious humanitarian organisations. In 2007, Red Cross commenced new programs and services for Indigenous Australians as part of its mission “to help the most vulnerable”. Drawing on Nakata’s concept of the “cultural interface” and field-based research across Australian Red Cross, the thesis explores the interfaces between Indigenous staff, the organisation, and Indigenous communities in the early stages of this venture during the period 2010-2012. The thesis also reviews in detail the experience and challenges of adapting and introducing a Canadian family/community safety program to Australia as an Indigenous community development program.

As NFPs move into domains that were previously mainly Indigenous and with increased co-dependence between the NFP sector and government in providing Indigenous programs and services, the thesis offers a timely account of lessons, risks and challenges for all involved. In conclusion, the thesis questions whether the current policy direction and its resulting collaboration between governments and the mainstream NFP sector have secured the outcomes intended.

Candidate's statement

I, Gwenda Claire Colyer, declare that the work presented in this thesis is my original research and that the ideas of others have been duly cited and acknowledged in the text. This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for a higher degree to this or any other university or institution. Ethics approval for this research was obtained from the Macquarie University Human Research Committee (HE27NOV2009-D00204 and 5201000483).

Gwenda Claire Colyer

17 March 2014

Acknowledgements

This research was made possible by the cooperation and assistance of the Australian Red Cross, the support of an Australian Research Council Linkage Project (ARCLP0882152) and a Research Excellence Scholarship (MQRES) awarded by Macquarie University.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to everyone who took part in the research project and who so generously shared their personal stories, experiences, and insights of working life at the cultural interfaces of a major Australian not-for-profit organisation. The following individuals, almost all of whom were staff of Australian Red Cross at the time of the field research, expressed a wish to be personally acknowledged, which I do with my whole-hearted thanks:

Maria Anderson	Helen Farinola	Ken Leon	Rachael Schmerl
Kate Berry	Gwenda Freeman	Margaret Luta	Lyndal Scobell
Evelyn Barker	Warren Fryer	Nichole McKewen	Andi Sebastien
Donna Brahim	Dawn Gilchrist	Debbie McRobie	Lorraine Sholson
Marcia Brownley	Bradley Gilchrist	Shane Maddocks	Gina Smith
Tyrone Brownley	Michelle Godwin	Joan Meredith	Tania Solar
Mary Carroll	Leigh Gregory	Perry Miller	Fiona Stanley
Heather Clark	Olga Havnen	Sally Morris	Kyrn Stevens
Ralph Coulthard	Bonita Hoey	Anthony Newcastle	Kerry Symons
Nikki Cowcher	Barbara Hollin	Allan Newchurch	Robert Taylor
Sharna Cox	Luana Johnston	Craig Nevin	Linda Turner
Gwen Crombie	Jacqui Katona	Billie O'Keefe	Jessica Watkinson
Jack Crombie	Wilma Kemp	Janis Page	Rodney Williams
Roslyn Doyle	Belinda Ledgard	Athena Plummer	Jackie Wright
Leeanne Enoch	Andrea Lee	Rosemary Plummer	Tania Yow Yeh

I wish to acknowledge and thank many Australian Red Cross staff for their help, in particular members of the Research Department, Carol Hubert, Carla Benham, Zigi Yates and Panayiota Romios. I also express my appreciation to Red Cross Executive Directors and Regional managers who facilitated my field work and supported the research in many practical ways. Olga Havnen, the former Australian Red Cross Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, and a long-standing friend and colleague, facilitated

introductions and was extraordinarily generous in her commitment of time and support for the project. As always, I am very grateful for her friendship, her depth of understanding and insights into the issues that inspire us both, and for what many participants in the project described as her ‘encyclopaedic’ knowledge.

For their individual support for and facilitation of the project at different times, I also thank Jacqui Katona, Kate Berry and Wendy Edmondson, who as successive National Managers of the RespectED program, enabled my close engagement with the development of the program. I am also grateful to all the members of the Australian Red Cross RespectED program team (2010-2012) for their generous support of the research, willingness to share their experiences, and for many truly unforgettable moments in team workshops and training exercises.

I wish to acknowledge my academic colleagues in the Macquarie University–Australian Red Cross Linkage Partnership: Professor Robyn Dowling, Emeritus Professor Robert Fagan, Associate Professor Michael Fine, Professor Richie Howitt, Dr Julia Scott-Stevenson, and Dr Rochelle Spencer.

I will be forever deeply grateful to my Principal Supervisor, Professor Richie Howitt, for his encouragement and confidence in me, for nurturing my intellectual and academic development, and for the extraordinary generosity with which he has dedicated so much of his time, intellectual insight, academic knowledge, and skill as a teacher in support of this project, and to the linkage project generally. Our supervision sessions were both inspiring and literally mind-expanding. I am also very grateful for his exceptional patience, good humour, and unsurpassed regruntling skills. It has been a privilege and a life-changing experience to have undertaken this project under his supervision.

I also wish to thank my Associate Supervisor, Emeritus Professor Robert Fagan, for his insightful, expert reading and commentary on the final draft of the thesis, and express my gratitude for his doing so in a tight time-frame when there were many demands on his time.

In our exceptionally friendly and supportive university department, I would like to thank and acknowledge my colleagues on ‘the 7th floor’ with whom I have shared this ‘PhD journey’, for their friendship and collegiate encouragement, including Pamela Box, Riyanti Djalante, Marnie Graham, Minna Hsu, Ann El Khoury, Justus Kithiia, Gaim Lunkapis, Liz Morgan,

Karina Luzia, Martin Rice and Natasha Udu-gama. A special thank you to former 'room-mates', Laura Hammersley and Rebecca Bilous for their extra support on the 'home stretch'.

I am also especially grateful to Jacqui Katona, Lana Leslie and David Crew, not only for their friendship and encouragement as colleagues, but their generosity in acting as 'sounding boards', and whose own research and depth of understanding of the issues in these contested spaces provided informed objectivity and invaluable perspectives that helped to anchor me as a researcher.

I thank my friend and professional colleague, Kate Sullivan, who kindly read the thesis in draft and provided her informed and thoughtful comments and suggestions, as well as for many encouraging conversations to help me untangle my ideas, for advice and moral support, suggested readings, and the delivery of most welcome and gratefully received 'care packages' at critical times. I also thank my friend, Tony Mandl, for long weekly walks and debriefings over the several years of this thesis project, for opera and music, and my niece, Bron Downes, for her continual interest, support and encouragement. I thank my family and friends for their understanding and patience while I have been buried in the thesis.

I am grateful to Karen Jefferey for her beautiful work in designing the tables, map and cover design and overall look of the thesis, and her good humour in persisting patiently through many difficulties. I also thank Lorraine Shannon for her careful fine editing. I acknowledge artist, Cathy Wilcox, both for her brilliant cartoons and for her kind permission to reproduce in this thesis "It's all about me" (first published in *The Sun Herald* in June 2013).

Finally, I thank those mentors, friends and former colleagues who introduced me to an understanding of Indigenous issues many years ago, for their patience in teaching me and their part in changing my 'lifeworld'. I especially wish to acknowledge Olga Havnen, for imparting her vision and passion, and my former boss, David Ross, Director of the Central Land Council, for his mentoring and wise, down-to-earth advice. I hope this thesis will make a contribution to a greater understanding of the complex issues to which both have been dedicated for so many years.

I dedicate this thesis to my lovely mother, Sheila Colyer, aged 95 years, who always encouraged us to pursue education and who has always been proud of me.

Glossary

ACA Act	Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Services
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AIDA	Australian Indigenous Doctors Association
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
APS	Australian Public Service
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATSIS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services
ATSISJC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner
Bringing Them Home Report	Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, 1997
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal and Economic Policy Research
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
CfC	Communities for Children (Commonwealth program)
CGC	Commonwealth Grants Commission
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
COAG trials	Trial sites for 'whole of government' approach to delivery of Indigenous services
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Closing the Gap	Current national Indigenous policy developed by COAG under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) to improve Indigenous benchmarks in key social indicators
CRC	Canadian Red Cross
DOFD	Department of Finance and Deregulation
DSS	Department of Social Services (Cwlth) (formerly FaHCSIA)

Employment and Retention Sub-strategy	Australian Red Cross Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Sub-strategy
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (Commonwealth) (now Department of Social Services)
Fundamental Principles	The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) movement
Good Start Breakfast Club	Red Cross program providing free breakfast of fruit and cereal
GSBC	Good Start Breakfast Club
HORCATSIA	House of Representatives Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
HR	Human Resources (formerly People and Learning)
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now Human Rights Commission)
ICC	Indigenous Coordination Centre
IDI	Intercultural Development Inventory
IDI research	Research project with Australian Red Cross using the IDI
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ORIC	Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations
<i>Koori (Kooris)</i>	Aboriginal person (people) (New South Wales, Victoria)
<i>Little Children are Sacred Report</i>	Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007
<i>Murri (Murris)</i>	Aboriginal person/people (Queensland, parts New South Wales)
McLure Report	Report of the Reference Group on Welfare Reform (2000), chaired by Mission Australia CEO, Patrick McLure
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
NFP/NFPs	Not-for-profit / Not-for-profit organisations
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NIRA	National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap)
NPM	New Public Management
NT	Northern Territory

NTER	Northern Territory Emergency Response ('the Northern Territory Intervention', 'the Intervention') – a legislated package of measures targeted specifically to Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory
OATSIH	Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
ORIC	Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations
PHaMS	Personal Helpers and Mentors Service
Practice Manual	Guidelines for Australian Red Cross staff and volunteers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities (2009)
Reconciliation	A national ten year process for Aboriginal Reconciliation initiated by legislation passed in the Australian Parliament, 1991
RGWR	Reference Group on Welfare Reform
ROGS	Report on Government Services
RPA	Regional Partnership Agreement
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SAM	Save a Mate program (targeted to youth)
SAM Our Way	Adapted version of SAM program for Aboriginal participants
SCAIA	Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs
SRA	Shared responsibility agreement
Top End	The northern region of Australia's Northern Territory
The Forum, national Forum	The first Australian Red Cross National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Forum, held in Brisbane, December 2009
The Intervention	The Northern Territory Emergency Response (see NTER)
'The Lands'	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands in northern South Australia
The Principles	The Fundamental Principles of the IFRC
TSOs	Third sector organisations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
VOIP	Voice Over Internet Protocol
Whitefella	Non-Indigenous person
WTPC	<i>Walking the Prevention Circle</i> (RespectED education module)

Prologue

I came to my profound interest and work in Indigenous affairs through my earlier career in broadcasting (1979-1992). In 1981, an early assignment took me to Canberra, the national capital, to report on a United Nations conference on Indigenous peoples. At that time, aged 26, I had scarcely met or had anything to do with Aboriginal people. My upbringing in Sydney, and 'superior' education had utterly failed to give me any insight into or understanding of the history and process of colonisation in my own country, notwithstanding an honours degree in history at one of the best 'sandstone' universities. The conference opened my eyes – and my heart – and profoundly shocked me. I was offered an opportunity to begin to understand Indigenous relationships with country, and met and interviewed Aboriginal people whose personal life experiences of hardship – of which I knew nothing at all – related directly to the policies of governments and a broader racism I found difficult to imagine. I learned not only that I was a beneficiary of nearly 200 years of dispossession of Indigenous people in my own country, but that my country was one of many whose Indigenous peoples had a similar relationship with country and had experienced very similar experiences of dispossession, racism and exclusion.

In the mid-1980s, I transferred to the Northern Territory, working first for my principal employer, the national broadcaster (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, ABC) and then in the late 1980s, through a secondment to Alice Springs to work with the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), training Aboriginal broadcasters – the first of a number of experiences working in Aboriginal community controlled organisations that were striving both to assert an Aboriginal voice and to control their own affairs and development in issues concerning land, heritage, culture, education and health.

My experience as a worker in these organisations, as a co-worker with Aboriginal staff and reporting to and working under the guidance of my Aboriginal 'bosses' was what is called "a life-changing experience". Because of my co-workers, bosses and mentors, I gradually learned a different way of seeing and understanding Aboriginal perspectives. I progressively found that the more I learned, the less I knew – my initial impressions, viewed through the prism of my cultural background and race, often turned out to be completely wrong – misinterpretations of what I thought I saw. On the other hand, the more I was given time and opportunity, with extraordinary generosity, the more I was taught.

I also learnt that my understanding of Indigenous issues, no matter how sympathetic, was often completely lopsided: I saw things through the prism of my understanding, culture and upbringing. Especially when working as media officer with the Central Land Council (1992-1996), at the interface between a council acting on behalf of traditional landowners to reclaim land and protect cultural heritage, and a hostile media and even more hostile Northern Territory Government, ever-ready to use these issues for political advantage, I began to understand how powerfully mainstream ways of seeing what was important and whose interests were at stake were controlled by dominant culture values that had just about nothing to do with Aboriginal perspectives or interests or ways of seeing the world.

These were my first experiences of what at that time, I thought of as 'working cross-culturally'. More recently, I have come to see these interactions as more profoundly associated with a national blindness, or what Stanner termed "a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale" (Stanner, 1991 [1968], p.25). At a personal level, drawing on Martin Nakata's concept of the 'cultural interface', I understood that I had been working at that cultural interface myself, both within organisations and, at the land council, also acting at the cultural interface between my Aboriginal bosses and powerful political constructs of white dominant culture. These are complex and difficult places to be. As a non-Indigenous person in an Aboriginal workplace, one is never quite sure of the history and 'the rules', and can easily make inadvertent cultural mistakes, yet on the whole I felt included, accepted and valued for who I was, not categorised or judged because of my white, middle class, city-bred background. In many ways, my circumstances were the reverse of the experience of Aboriginal people at the cultural interface. I was in the minority of white staff members in Aboriginal organisations, but I came from the majority culture; my life had not been one of exclusion and I had alternatives and life opportunities largely not available to my colleagues had they been working for white organisations. Nakata's description of the permeacy of life at the cultural interface for Aboriginal people made sense, because I lived it, but unlike my colleagues, I also had the option to withdraw from it.

These experiences led me to a range of further encounters and enriching, challenging, life-changing opportunities, including involvement in major legal and policy debates, and advocacy and activism in support of Indigenous rights. My more recent professional path in the 2000s was in a range of consultancy projects and short-term positions, all in some way associated with Indigenous affairs, and through these I became increasingly aware of

the involvement and participation of the not-for-profit (NFP) and philanthropic sectors in Aboriginal engagements. One such project was to assist in organising The Fred Hollows Foundation 'Learning from the Past, Thinking About the Future' conference in Sydney in 2002, which focussed on the prospects for collaboration between corporate and philanthropic partners in local community-driven projects and the promising potential that these organisations could bring flexibility, expertise and resources to such projects in a way that governments could or would not. In late 2007, I was commissioned by Australian Red Cross to facilitate a strategic planning process for the expansion of its Indigenous engagement in the Northern Territory, and again, the prospect of a major Australian NFP engaging with and responding to community needs and priorities offered promising opportunities for an important new kind of engagement between Indigenous Australians and mainstream Australian institutions.

As explained in more detail in the body of this thesis, the opportunity for deeper investigation of such engagements came through a research partnership between Australian Red Cross and Macquarie University's Centre for Research on Social Inclusion. This project was supported by a substantial Australian Research Council Linkage Project grant (ARCLP0882152), and my participation, by a Macquarie University PhD scholarship. Working as part of a larger, multidisciplinary team working collaboratively with Red Cross, I was invited to research Australian Red Cross's Indigenous engagement. This was both an exceptional privilege and a considerable challenge, but I felt that what I could uniquely bring to the project was my own history and experience of work at the cultural interface to bring an empathetic understanding to the experiences of Australian Red Cross staff, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, at that interface.

Australian Red Cross's decision to open itself to scrutiny in the complex area of Indigenous engagement was both very generous and courageous. I am grateful to many Red Cross staff, themselves deeply interested in the success of this work, who generously contributed their time and assistance, and also to my academic supervisors and colleagues who, like my earlier mentors, supported my development along this new, life-changing, learning curve. As the thesis that follows makes clear, Red Cross allowed extraordinary access to support this research in this sensitive and difficult domain and in turn, I have endeavoured to undertake the work carefully and with sensitivity.

The thesis offers an insight into a particular period of Red Cross's history. Things have moved on in Red Cross since 2010-2011, when I undertook the greater part of the fieldwork for this thesis, and thus the thesis offers a snapshot across Australian Red Cross at a particular point on its journey, and I hope will be understood in that light.

Understanding, and even seeing, the cultural interface is difficult, disconcerting and often very challenging. For whitefellas at the cultural interface, it is not easy to look into the mirror and reflect on the awkward spaces of power and privilege there in the exercise of cultural dominance. The story that unfolded offered a significant window on Nakata's cultural interface, and while an academic account cannot capture all the complexities involved, this thesis does aim to foster understanding and to do so with honesty and respect.

This thesis, then, offers a window on how cultural interfaces are experienced in the NFP sector, drawing on the generous access I was offered by one significant NFP in the course of a journey that is not only complex and difficult for any institution, but also for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff who live and work it every day, and for the Indigenous people and communities it engages, serves and affects along the way. I hope it does so well enough to inspire further engagement with the difficult questions and awkward answers it raises.

Chapter 1. Introduction

In the Indigenous area, more than any other, there has been a huge gap between policy intent and policy execution, with numerous examples of well-intentioned policies and programs which have failed to produce their intended results because of serious flaws in implementation and delivery. (DOFD, 2010, p.11)

Indigenous Australians have poorer outcomes than other Australians on nearly all socioeconomic statistical measures (SCRGSP, 2012b, p.16) and fare worse on most social indicators than the Indigenous peoples of comparable developed OECD nations such as Canada, New Zealand and the United States (Kauffman, 2003). In 2011, total direct Indigenous expenditure by all Australian governments (Commonwealth and state/territory) was estimated at \$A25.4 billion, or approximately \$A44,000 per head of Indigenous population, compared with less than \$A20,000 for non-Indigenous Australians (SCRGSP, 2012a). Yet, despite high level government commitment to ‘close the gaps’ and apparently high levels of expenditure, some indicators remain stubbornly resistant to improvement and the Prime Minister’s most recent Closing the Gap Report revealed that some, for example employment, had worsened (Abbott, 2014).

Indigenous affairs in Australia “confronts a repetitive cycle of well-intentioned policy failures” (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B; Gray & Sanders, 2006; Sanders, 2013; Graham, 2011; Maddison, 2009a, pp 1-23). It is subject to significant failures not only of policy formation but also of implementation (DOFD, 2010, p.11) and has been characterised as a “wicked problem” (APSC, 2007). According to Pacanowsky,

Wicked problems ... come with built-in complexities that make them doubly difficult. Wicked problems present no known algorithms for solution; simply identifying the problem can turn into a major task. Wicked problems force us to work “outside the box”. Sometimes we hit upon a “solution” that merely serves to prove that we failed to define the problem to begin with. (Pacanowsky, 1995)

Wicked problems seem intractable and are highly resistant to resolution: they are difficult to define, are often multi-causal and have many interdependencies, with internally

conflicting goals and objectives; they are often unstable, socially complex, have no clear solutions and some, as is the case for Indigenous policy in Australia, are “characterised by chronic policy failure”. Attempts to address them often lead to unforeseen consequences (APSC, 2007, pp 3-5).

In the context of the still unresolved relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples in Australia, the threads of recent policy shifts can be traced to longer term developments in Indigenous policy by Australian governments. Indigenous policy has recently cycled through a repetitive pattern of debates and themes, from protection to assimilation to self-determination and back to protection and assimilation (Maddison, 2009a, p.1). Sanders (2013) argues that shifts in Indigenous policy reflect competing principles of ‘equality of opportunity’, ‘autonomy/choice’ and ‘guardianship’ that at any one time are balanced in some way; Rowse (2012) explores these shifting policy debates from the perspective of different forms of recognition and whether Indigenous Australians are viewed as ‘populations’ (tabulated and framed in terms of their relative statistical inequality with the ‘mainstream’) or ‘peoples’, rights-bearing entities defined by their collective agency and potential capacity to negotiate “collective rights that should be expressed in laws and institutions, negotiated between the nation and its Indigenous peoples” (Rowse, 2012, p.215).

This policy area in Australia is also subject to what Sanders (2008, 2013) terms “generational revolutions” when the “intense moral tone” of Indigenous affairs as a cross-cultural or inter-societal policy arena contributes to a sense of urgency or failure and to precipitate policy ‘switching’, or generational revolution: “times when, through ideas of failure, past policies and institutions are abandoned and new approaches are developed by new generations of actors” (Sanders, 2013, p. 168). Although the most recent shifts in Indigenous affairs policy had their antecedents under Labor governments in the 1990s (Sullivan, 2011b), the changes in legislation, policy and practice instigated by the conservative government led by the then Prime Minister, John Howard, from 1996-2007 constituted an important example of such a generational revolution or “policy punctuation” (Sanders, 2013).

In this period, the Australian Government launched what it called “a quiet revolution” in Indigenous Affairs (Vanstone, 2005a; Gray & Sanders, 2006). The so-called “new arrangements” commenced in 2004 with the dismantling of the Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the national elected peak body, and the dispersal of its funding, programs and staff to mainstream government departments (that is, to generalised departments that did not specialise in Indigenous services or programs). This marked the beginning of an era of “new mainstreaming” (Altman, 2004; McCausland, 2005; SCAIA, 2005; Gray & Sanders, 2006) that continues to be central in national Indigenous policy.

At one level, ‘mainstreaming’ aims to ensure that the needs of Indigenous people for social, community and welfare services, especially the 75% of Indigenous Australians who live in urban and regional centres, are adequately and appropriately met by mainstream services (ANAO, 2012a, p.68). At another, however, it has meant in practice that an ever-growing group of non-Indigenous not-for-profit organisations (NFPs) has entered the field of Indigenous service delivery to the extent that they are now the main recipients of Commonwealth Government funding for Indigenous programs (ANAO, 2012b, p.65). Both conservative and Labor Governments have signalled their intention to ‘harness the mainstream’ (COAG, 2004) and regard non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which are expected to have “stronger community links”, as assisting in achieving solutions to the ‘wicked problem’ of Indigenous disadvantage (APSC, 2007, p.20).

The research reported in this thesis opens an important window on this period of generational revolution in Indigenous policy through a study of one of Australia’s major NFPs. Australian Red Cross is one of many mainstream organisations that have moved into new or greatly expanded engagements with Indigenous people in Australia in the past decade. The nature and extent of this expansion of NFPs/NGOs may be one of the unforeseen consequences of the dramatic shifts in Indigenous affairs policy of the past decade. This increased engagement of NFPs in Indigenous issues remains under-researched to date, but it may prove to be a shift that represents yet another iteration of oft-repeated Indigenous policy failure and further concentrates the ‘wickedness’ of the problem, making persistent Indigenous disadvantage and marginalisation even more difficult to address as the systems involved become increasingly complex and less amenable to change as a result of the shift in policies and the way they have been implemented. The focus of this study on one of the nation’s largest NFPs was both challenging and revealing. As an important national public institution, Australian Red Cross opened itself to scrutiny in this research, and in doing so opened a challenging and new perspective on the complex interplay between these different policy domains.

One of the reasons that the shifting sands of Indigenous affairs policy present such a wickedly complex policy challenge in the present is due, at least in part, to equally momentous changes in policies that have simultaneously transformed the NFP sector over the past twenty years. In parallel with the contestation and policy shifts of Indigenous affairs, major changes in policy settings also affected the NFP sector in this period. The increasing marketisation of welfare and community services, begun in the era of microeconomic reform under the Labor Governments of the 1990s, were entrenched under the conservative Howard government (1996-2007) (Melville, 2008, p.107). Under its more “ideological” implementation of New Public Management principles (Johnston, 2000, p.358), outsourcing of services, and competitive tendering and contracting to improve efficiency and reduce costs expanded and became official government policy. The Howard years especially were turbulent and combative times for the NFP sector (McDonald & Marston, 2002), and saw many advocacy organisations and peak bodies defunded and attacked for a lack of ‘accountability’ (Staples, 2007; Maddison & Hamilton, 2007; Maddison, 2009b). While there was growth for the sector as a whole (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.300), there was also increasing dependency on government funding (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.302) and this period saw the rise of large, especially faith-based, NFPs as preferred providers in the politicised context of ‘mutual obligation’ and welfare-to-work reforms (Phillips, 2007).

It is into this messy interplay between Indigenous affairs and the activities of the NFP sector that this thesis ventures. There has been little consideration in academic literature of the inter-connections between these two key areas of policy, or of the consequences of these changes for the Indigenous community sector, which receives little recognition either as part of the broader NFP sector or as a distinctive sector in its own right (Sullivan, 2011a, p.47). The mainstreaming of Indigenous services and disestablishment of ATSIC in 2004 exposed the Indigenous community sector to the pressures of the marketplace and processes of competitive tendering for mainstreamed or ‘universal’ programs (Sullivan, 2011a, p.71). During the same period, non-Indigenous NFPs have had increased opportunities to secure funds not only to provide ‘universal’ services to Indigenous people, but for Indigenous-specific programs as well. Increased competition from large mainstream organisations may well have contributed to the decrease in the number of Indigenous community sector organisations delivering health and community services, employment and training, education, child care and housing since 2007-08 that has now become evident (ORIC, 2013, pp 4, 14).

Generational shifts in policy in both sectors in the last decade have been critical in shaping how mainstream NFPs have expanded their roles in Indigenous service delivery. In Indigenous affairs, the ‘good intention’ was that NFPs would contribute to addressing Indigenous disadvantage, in particular by ensuring that needed services would reach Indigenous people in culturally appropriate and accessible forms. However, this major shift in policy and practice was not the subject of consultation with Indigenous people and communities (nor has it been explained or communicated), and its effectiveness, outcomes and consequences are still unknown and deeply contested.

A central question, given the cultural and other barriers that have prevented Indigenous people from accessing mainstream services in the past (CGC, 2001, p.xvi; ATSIJ, 2007, p.35), is whether mainstream organisations have the capacities needed for effective engagement with and service provision for Indigenous clients and communities? This is one of the issues that this thesis considers in detail, along with the effects of these changes at several critical intersections of NFP activity and Indigenous experience.

As Indigenous people are drawn into new workplaces and non-Indigenous organisations seek new engagements with Indigenous communities, the intercultural space which Nakata describes as the “cultural interface” (Nakata, 2002) is engaged in these encounters. The ways in which relationships develop and are responded to around the various critical cultural interfaces (for example, between the organisation and its staff, between non-Indigenous and Indigenous employees, and in relationships with communities) are critical in overcoming structural barriers to Indigenous employment and access to services, and in the development of cooperation, trust and reputation in communities. The challenges and implications of engagements at such cultural interfaces were the focus of the research which forms the core of this study.

1.1 Australian Red Cross as the focus of this research

In 2008, Australian Red Cross made a formal commitment to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage as one of its new key priorities (Australian Red Cross, 2008b). At this time, Red Cross was also building a wide-ranging research partnership with Macquarie University that aimed to explore issues of capacity building in the NFP and volunteer sector. This PhD project was commissioned as part of that research partnership, and commenced in 2009 with the working title “Australian Red Cross and

capacity building in Indigenous Communities”¹ in expectation that the research would consider Red Cross’s organisational capacity for Indigenous engagement and its community-based development practice.

As a result of discussions within the research partnership the following questions were framed to guide the research:

- What are the experiences of staff and challenges (and limitations) for Red Cross as an employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff?
- What are the challenges for Red Cross in engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; what influences the effectiveness of the engagement?
- What organisational capacity, knowledge and skills does Red Cross have to support capacity development in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?
- How do capacity-building elements of the RespectED program support the capacity development of communities and how is capacity development evident?

My own first question on starting the project was “How does a white, mainstream organisation ‘do’ development work in Indigenous communities *in Australia*?” – that is, how do organisations that are in many respects representative of white settler society work with Indigenous minorities within the colonized country? A scan of major NFP websites showed that, like several other large mainstream organisations then working with Indigenous Australians, Red Cross used the language of international development, and committed itself to ‘genuine partnerships’, ‘building capacity’ and ‘long-term sustainability’, but working with Indigenous Australia seemed a very different proposition from international NGO development work, even with Indigenous peoples, in other countries.

1.1.1 The cultural interface as a conceptual framework

I came to this research project with a practical understanding of the challenges of working in the kind of cross-cultural context in which Aboriginal people would be working in Red Cross, but in their case, in the reverse situation of a dominant culture/mainstream

¹ The topic was developed within the research partnership in 2008, and was advertised to potential candidates under this project title. The working title was later changed to “Australian Red Cross and capacity building in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities” to accord with Australian Red Cross’s organisation-wide shift to the term ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ rather than ‘Indigenous’.

organisation. It struck me that success in this work across the complex relationships shaped by colonial and post-colonial histories, geographies and race relations would depend greatly on the nature and effectiveness of interrelationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people *within* the organisation, and the organisation's capacity to recognise, value and accommodate this internal cultural difference, as well as in its external relationships with Indigenous communities.

Nakata's evocative theorisation of the "cultural interface" (Nakata, 2002) offered a conceptual framework within which to explore and examine interactions and perceptions of the multiple cultural interfaces involved in Red Cross's engagement with Indigenous communities: how they were constructed, enacted, constrained and informed by the individuals living and working there. According to Nakata, the cultural interface is

the place where we live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place that shapes our futures and more to the point the place where we are active agents in our own lives - where we make decisions - our lifeworld. For Indigenous peoples our context, remote or urban, is already circumscribed by the discursive space of the Cultural Interface. (Nakata, 2002, p.285)

These cultural interfaces are illustrated in Figure 1.1 in a generalised way.

The figure broadly identifies three interfaces (of potentially many) that the research needed to consider. First is the cultural interface experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees working within Red Cross: the interface between organisation and staff. This interface is conventionally understood in terms of human resources and organisational management, but in the intercultural organisations emerging as a result of the relegation of responsibility for provision of broad-ranging social services to NFPs, it is also a highly-charged cultural interface, in which standard mainstream human resources and management practices – developed in previously largely monocultural mainstream NFPs – are unlikely to be capable of fostering the changes and challenges being experienced by workers. Second is the interface between the organisation and its clients or customers. In the context of contracted service delivery on behalf of government, the 'customer' is in fact the funding body. In the case of NFPs, the interface with clients is often constructed as a service relationship, but in the recent past in Australian Indigenous affairs, this field has also become charged by the changing relationships between government policies and Indigenous politics. A third critical interface exists between the organisation and its Indigenous employees and their own communities and wider Indigenous politics. While the simplified representation of the multiple

intersecting/overlapping interfaces shown in Figure 1.1 does not convey the rich and complex settings created at these interfaces, it provides a useful summary of the way the thesis focuses on experiences across those interfaces within Red Cross and as a window on the relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler Australia in the early 21st century.

Figure 1.1 Cultural interfaces between NFPs, staff and community



1.1.2 Research design

In many ways, the case study for this research was defined by the terms of the wider research partnership between Macquarie University's Centre for Research on Social Inclusion and Australian Red Cross. The partnership was formalised as an Australian Research Council Linkage Project (ARCLP0882152), which commenced in 2008. The linkage project set out to explore three core themes through the operations of Australian Red Cross:

- volunteering
- organisational capacity
- community capacity building

The research was organised around several distinct projects focusing on youth (led by anthropologist Dr Rochelle Spencer), volunteers (led by sociologist Associate Professor

Michael Fine), food security (led by Professor Robert Fagan) and Indigenous programs and activities (led by Professor Richard Howitt). Australian Red Cross identified its work with Indigenous communities as a priority area for the research partnership with Macquarie University, and three related projects in this theme were proposed:

- an organisational capacity study intended to utilise both standardised and purpose-designed cultural capacity indices to be administered across the staff and volunteers of Australian Red Cross, with support and advice from the Red Cross project support team and management. Ultimately this project focussed on a more tightly-targeted survey of the senior leadership of the organisation and in-depth interviews with that group. This was reported to Red Cross in late-2010 and a paper on this research is currently under review (see Appendix B).
- a community experience study, with the intention of developing a series of action research case studies across Red Cross field sites. This study did not proceed in the form originally proposed as Red Cross undertook the work in-house and proposed sharing that work with the Macquarie research team.
- a PhD project (this project) which would develop an in-depth analysis of aspects of the implementation of Red Cross policies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs, including an appropriate program-level case study.

This PhD study commenced in 2009, supported by a Macquarie University scholarship, with the intention that the dual focus of the research would be on organisational capacity, as an employer of a greatly expanded Indigenous workforce, and on community capacity development, to be investigated if possible through a case study of a Red Cross community development program.

The research design anticipated two distinct research activities. The first would involve a qualitative study of the experiences of Indigenous employees in Red Cross, exploring a wide range of questions and relying on strict confidentiality to ensure participants were able to discuss details of their experience at the 'frontline' of Red Cross's new policies, programs and practices. The second phase was to focus on a detailed case study of a program that would allow consideration of the interfaces between Red Cross and communities involved in the case study program. Ethics approval was sought (and granted) for these two distinct elements of the PhD research project (Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee approvals HE27NOV2009-D00204 and 5201000483)

The first interviews for this part of the research were to be conducted in the first half of 2010, and were expected to inform the design of the detailed case study research on a community-based program. Design of the second phase case study proved much more

problematic and difficult than originally anticipated. In 2010, having received confirmation of Commonwealth Government funding, Red Cross identified the introduction of RespectED, a new community violence prevention education program based on a Canadian Red Cross model, as a potential case study for this PhD project.

While the research offered a timely opportunity to track from start-up the program Red Cross anticipated as its flagship for community development, the design of the case study needed to be finalised in consultation with and approval from RespectED staff. Their willingness to participate in the research, and/or to facilitate research in their communities, would allow this phase to encompass the interfaces between Indigenous communities and Red Cross staff as well as Red Cross as an organisation, and might also lead to opportunities for further research with community participants in the program that would shed light on the broader interfaces between community members and local mainstream institutions.² Red Cross planned to trial the RespectED program in four trial sites before rolling it out to a much broader group of communities. The relatively short time frame for the PhD project precluded the possibility of a full evaluation of the program (given that the anticipated long-term outcomes would require a 7-10 year evaluation timeframe if the program rolled out as planned – which, as discussed in Chapter 7, it did not), but it was hoped that feedback from community-based research at the trial sites would inform further development of the program.

A considerable degree of flexibility was built into the research design, in part because of uncertainty about the level of response of potential participants in the first phase, and unpredictability of the timing and progress of the development of RespectED as a program and as a case study in the second phase. The design allowed for the possibility that either the first or later phases might become the primary focus of the research project, depending upon how events and the research unfolded. The execution of the research proved more difficult and convoluted than anticipated, however, and rather than undertaking just one set of interviews and focus groups as planned, the activity identified as Phase I extended well into 2011 and considerably overlapped with research activities for Phase 2. The uncertainties and difficulties faced in the development of the RespectED

² The application for ethics approval for this element of the project contained a more complex and detailed diagram of these multiple cultural interfaces, including the interface between community members and external mainstream services and institutions. This is shown in Chapter 3, Figure 3.1.

program also meant that research on the case study was much more episodic and uneven than anticipated.

Despite these difficulties, the research produced substantial data for the thesis. Across both phases, a total of 82 participants, nearly all of whom were Australian Red Cross staff, took part in the research. Fifty-four participants (66%) were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent, representing approximately 65% of Red Cross's full-time Aboriginal staff at that time. Sixty-eight individual interviews and five small group sessions were transcribed and coded, using NVivo qualitative data analysis software, to identify emerging themes, and in addition some thousands of pages of Red Cross documentation – policy and strategy documents, annual reports, internal reviews, program and funding proposals, funding body reports and discussion papers – were reviewed and analysed. In the course of the research I also made handwritten notes of interviews and activities in which I took part as participant/observer which totalled more than 2,000 pages. A wide range of relevant scholarship and public policy materials were also considered, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

1.1.3 Ethical considerations

Following Howitt's (2011) advice that ethics needs to be considered as 'first method', the research design process discussed above went hand-in-hand with consideration of the ethical issues involved in the research. Cross-cultural research is an ethically complex activity in any circumstances (Humphery, 2001; Howitt & Stevens, 2005; Howitt, 2005; Davis & Holcombe, 2010). The first phase of the research focussed on employees of a large, mainstream organisation, some of whom would be Indigenous individuals, which posed some challenges in establishing "a process of meaningful engagement and reciprocity between the researcher and Indigenous people" (AIATSIS, 2012) due to the limitations imposed by a large research project that involved distant locations, short visits and some difficulties in maintaining ongoing communication with people who were widely dispersed in the organisation and did not form a coherent 'group'. However, the opportunity to present information about the research project and respond to questions at a national meeting of all Australian Red Cross Indigenous staff in late 2009 (the first national Forum) at least provided the opportunity for potential participants to hear and ask questions about the research and 'size me up' as a researcher (and as a person) prior to commencement of the project.

In framing the ethics application for the first phase of the research, particular care was taken to ensure that there would be no sense of coercion to participate (either by me or by the organisation as employer) and that due care would be taken to ensure complete privacy and confidentiality for all participants. In particular, it was important to be able to assure participants not only that their involvement was completely voluntary, but that they could withdraw at any point and their participation in the project and their interview data would be kept in strict confidence. The consent form allowed participants to indicate whether they wished to be interviewed in a location other than their workplace, give consent for recording, and the option to review transcripts and notes, and receive publications and reports. At interview, participants were also advised that I would contact them if I wished to quote from their interview and would provide an opportunity to review the material and the context in which it would be used. All participants who were to be quoted were personally contacted (where possible) during the preparation of both the final research report to Australian Red Cross and of this thesis. This protocol has been observed throughout the project and non-disclosure of individual identities of participants (and any information that might identify participants to the employer) has been avoided in the text, with the exception of some statements from the most senior Aboriginal manager in the organisation, as discussed below.

Framing the ethics application for the second phase of the research in the RespectED case study involved careful consideration of how to create an appropriate iterative process that would create informed consent in much more complex circumstances than a single interview or discussion. This phase of the research concerned Red Cross employees both as members of staff and potentially as the key contacts who would facilitate and even lead discussions with their communities to invite them to consider whether they wished to participate in the project. Whether this would occur depended on the time-frame of the program, and in the event the program itself had not reached a point of development where community-based participation was possible.

As the project developed, the case study research tracked RespectED's early development through participant observation at training workshops, team meetings, telephone conferences, discussion and review of staff work plans, project reports, program team reflection, and participant interviews. Information about the research project was provided early at the first RespectED staff training workshop and workshop participants (all Indigenous staff of Red Cross) discussed and decided in private (as a group) that they

agreed to my presence as participant/observer. By the time of this workshop, the first phase of the research was already under way and several participants had already met me and taken part in first phase interviews. For subsequent meetings and workshops, the community-based staff were asked privately in advance if they were happy for me to attend in my role as researcher and participant/observer (providing their agreement individually by email to the national program manager). This process provided an iterative process of collective consent throughout the project, however decisions about personal participation (that is, whether to take part in a personal interview) were made individually.

In both phases of the research, the ethical protocols anticipated development of participatory research processes with Indigenous participants, but this did not prove to be possible. In the first phase research, participants were too numerous and too widely dispersed, communications proved much more difficult than expected,³ and there was not an appropriate opportunity to coordinate with any one group to explore a specific research issue. In the RespectED case study phase, again, program staff were too widely geographically separated and the opportunity to work on this basis with community members at a trial site did not eventuate during the life of the project.

The failure of the anticipated participatory dimensions of the research represented a challenge in terms of the research design. The participatory intent had anticipated a different sort of context than the one that emerged through the research, and, given the time taken to bring the project to the fruition represented by this thesis, the wider participatory framework was probably over-ambitious – perhaps a reflection of the complexity and ‘wickedness’ of the issues involved. The research participants shaped every aspect of the work as it unfolded, however, and the emerging conclusions and explanations were grounded in the interviews given by participants (with whom transcripts were checked and discussed) which were the starting point for further inquiry that shaped the contextual research and analysis provided in chapters two and three.

³ For example, Australian Red Cross staff computers were ‘locked down’ so staff could not access or download from the internet (an internal ‘intranet’ only could be accessed) and were not equipped with audio, so it was not possible to use VOIP technology such as ‘Skype’ for communication and conferencing. The only means of communication were effectively telephone and email, and as many participants’ work responsibilities required them to be out of the office much of the time, it was often difficult to communicate at all.

It is important to note that the purpose of the research was not to critique individual programs, or the efforts of the organisation or of Red Cross staff to deliver them. Rather the research aimed to draw out the views of staff about their experience in the intercultural context, and to synthesise these into a 'snapshot in time' that framed and analysed the challenges of this new engagement. Many of the interim findings reported through the research partnership to Red Cross have since been taken up as issues for consideration and action.

1.1.4 Implementing the research design

As with any research project, the design on paper was challenged by real world constraints. In my case, I faced issues that affected recruitment of research participants, scheduling of fieldwork, access to documents and other issues, as well as challenges related to my positionality in the cross-cultural setting of the research and management of the data. I will briefly discuss each of these issues before turning to the reporting of the research in the rest of the thesis.

Recruitment of participants

Recruitment for the first phase research was undertaken by the Australian Red Cross Research Department. This process was protracted and delayed because at that time Red Cross did not have systems for identifying Indigenous staff, nor a means of readily identifying other staff involved in, or supervising/managing, relevant programs. As a result Red Cross was able to extend the initial invitation to participate to Indigenous staff only.

In retrospect, the recruitment process requested by Red Cross was unnecessarily formal for Indigenous research and overly-concerned with a rigid separation between researcher and potential participants. An invitation letter was issued from Red Cross senior management and those who wished to take part were asked to sign and return the consent form by mail to the researcher, while inquiries about the research were directed to Red Cross contacts, rather than to the researcher. Initial responses to the formal letter were relatively few but, combined with a list of individuals who had previously indicated they wished to be involved at the national Forum, provided a wide geographic spread of locations where Indigenous staff were working in Red Cross. The opportunity to present in person at the national Forum was clearly important to the success of the research

project, because as the field work got underway, the number of participants at each location ‘snow-balled’. Many who took part remembered the discussion at the Forum and were interested in participating, but had not been readily engaged by the formal recruitment process.

Some difficulties arose from the fact that Indigenous staff only were initially invited. It was evident at the first site visits that non-Indigenous staff were also interested in participating, but although the ethics approval had included them, some felt they could not take part as Red Cross had not extended an invitation to them. Following a request to senior management by the research facilitator, endorsed by the Red Cross Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy (HATSIS), this was resolved in mid-2010 by an email from the national Director of Services and International Operations to Red Cross state/territory senior executive staff, clarifying that Red Cross supported their participation and that of other non-Indigenous staff. These senior staff then circulated information to potential participants prior to site visits so they could take up the opportunity if they wished.

Scheduling fieldwork and related matters

Slow progress in the first round of invitations delayed commencement of the first phase field work. The first field trip commenced in May 2010, shortly before the first intensive training in the RespectED education modules, scheduled for June of that year. As a result the first and second phases overlapped intensively for a period of about six months (and to some extent throughout the field work), with field trips to several states/territories for first phase research ‘fitted in’ between RespectED activities such as training workshops and team meetings. Field research on the RespectED program continued until August 2011 and some final interviews (usually by phone) were held in the last months of 2011 and early 2012.

Nearly all data collection for the first phase was conducted on site at Australian Red Cross offices in 14 locations in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Interviews were conducted in private, one-on-one interviews or in small focus groups. The great majority chose a personal interview (68), but some Indigenous participants (6) preferred to be interviewed with a colleague, and two focus groups (of four participants, held in different locations) were organised by the participants

themselves. Only one participant requested an interview outside normal business hours, indicating that the majority were not overly-concerned that Red Cross was aware of their participation but nevertheless were concerned that their interview data be kept confidential. The great majority (66 of 82 participants) asked to be provided with a copy of their transcript, but only four (all at higher management level) requested minor alterations.

Relatively few of Red Cross's most senior managers (6) participated directly in this research project. The research project led by Professor Howitt, conducted in 2010, specifically addressed the question of Red Cross's intercultural capacity at the level of its senior leadership group but as there was concern that this cohort would be over-researched, Red Cross initially wished to exclude this group from the invitation to participate in this project. However, following discussions with the HATSIS, the email from Director of Services and International Operations (regarding non-Indigenous participation, referred to above), also clarified that senior managers were welcome to participate, and several made contact to express their interest. The consent process for the project led by Professor Howitt also gave participants in that project the option to make their interview data available to the broader research project, which many did, and this ensured that a further rich source of data from the perspective of senior managers was available to this project.

When field work commenced, facilitation of Phase 1 of the research project was passed to the HATSIS, who initiated introductions to senior managers at each of the research locations. Those managers then circulated information about the research visit and arranged interview spaces. As the RespectED phase commenced, responsibility for facilitating the research was passed to the National Manager of the RespectED program. This arrangement worked well for some time and close collaboration ensured that detailed information about meetings, phone hookups, workshops and other material associated with the program was maintained in a steady flow for several months. Such facilitation later became more problematic due to staff turnover in the RespectED manager's position. As is explored in Chapter 7 in the discussion of the RespectED case study, the difficulties of filling the manager's position resulted in a kind of 'vision drift' in the program, and the research project was similarly affected by these staff changes, as each successive manager 'inherited' a research project (and a researcher) that was unfamiliar to them and whose connection to their role in RespectED was unclear.

Positionality

Indigenous researcher, Kathy Absolon, observes “Worldview directly influences self as a re-searcher, self in the re-search process and methodology” (Absolon, 2011, p.57). As a non-Indigenous researcher I brought my worldview and cultural background to this research project, and I am inevitably marked by an identity not dissimilar from many in the Red Cross leadership group: white, educated, middle class, middle-aged and city-raised (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B). However, as discussed in the Prologue, I also brought life experience and a working background that had included more than 20 years’ experience of working with and for Aboriginal people and organisations, as well as experience of working in large mainstream institutions, which likely placed me in a better position than most to offer a ‘bridging’ perspective and understand the complexities of the intercultural experience.

Despite the voluntary nature of participation, in the context of research centred around and based within a mainstream institution, I nevertheless had questions and concerns about the power dynamic, especially between Indigenous participants and myself as a non-Indigenous researcher. This troubled me, but, as a colleague pointed out to me once as we reflected on our research experiences with Aboriginal participants, “You can’t eliminate power in research but you can certainly dilute it”.⁴ I endeavoured to do this in careful and respectful treatment of all participants, their wishes and the stories they shared with me.

In her work on Indigenous methodologies, Kovach (2009, p.98) states that in the context of Indigenous research, “For story to surface, there must be trust” and in the absence of a pre-existing relationship, a process of establishing trust is needed:

In asking others to share stories, it is necessary to share our own, starting with self-location ... For many active in Indigenous research, this comes naturally, as part of community protocol. The researcher’s self-location provides an opportunity for the research participant to situate and assess the researcher’s motivations for the research, thus beginning the relationship ... (Kovach, 2009, p.98)

To some extent, this did ‘come naturally’ in this research because in my own experience, the process of self-identifying and locating oneself was already normal practice in

⁴ L. Leslie, personal communication, April 2012.

research and everyday interactions. I was personally known to a small number of Red Cross Indigenous staff (including the HATSIS), which established a sense of 'being known' and a reputational foundation of trustworthiness (Kovach, 2009). For those who did not know me, it was important to share information about myself as the conversation unfolded – such as places I had worked and people I had worked with, or country, organisations, histories and sometimes language with which I was familiar. This helped to establish a starting point of mutual understanding and trust, and sometimes there were points of personal connection such as acquaintance in common or similar experiences.

The approach to the interviews, taken with all participants, was one of 'appreciative inquiry'⁵, in the sense of allowing participants room to identify issues of importance to them and listening respectfully – creating a recognition space that valued each individual's perspective. This was perhaps most important for Indigenous participants, but creating a space of trust was important for all participants. In the context of a mainstream organisation in the early stages of cross-cultural engagement, it was apparent during the field work that there were sensitivities, for non-Indigenous as well as for Indigenous staff. Many participants clearly valued the opportunity to reflect and sometimes to debrief with an outsider. All participants were offered as much time as they needed or wanted: many interviews extended over two hours or more, including one interview with a non-Indigenous staff member that took more than four hours. Where time and circumstances permitted, some interactions took place over several days, but in general the nature of the field work and participants' work responsibilities meant that time with individuals was limited.

Confidentiality and data management

Maintaining the confidentiality of participants was an important aspect of the research project, not only because of the rigorous ethical protocol established with Red Cross prior to commencing the field work, but also because assurances and reassurances were often sought by participants, especially by more senior staff. Many individuals wished to be

⁵ 'Appreciative inquiry' is more specifically a participatory research methodology that takes a strengths-based approach to development or community-based initiatives – see for example Thorne (2004), Sarah (2005) and Cram (2010). Such participatory methodologies could not be applied in the research project, but the term is an apt description of the approach taken to interviewing and engaging with participants.

personally acknowledged as contributors to the research, but, as the participants were discussing their employer, colleagues and managers, and sometimes voicing criticisms, absolute confidentiality with respect to their personal views and comments was essential. In addition, there appeared to be a high level of sensitivity in Red Cross in relation to Indigenous issues. It was unclear whether this was due to the newness of the engagement and contestation about approaches to it, or a work climate that discouraged what might be seen as dissent, the fear of making criticisms that might reflect poorly on the Red Cross 'brand', or the delicacy of race and intercultural issues generally – or possibly some combination of all of these – but it was clearly felt by many of the participants and underscored the need to ensure that the views of individuals remained confidential in reporting the research.

In approaching the task of drawing on interviews to illustrate the experiences of Red Cross staff who work at the cultural interface then, the question of how to quote individuals without revealing their identities raised some complex questions. Although Australian Red Cross is a large, national organisation of approximately 3,000 paid staff, with a network of offices in all Australian states and territories, the pool of Aboriginal staff and the non-Aboriginal staff who work with or supervise them form a relatively small group and are located in specific and often isolated locations. Given the relatively small pool of likely participants, many would be easily identifiable to their employer, colleagues and/or their communities, simply by stating their location or role; in some cases naming the region or state alone would be sufficient to identify an individual. Other commonly-used de-identification options, such as numbering the interviews or developing pseudonyms or codes for places and individuals, were considered, but these approaches had limited value in view of the large number of locations and interviews collected and seemed likely merely to cause confusion.

I was also reluctant to categorise participants on the basis of their identity as either 'Aboriginal' or 'non-Aboriginal' staff. Doing so could in some cases not only provide identifying information, but almost inevitably would carry with it racialised perceptions of the speaker and the possible bias of their views, especially as most Aboriginal staff are employed in junior roles and more senior roles are generally held by non-Aboriginal staff. I wanted the voices of participants to be heard first as individuals, but at the same time I did not want either the Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal participants to become 'invisible' to

the reader as their individual perspectives and life experiences are critical to understanding interactions at the cultural interface and how it is experienced.

When quoting participants, I have therefore adopted the general practice of providing no identifying information about individuals and instead have provided relevant contextual information in the text, including Indigeneity where appropriate. I have edited quotes to remove specific location-based information (such as the names of regions, towns and discrete Aboriginal communities) that could identify the speaker. In some circumstances, however, it was important to identify the HATSIS by her title, with her consent, but where this was not required by the context this individual is also de-identified in the same way as other participants. A confidential file containing all the quotes that appear in the thesis and linked to the original research data has been maintained, both as part of the consent process and to ensure that the presentation of the data can be tested if required.

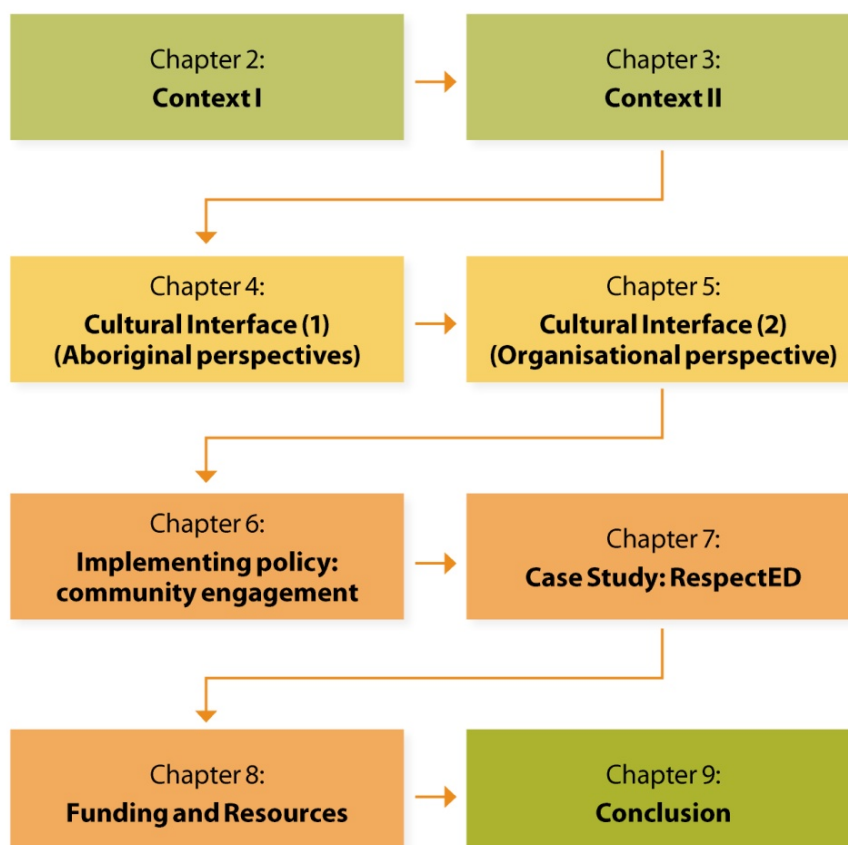
The question of terminology in identifying whether participants were ‘Indigenous’, ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ was also complex. The majority of these participants described themselves as Aboriginal, but other terms such as ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Aboriginal-Islander’, and regionally preferred terms such as ‘Murri’ and ‘Koori’ were also used. Only one participant identified a heritage that included Torres Strait Islander descent. I have therefore used the terms ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Aboriginal’ more or less interchangeably, but have tended to use the term ‘Aboriginal’ in empirical chapters and when describing participants, and ‘Indigenous’ in the chapters that concern broader national policies related to Indigenous Australians as this is the term most commonly used in that context.

1.2 Structure of thesis

The research reported in this thesis is contextualised by a complex policy environment at both national and state and territory scales, and in terms of the internal policies of Australian Red Cross. This opening chapter has sketched some aspects of that broader policy environment and the work of Australian Red Cross, but, as indicated in Figure 1.2, this task is taken up in more detail in Chapter 2 (policy issues) and Chapter 3 (the background of Australian Red Cross). This contextual discussion is followed by the empirical data in Chapters 4 to 8 and a concluding discussion in Chapter 9.

Figure 1.2 Thesis structure

The thesis structure diagram (below) indicates the inter-relationships between chapters: Chapters 2 and 3 contextualise the thesis; Chapters 4 and 5 present an analysis of empirical data at the core interface between the organisation and Indigenous staff; and Chapters 6 to 8 draw on empirical data to take up the themes of intercultural capacity, interfaces with communities and the influence of funding issues on NFP-Indigenous engagement. The final chapter presents research findings and reflects on the policy issues raised in Chapters 2 and 3.



Chapter 2 focuses on the interplay of policy in Indigenous affairs and in the regulation of the NFP sector over the past 20 years. It traces the increasing marketisation of the NFP sector, increasing government control through competitive tendering and contracting, and the increased dependency of the sector on government funding. The chapter also tracks the generational shifts in Indigenous affairs policy that brought the earlier era of ‘self-determination’ to a close and began an era of ‘new mainstreaming’ that has opened opportunities for the mainstream NFP sector to compete for contracts to deliver Indigenous programs and services.

Chapter 3 provides further contextual background by exploring how the processes of ‘mainstreaming’ have been implemented in practice. This chapter provides an

introduction to Australian Red Cross, its history, culture and the strategic review process which led it to a strategic and policy commitment to address Indigenous disadvantage as one of its key priority areas. The final sections of the chapter consider the intercultural context in which such engagements take place, introducing relevant academic literature in the fields of intercultural engagement, health and social work practice, racism, and the cultural interface as the conceptual framework of the thesis.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the cultural interface between Australian Red Cross Indigenous employees and the organisation, drawing on empirical data from the study. Chapter 4 locates the Aboriginal staff, their perceptions of the organisation and their experiences at multiple cultural interfaces with colleagues, managers, Red Cross members and volunteers and their own communities. Chapter 5 considers the organisational perspective and perceptions of the cultural interface of individuals and managers and the challenges of intercultural engagement.

Chapter 6 draws on empirical data to identify the ways Red Cross had approached the interface with Aboriginal communities and community organisations, the influence of its history, organisational culture and intercultural capacity, and the internal challenges it experienced in implementing its major policy commitments of adopting community development approaches and capacity development owned and driven by communities.

Chapter 7 is a detailed case study of the early development of Australian Red Cross's flagship community development program, RespectED. It considers in more detail the challenges experienced in a mainstream organisation that had little previous experience of community development, the difficulties of recruiting, supporting and retaining staff and the influence of funding bodies in implementing such programs.

Chapter 8 considers issues concerning the availability of funding and resources to the mainstream NFP sector and draws on empirical data to identify how external funding for Indigenous programs influences program decisions and staff recruitment, and the ethical dilemmas for mainstream organisations in competing with each other and with Aboriginal community organisations for funding. The concluding chapter, Chapter 9, summarises the findings of the research and its broader implications for policy and for the sector, and proposes directions for future research.

Chapter 2. Context I: The Australian not for profit sector and the delivery of Indigenous services

The potentially destructive impact of the move from self-determination to mainstreaming will be seen in the immediate future. Our concern is that once again we will be experimented on and that, in another five to 10 years' time, we will be back to discuss what went wrong.⁶

When Australian Red Cross committed to a new engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, it did so in the context not only of its own long history as a pillar of mainstream Australian ideas of service, generosity and egalitarianism, but in the shadow of its long history as somewhat iconic of the dominant culture of Australian society – the British colonial society that, as former Prime Minister Keating said in his landmark 1992 Redfern speech, “did the dispossessing” of Indigenous Australians. It was large, conservative and, from the perspective and experience of most Indigenous citizens, a ‘white’ organisation, best known for its blood service, emergency services and international relief efforts. Australian Red Cross had had little experience of engagement with Indigenous peoples in Australia, nor of community development or delivery of services to Indigenous people. Its decision to change, and its experience of the challenges involved, is in some ways representative of the challenges facing Australian society as a whole in shifting away from the painful and dehumanising legacies of colonial racism towards a postcolonial (perhaps even decolonising) reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and the diverse ethnic, linguistic and cultural streams that constitute contemporary Australia.

⁶ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Commissioner Alison Anderson, submission to the Select Committee on the Administration of Aboriginal Affairs, Alice Springs, 20 July 2004, Central Remote Regional Council, Submission 52 (SCAIA, 2005).

While Australian Red Cross is exceptional (as discussed in more detail in chapter 3), it is also a significant player in Australia's not-for-profit (NFP) humanitarian sector (Wanna et al., 2010, p.153). Its decision to change, then, needs to be contextualised not simply in terms of its own institutional history (and geography) but also in terms of the social and political contexts of Indigenous affairs and the changing place of the NFP sector in Australian society. This chapter provides an account of that context, reviewing the evolution of public policy in these two important arenas of recent social history to allow the reader to better understand the broader context of the detailed case study at the heart of this thesis.

But let me open the discussion of the social and political context of my study with some personal anecdotes that contextualise my own trajectory into this topic:

- 1) In 2007, I visited the national capital, Canberra, at the time the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) legislation⁷ was rushed through Parliament. Driving home to Sydney late at night, I stopped for petrol in a small town off the highway and as I paid the bill, the proprietor drew my attention to the front page headlines of that day's newspaper which reported that the army would be sent in to remote communities in the first stage of the Northern Territory 'Intervention'. He heartily approved of this measure to "clean things up" as desperately needed and long overdue.
- 2) In conversation (in a middle class area in suburban Sydney), a new acquaintance asked me about my research. When I briefly explained that it was about Australian Red Cross and its work with Aboriginal communities, the acquaintance launched into a diatribe to the effect that Aboriginal people needed to be taught how to live properly in houses because otherwise they destroyed them overnight by packing too many people in and breaking up the furniture and doors for firewood.
- 3) A tradesman called at my home to repair the plumbing and a similar conversation about my studies took place. When I described the topic in the same short sentence, he nodded approvingly. "That's important." He had a mate living in Darwin (the capital of the Northern Territory) who told him about the homeless

⁷ A package of legislated measures specifically targeted to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (see further section 2.2.3).

Aboriginal drunks who were “everywhere up there”. To his mind, a worthwhile organisation like Red Cross was exactly what was needed to help these people sort out their problems.

None of these individuals knew any Aboriginal people personally or had first-hand experience of Aboriginal communities, yet their freely expressed views were founded on deeply-held opinions about what Aboriginal people and Aboriginal communities are like and what they need. They also implied some sense of confidence in Australian Red Cross to do what they saw as the right thing and reflected an unquestioned (and unquestioning) confidence in the moral position of Red Cross as a representative of ‘mainstream Australia’. In these conversations, ‘they’, Aboriginal people, were imagined to be a long way away, somewhere else, distant and remote, although in reality Aboriginal populations are becoming increasingly urbanised and almost one-third of Indigenous Australians are now resident in major cities (Taylor, 2011; Biddle, 2009). In each case, these everyday conversations reflected a moral compass in which Indigenous people occupy positions of imagined inferiority, pathology and irresponsibility. They reflect a belief that Aboriginal people are in childlike need of stern intervention, to be ‘helped’, and shown how (or made) to be and to act like decent (i.e. white) people.

The views reflected by these conversations are common, and are both fed by and feed media representations of Aboriginal people and policy issues. As Patrick Sullivan observes in *Belonging Together*:

It is perhaps inevitable, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people only representing about 2.4 per cent of the Australian population (Taylor 2006:5) and many of these people being remote from areas of white settlement, that most Australians, including politicians and media commentators, have no direct experience of Aboriginal life. This encourages the generation of an ‘everybody knows’ virtual reality ... reliant largely on the exchange of partisan views that are not well grounded in reality. Many public commentaries are aimed at other non-Aboriginal combatants in the ‘culture wars’ with the intention of weighting media representations in favour of particular, ideologically informed policy directions. (Sullivan, 2011a, p.7; see also McCallum et al., 2012)

Yet, despite the fact that most Australians’ knowledge of Aboriginal people is not “well grounded in reality”, Indigenous policy is created for the non-Aboriginal population (Sullivan, 2011a, p.73) and is a product of the views and/or prejudices of mainstream Australia, as is discussed further in this chapter. These have changed markedly, alongside other major policy shifts of the last decade.

In late 2013, it is difficult to recall that in 2000, as the decade for Aboriginal Reconciliation neared its conclusion, polling indicated that 78% of Australians supported Reconciliation with Indigenous Australians, that hundreds of thousands of Australians took part in ‘bridge’ walks to demonstrate their support⁸ (Crosweller & Daly, 2000), or that a slight majority (53%) of Australians favoured a treaty (Jopson, 2000).⁹ During the decade for Reconciliation, the Reconciliation movement had gained momentum, especially amongst middle class Australians, around the key themes of arriving at a new relationship of co-existence based on a shared history of Australia’s colonial past and a formal apology for historical wrongs, especially for the removal of Aboriginal children from their families under state policies (Attwood, 2005; Gooder & Jacobs, 2002, 2000; Augoustinos & Penny, 2001; Coombes et al., 2013; Johnson, 2011).

It is even more difficult to imagine that similar mass demonstrations of mainstream support could occur in the current social and political climate. While the mainstream media has long “ignored, marginalised and discredited” Aboriginal Australians, and its stereotyping of Aboriginal people as “primitive, lazy, hopeless, disruptive, corrupt, criminal and always ‘the other’” have contributed to discrimination and entrenching disadvantage (Parker, 2011, p.52), an even more profound pathologisation of whole communities seems to have occurred in the processes of political and policy change. The roots of this situation are to be found in the complex interplay of public policy, politics and social process in recent decades and in particular in two key areas – the regulation of the NFP sector and Indigenous affairs policy. This chapter considers the impact of reforms in these key policy areas, for the NFP sector generally and the particular consequences for the Indigenous sector. Its emphasis is on the wider context: the shifting political and ideological environment which has given rise to the increasing role, especially of large not-for-profits, in the delivery of government-funded services, the sector’s increasing dependence on government, and the impact of policy changes in Indigenous affairs.

⁸ The first ‘bridge walk’, over the Sydney Harbour Bridge in May 2000 attracted some 400,000 people and was replicated in Adelaide in June (est.50,000), in Brisbane (est. 60,000) and in Perth and Melbourne (est. 200,000 – 300,000) in December 2000. Similar walks were also re-enacted in many country towns (see also <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/resources/factsheets/q-a-factsheets/bridge-walk-anniversary>).

⁹ *The Age* newspaper headlined its cover page photograph of the Sydney Harbour Bridge walk “Now the push for a treaty”.

Figure 2.1 Reconciliation marches



Photographer: Rick Stevens (*The Age*, 29 May 2000)

Scenes left and above from the Corroboree 2000 Sydney Harbour Bridge march, 29 May 2000



Scenes (above) from the Adelaide 'bridge' walk, June 2000 (photographs: Claire Colyer)

2.1 Transformations in Australia's NFP sector and Indigenous affairs

One of the features of reform in the delivery of services to Indigenous people has been the growth of competitive tendering for contracts and the allocation of significant government funds to non-Indigenous NFPs to deliver services and implement government policies. State and territory governments in Australia are significant purchasers of services delivered by NFP providers, but the focus of this chapter is on policy shifts at the Commonwealth level which have had overarching influence nationally on policy and funding, and on the character of government relations with both the non-profit and Indigenous sectors. The Commonwealth has been the major driver of national Indigenous policy, especially since it was empowered to legislate in relation to Aboriginal matters by the constitutional referendum of 1967 (Sanders, 2013) and is the primary source of funding for Indigenous programs, including those delivered through state and territory government programs (Attwood, 2005; Cunningham & Baeza, 2005; Povinelli, 2011; Productivity Commission, 2012a). Further, a range of micro-economic and welfare reforms, and changes to government procurement of welfare services initiated by the Commonwealth over the past 30 years have been a major factor in determining and influencing the role of NFPs in community service delivery and in their relationship with governments as the primary purchaser of services.

NFP organisations in Australia have been engaged in the delivery of welfare services through community-based activities since before the federation of Australia in 1901. Since a suite of welfare and economic reforms initiated in the 1980s, however, the NFP sector in Australia has undergone profound transformation (Lyons, 2001, p.186-7; Butcher, 2006). Until the 1970s, the primary mechanism for funding NFPs was through generalised 'grants-in-aid', but by the 1980s funding arrangements for the sector had shifted to competitive tendering and contracting, reflecting similar developments in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and New Zealand (Boulderstone & Earles, 2009).

In Australia, these changes commenced in the era of microeconomic reforms initiated by the Hawke-Keating Labor Governments of 1983-1996, under the umbrella of National Competition Policy (McGuire L. and O'Neill, 2008, pp 237-8). Financial management reform (also referred to as 'the new managerialism' or 'New Public Management' [NPM]), through the enactment of the Financial Management Improvement Program – the first two phases introduced by the Hawke, then Keating Labor Governments – encompassed a

raft of NPM reforms that drew on policies and management techniques of the private sector and financial reforms within the Australian Public Service (Johnston, 2000).

The introduction of NPM in Australia was part of “a tidal wave of public sector reform” that swept dozens of countries from the early 1980s, with greatest impact in developed, English-speaking nations (Dollery & Lee, 2004). A term first coined by Hood in 1991 (Hood, 1991), NPM drew on public choice theory and was characterised by an emphasis on professionalism and on private sector styles of management in the public sector, a shift to greater competition, ‘doing more with less’, greater emphasis on accountability through measures of performance and outputs (Hood, 1991 #1164, see also Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Wanna et al., 2010, pp 141-142), and belief in the market and quasi market mechanisms to coordinate supply and demand for public services (Carroll & Steane, 2002). Johnston (2000) suggests a third phase of NPM reform in Australia – introduced by the Liberal-National Coalition Government led by John Howard (1996-2007) – that was committed to a “more ideological form” of NPM which encouraged further contracting out of traditional public services, significant downsizing of the Australian Public Service and, in Johnston’s view, the likelihood of increasingly partisan policy advice “more attuned to electoral outcomes than the stated goals of efficiency or effectiveness in service provision” (Johnston, 2000, p.358; see also Sullivan, 2011a, p.71). In addition to large-scale privatisation of government enterprises from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s, a prime example of the operation of NPM in Australia was the dismantling by the Howard Government of the Commonwealth Employment Service and introduction of the Job Network in 1998 which contracted delivery of employment services to NFP providers on a competitive basis¹⁰ (Carroll & Steane, 2002; Marston & McDonald, 2006).

In much the same way as the ‘third sector’ has been transformed in the United Kingdom (Kenny, 2002; Evers, 2005; Chew, 2008; Billis, 2010), the United States (Salamon, 1993, 1999), Canada (Brock, 2000; Mulholland et al., 2011) and New Zealand (Nowland-Foreman, 1997; Cribb, 2006), NFPs in Australia have become ‘welfare hybrids’ that exhibit features of both public and private sectors alongside their voluntary NFP sector

¹⁰ A number of Christian faith-based NFPs were successful in tendering for Job Network contracts, including Mission Australia, the Salvation Army, Catholic Welfare Australia, UnitingCare and Anglicare (Maddison & Hamilton, 2007; Mendes, 2008, p.132 and pp 244-245).

characteristics. They are professionalised, less reliant on volunteers and donors, and increasingly dependent on government-funded contracts (Kenny, 2002; McDonald & Warburton, 2003; Cribb, 2006; O'Shea et al., 2007; Staples, 2007; Barraket, 2008, p.3; Billis, 2010; Paine et al., 2010; Smith, 2010). In Australia, the sector has also experienced substantial growth as governments have turned to NFPs to deliver an increasingly wide range of welfare services on their behalf and on their policy terms.

The roll out of a new neo-liberal agenda during the 1996-2007 Howard era (Aulich, 2005; Halligan, 2005) was to have profound effects on both the NFP sector and in Indigenous affairs policy. Further major policy changes reshaped the non-profit sector (Lyons, 2001; Lyons & Passey, 2006; Barraket, 2008; Productivity Commission, 2010; Wanna et al., 2010), welfare policy (RGRW, 2000; Dawkins, 2001; Robbins, 2005; Mendes, 2005b), and Indigenous affairs in Australia (Sanders; Dillon, 1996; Altman, 2004, 2009; Humpage, 2005; Sanders, 2005, 2006, 2008; Altman & Hinkson, 2007; Robbins, 2007; Hunt, 2008; Sanders & Hunt, 2010; Sullivan, 2009, 2011a;). This era entrenched the marketisation of community and welfare services that was already under way (Melville, 2008, p.107) and promoted the rise of large, often faith-based, NFPs as 'preferred NGOs' in a highly politicised context (Phillips, 2007; McDonald & Marston, 2002).

McDonald and Marston (2002, p.3) describe the operating environment of the non-profit community sector during this period as "extremely turbulent, unstable and highly contested". The progressive application of NPM principles had multiple effects in increasing requirements for NFPs to enter contracts to deliver services and increasing professionalisation of NFP organisations: as it progressed, 'outsourcing' began with the public sector and government business enterprises, but gradually the principles of contracting and competition were extended to social welfare services to achieve greater efficiency (McGuire L. and O'Neill, 2008, p.238; Smyth, 2008, p.226). Funding was no longer based on historical costs, but on defined outputs and outcomes: social policy "shifted from universal rights to a performance culture" (McGuire L. and O'Neill, 2008, p.238). The election of the Howard Government in 1996 had accelerated the shift as competitive tendering and contracting became official government policy (McGuire L. and O'Neill, 2008). Core funding to peak bodies was replaced by purchaser-provider contracts that required specific outcomes directly related to government policy and objectives (Staples, 2007).

As Butcher argues, these reforms created “contestable markets in the human services, resulting in the cooptation of non-government, non-profit service providers as part of the formal mechanism for the delivery of prescribed services” (Butcher, 2006, p.72).

This has resulted in a policy environment that treats TSOs [Third Sector Organisations] as merely another set of potential providers of prescribed units of service in a competitive market place ...

... At times, it suits governments to laud the contributions of TSOs and posit them as repositories of core community values. At times, too, governments are willing to co-opt broadly sympathetic TSOs in order to further particular political or policy agendas. (Butcher, 2006, p.72, 73)

In Indigenous policy, major changes were initiated under the Howard government from the mid-2000s as a so-called “quiet revolution” in Indigenous affairs (Vanstone, 2005a; Altman, 2004; Gray & Sanders, 2006; Sanders, 2008). These changes shifted the national policy approach from ‘self-determination’ to a more assimilationist model, halting the momentum of the rights-based approach that had characterised previous Indigenous policy and rejecting it as ‘symbolic’ and incapable of addressing the real needs and socio-economic disadvantage of Indigenous people (Robbins, 2007).¹¹ In the “quiet revolution” separate Indigenous representation and advocacy, and control over Indigenous-specific funding were removed and funding reverted to mainstream government departments. Aboriginal people were drawn into mainstream social welfare policy and service delivery, with its emphasis on ‘mutual obligation’ and self-responsibility (RGRW, 2000; Dawkins, 2001; Robbins, 2005; Mendes, 2005b), while Government agencies were expected to establish direct relationships with Indigenous communities through ‘Shared Responsibility Agreements’ and ‘whole of government’ approaches to the delivery of services and community infrastructure (Cooper, 2005; McCausland & Levy, 2006; Lawrence & Gibson, 2007; Hunt, 2008, p.29).

While considerable attention has been given to the impacts of changing policy in their respective sectors (for example, Van Gramberg, 2005; Lyons, 2007; Barraket, 2008; Melville, 2008; and Anheier, 2009 in the NFP sector, and Rowse, 2005 and Sullivan,

¹¹ While some commentators use this terminology of ‘self-determination’ to describe the national policy settings in place prior to the 1996 national election, it should be noted that no Australian government or legislation has ever accepted the principles of Indigenous self-determination as currently defined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and that political endorsement of these principles is far from on-the-ground implementation of self-determination and acceptance of Indigenous sovereignty and status as self-determining peoples.

2009; 2010, 2011a in the Indigenous sector), less notice has been taken of the consequences of some of the changes that have taken place in the way the two sectors have interacted and the implications for NFP engagement in Indigenous settings.

Indigenous community organisations are occasionally mentioned as part of the NFP sector in Australia (Lyons, 2001; Phillips, 2007; Productivity Commission, 2010), but the rich literature concerning not-for-profits rarely explicitly considers the role of Indigenous community organisations, nor the impacts of wider policy changes affecting the sector. Rather, the literature on Indigenous organisations is largely positioned in specifically Indigenous contexts, such as Indigenous economies, for example, O'Faircheallaigh (1998, 2004, 2006), or more broadly in the work of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), in the context of Indigenous governance – for example, Martin (2003, 2005) and Hunt et al. (2008) – and/or in analysis and criticism of Indigenous affairs policy, for example, Humpage (2005, 2008) and Dillon (2007).

The following sections of this chapter consider in more detail the nature and impact of the shifts in policy settings as they have affected both the NFP sector and the direction of national Indigenous policy since the election of the Howard Government in 1996, and the consequences arising, especially for the Indigenous community sector, from the interaction of policy and implementation in the new era of 'mainstreaming'.

2.2 Policy reform in the Howard era, 1996-2007

Prior to election in 1996, the then leader of the Opposition, John Howard, set out his aims for government in a series of 'headland speeches'. The economic reforms of the previous era under Labor (1983-1996) were endorsed, but had not gone far enough: microeconomic reform would be extended to areas previously exempted from national competition policy; the economy would be made more flexible; the waterfront and industrial relations would be reformed; the public service would be made professional and efficient; and the problem of unemployment would be solved by unleashing the potential for small business growth by a "major assault on regulations and other disincentives" (Howard, 1995). In Indigenous affairs Howard claimed that Aboriginal policy had been divisive and had been hijacked by "social engineers" and the "politically correct"; the focus of his government would be on "improving standards and opportunities in health, housing, education and employment" (Howard, 1995). Howard

(1995) signalled the importance of charitable welfare agencies in the provision of welfare services, but the extent of their role and the impact of broader policy changes on the sector was to become clearer when incremental social welfare reforms increasingly focussed on reduction of welfare dependency through the imposition of ‘mutual obligation’ measures and expanded the role of these organisations in newly-privatised employment services (Mendes, 2005b).

2.2.1 Governing for the ‘mainstream’

In his 1995 speech on the role of government, Howard signalled his intention of governing ‘for the mainstream’:

There is a frustrated mainstream in Australia today which sees government decisions increasingly driven by the noisy, self-interested clamour of powerful vested interests with scant regard for the national interest.

The power of one mainstream has been diminished by this [Labor] government’s reactions to the force of a few interest groups ... (Howard, 1995)

On election in 1996, the aim of governing for the mainstream was a powerful influence in government policy in relation to the non-profit and Indigenous sectors. Howard made it clear that his reference to “noisy, self-interested... vested interests” that were hostile to the “national interest” included Indigenous organisations advocating rights-based arguments for reform and recognition.¹² Howard’s pre-election speeches (and the election slogan “For All of Us”) generated polarisation and endorsed the emergence of a ‘new right’ critique of the ‘black armband’¹³ view of Australian history, opposition to Reconciliation that required any form of apology to Indigenous Australians for past injustices, and

¹² This view of the ‘national interest’ represents Indigenous rights and priorities as hostile and separate from the nation as a whole, or as counter to the interests of other sectors (for example mining or business) which may be seen as enhancing the ‘national interest’. Howitt (1991) has commented on the way that the language of ‘national interest’ and the common good has been mobilised in previous political settings to construct Indigenous citizens as a ‘vested interest’ hostile to national well-being, while for-profit mining interests are placed as ‘representative’ of that national interest. Elsewhere Howitt refers to this as a “slippery double movement of coexistence” where Indigenous citizens’ acceptance into the national polity remains conditional on compliance with the values and behaviours of the imagined mainstream (Howitt, 2012, 2009).

¹³ The term ‘black armband view of history’ was first used in Australia by historian Geoffrey Blainey in 1993: “The Black Armband view of history might well represent the swing of the pendulum from a position that had been too favourable, too self congratulatory, to an opposite extreme that is even more unreal and decidedly jaundiced” (McKenna, 1997; Clark, 2002), but the first skirmishes in the ‘history wars’ pre-date the Australian Bicentennial in 1988 (McKenna, 1997). The ‘black armband’ referred to the growing body of history that addressed frontier violence towards Aboriginal people (see also footnote 26 on the ‘history wars’).

opposition to judicial and statutory recognition of Native Title. While some of the rhetoric was extreme,¹⁴ there was evident willingness to mobilise race and fear as electoral strategies¹⁵ (Mackey, 1999; Clark, 2002; Clyne, 2005; Fear, 2007), and it was clear from the first weeks of the new government that Indigenous issues were high on the government's agenda for reform and action as central to its wider agenda for public sector reform, and as a matter of ideological purpose.

Butcher (2006) comments that observers of the relationship between government and some parts of the NFP sector in Australia have described it as “problematic at best and palpably hostile at worst”. The ‘palpably’ hostile elements related especially to government criticism of the advocacy role of NFPs and peak bodies, which were perceived to act on behalf of special interest groups rather than the ‘one mainstream’. Government ministers and conservative ‘think tanks’ attacked the sector for a lack of legitimacy and ‘accountability’. Lobbying, advocacy and participation in policy debate were attacked on the grounds of a lack of accountability to the general public, in contrast to the ‘electoral accountability’ of governments (Staples, 2007). Analysts of this period of the ascendancy of neo-liberalism – for example, Maddison (2004; 2005; 2009b), Phillips (2007), Staples (2007; 2008), Mowbray (2003), Thornton (2003) and Mendes (2003) – saw in it the strong influence of right wing think tanks and public choice theory, whose advocates characterised NFPs (and minority groups in general) as pursuing a predatory self-interest in order to obtain benefits for their members.¹⁶ The period was seen as one of concerted attack on NFP welfare organisations, especially of their advocacy role, and was even described by some as a ‘war on NGOs’, for example, Mowbray (2003), Thornton (2003) and Mendes (2003, 2005a).

¹⁴ For example, Liberal candidate Pauline Hanson was disendorsed by the Liberal Party before the 1996 election because of racist statements about welfare payments to Aboriginal people (Deutchman & Ellison, 1999; Clyne, 2005). Following her election as an independent, Prime Minister Howard did not condemn her further widely publicised racist comments, but rather appeared to sympathise with her views (Manne, 2004, p.16; Clyne, 2005).

¹⁵ During the heated public debate over amendments to the Native Title Act following the High Court's decision in *Wik* (which found that native title could co-exist with some pastoral leases) Prime Minister Howard controversially showed a map on national television which purported to show that most of the continent was subject to native title, implying that privately-owned land was at risk (Howitt, 2001a); it was also reported that the Prime Minister threatened to hold an election based on race to ensure passage of the legislation (Mackey, 1999).

¹⁶ Public choice theory, developed in the 1950s by economists Buchanan and Tullock (Buchanan & Tullock, 1971 [1962]), gained greatest influence in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and the United States. British public choice theorist Mancur Olson first concentrated on the effect of the theory on interest groups in 1965. Olson's visit to Australia in 1984 stimulated interest in public choice theory in Australia (see Mowbray, 2003; Maddison & Denniss, 2005; Staples, 2007; Staples, 2008).

A similar hostility towards Aboriginal peak organisations and attacks on their ‘accountability’ and credibility was also a theme of the Howard era. On coming to office, the government’s first initiatives were to appoint a special auditor to investigate grants made by the national peak body, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)¹⁷ (Cunningham & Baeza, 2005; Ivanitz, 2000) and to announce funding cuts of \$A470 million from ATSIC’s budget over four years (*Koori Mail*, 1996). Later, Aboriginal peak bodies such as the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO) were repeatedly threatened with defunding for criticism of the government’s slow progress in improving Aboriginal health (Kerin, 2001).

2.2.2 ‘Taming and training’ the NFP sector

Van Gramberg and Bassett (2005) argue that Western governments in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Australia utilised the third sector:

... as a means of quelling potential political opposition by rendering these community organisations dependent on funding tied to performance and outcome measures set by government: silencing these organisations from criticising government and restructuring the sector through amalgamation and closures. Together these tactics are having the effect of institutionalising the neoliberal agenda while quashing political opposition.

An intense period of rapid defunding of NFPs followed the election of the Howard Government in 1996 and continued progressively for a decade (Staples, 2007). Over time, the very real threat of de-funding, combined with “notice and confidentiality” clauses in contracts that restricted public statements or required advance notice to government, had the effect of silencing criticism of government and of government policy. Other mechanisms for control included forced amalgamations that weakened specific interest groups (e.g. ethnic women were ‘mainstreamed’ through male-dominated ethnic councils; lesbian rights groups were subsumed into mainstream women’s groups) (Sawer, 2002: Staples, 2007), and denigrating and de-legitimising organisations through public

¹⁷ The appointment of the special auditor was made despite the fact that ATSIC (uniquely amongst Australia’s statutory bodies) had its own internal Office of Evaluation and Audit, established under the *ATSIC Act 1989* (Pratt, 2003). The special audit was subsequently found to be beyond the Minister’s powers, however the audit of 1,122 funded organisations had cleared 95% for funding and found that most instances of ‘non-compliance’ were minor technical breaches (Ivanitz, 2000; Cunningham & Baeza, 2005).

criticism, excessive auditing, micromanagement, threats and bullying (Maddison et al., 2004; see also Maddison & Hamilton, 2007).¹⁸

As well as the withdrawal of direct government funding, the introduction of the Charities Bill in 2003 threatened the loss of tax deductibility on donations¹⁹ and other benefits by narrowing the definition of ‘charity’ so as to put many organisations’ entitlement to a range of income, fringe benefits, and goods and services tax exemptions at risk. Activities such as “advocating for a political party or cause”, or “attempting to change the law or government policy” would disqualify an organisation from tax exempt status as a charity (Maddox, 2005, p.251). Although the Commonwealth Government decided not to continue with the bill, draft rulings by the Australian Tax Office in 2005 had a similar effect by limiting NFPs’ eligibility for tax benefits if they engaged in public advocacy (Staples, 2007). A decision of the High Court in December 2010 (High Court of Australia, 2010) recently clarified that charities could engage in public debate and retain their charitable status, but during the intervening years, the risk of loss of tax exempt status and ‘deductible gift recipient’ status which threatened income from donations had undoubtedly impacted on the willingness of NFPs to criticise public policy (Williams, 2010).²⁰

Phillips’ research into NFPs in Australia during the Howard years found that in the general climate of hostility and criticism, certain organisations nevertheless came to be ‘favoured’ by the Australian Government, both to contribute to policy and to carry out government programs, particularly in the welfare/community services sector. Phillips identified the favoured and ‘captured’ NFPs by examining funding grants and ministerial press releases. These were usually church-based, had minimal advocacy claims, broadly supported the government’s neo-liberal agenda, were attached to ‘legitimate causes’, and were part of a well-established ‘charitable culture’: that is, they were seen as ‘genuine’

¹⁸ Ignatieff (2007) comments on Canada’s difficulties in responding to the political challenges of multiple rights agendas and the difficulty of incorporating new left identity politics into longer-standing political agendas focussed on creation and control of wealth rather than identity. See also Howitt (2001b, pp 90-93) and Fraser (1995).

¹⁹ i.e. status as a ‘deductible gift recipient’ which allows donors to claim a tax deduction on gifts to organisations that have been granted this status by the Australian Tax Office.

²⁰ The Charities Bill 2013 was passed in parliament on 27 June 2013. The definition of charity now explicitly recognises charitable activities related to health, culture, the environment, human rights and Aboriginal reconciliation, and acknowledges education and advocacy as legitimate charitable purposes.

charities that had a “certain moral fibre” (Phillips, 2007, p.30). The ‘favoured’ included large, national, usually Christian faith-based organisations such as Mission Australia, Wesley Mission, UnitingCare, the Salvation Army, the Smith Family and the Benevolent Society (Phillips, 2007; see also Maddison & Hamilton, 2007; Maddison, 2009b).²¹

In contrast to the NFPs that were favoured with contracts and policy influence, peak bodies such as the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), with a large organisational membership base, were ‘frozen out’ and sidelined in favour of preferred single organisations such as Mission Australia²² (Phillips, 2007; see also Mendes, 2008, p.132). In youth and Indigenous affairs, however, advocacy and representative structures were removed altogether and replaced with appointed councils, while much of the funding for these areas was shifted to the large, favoured organisations. Thus these marginalised groups lost a direct voice of advocacy and were excluded from representation (Phillips, 2007) (see also Sawyer, 2002; Vromen, 2005). Phillips speculates that the different approach in youth and in Indigenous affairs may have been due to a lack of organisations in these sectors that fit the ‘favoured’ typology.

2.2.3 Changes in Indigenous policy: the ‘New Mainstreaming’

From the early 1970s until the early 1990s there had been a degree of bi-partisanship in the policies of the major political parties towards Indigenous affairs (Altman, 2004). The 1967 constitutional referendum had empowered the Commonwealth to pass legislation in relation to Aboriginal people (and had allowed Aboriginal people to be counted in the census) and in response to the injustices of the Blackburn decision in the Gove Land Rights Case, both major parties went to the 1972 election with policies intended to recognise Aboriginal land rights in some form. The Whitlam Labor Government elected in 1972 introduced a policy it described as ‘self-determination’ which encouraged widespread incorporation of Indigenous community organisations to deliver services to

²¹ Maddison (2009b) notes that in 2006 several large faith-based charities that had been close to the Howard Government withdrew from contracts to deliver onerous welfare-to-work reforms.

²² The CEO of Mission Australia, Patrick McClure, chaired the Reference Group on Welfare Reform, which was commissioned by the Commonwealth in 1999 to advise the government on welfare reform, and reported in 2000 (‘The McClure Report’). The Benevolent Society was also represented and following publication of the report, the Welfare Reform Consultative Forum was invited to contribute to policy development and participate in confidential ministerial decision-making (Shergold, 2004, p.156). In 2005, the reconvened, renamed Welfare to Work Consultative Forum included Mission Australia, the Salvation Army and Catholic Welfare Australia (The Age, 2005).

Aboriginal people. Altman argues that during the period from 1972-1996, Indigenous policy was progressive and “delivered results, albeit slowly, according to standard social indicators” (Altman, 2004).

The shift from bi-partisan policy in Indigenous affairs

The period of bi-partisanship began to break down in the mid-1980s over reforms to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* 1976 and the pressure of mining interests to overturn Labor’s policy commitment to national recognition of land rights (Libby, 1989, pp 11-12, 105-114 & ch.6; Productivity Commission, 2012b, pp 56-57), and ended with the creation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) as an elected representative body in 1989/90, and with statutory recognition of native title in 1993 in response to the High Court’s *Mabo* decision of 1992. In 1991 there was a brief period of bi-partisan political support for legislation which created the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and a decade-long process to consider a treaty (Tickner, 2001, pp 30-31; Altman, 2004), but the establishment of ATSIC, in particular, triggered “perhaps the most tumultuous period in the history of Aboriginal affairs” (Cunningham & Baeza, 2005) as it transferred functions and the bureaucratic structure of government departments, as well as significant power over funding decisions, to an elected Indigenous body. The passage of the *ATSIC Act* was highly contested (Tickner, 2001, p.51) and at the time, the bill was the second most amended piece of legislation passed in the Australian Parliament (Pratt, 2003a). ATSIC was perceived by its opponents as creating a fourth tier of government that undermined ministerial responsibility and promoted separatist representation for a minority (Dillon, 1996, pp 91-93). The passage of the *Native Title Act* 1993, (and subsequent amendments passed in 1998 following the High Court’s decision in the *Wik* case) was similarly controversial and contested and was passed after the longest debate in the Parliament’s history to that time (Teehan, 2003).

A new policy perspective in the mid-1990s

The Howard era resulted in a radical shift in Indigenous policy and an end to the self-determination/self-management²³ approach of the preceding decades. On election in

²³ Hunt (2008) comments that although government policies under both major parties were broadly favourable to the principle of self-determination from the early 1970s until the mid-1990s,

1996, the Howard Government focussed on ‘accountability’ in Indigenous affairs and a policy approach of ‘practical reconciliation’ to reduce Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage (Hunt, 2008). The early announcement of the ‘special audit’ of ATSIC marked how profound a change of direction had occurred, not only because it focussed suspicion on Aboriginal capacity and trustworthiness (in a highly regulated statutory authority), but because it came at a time when the report of a thorough review of the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act* (ACA Act) (under which many Aboriginal corporations in receipt of ATSIC funds were incorporated) was about to be published (AIATSIS, 1996). The review found the Act and its implementation over-rigid and inflexible, and recommended more culturally appropriate forms of accountability (AIATSIS, 1996; Rowse, 2000), but it was neither published nor acted upon.²⁴ It had been commissioned in 1994 to consider the Act not only in terms of improved accountability, but of more effective, culturally appropriate arrangements to regulate Indigenous corporations and forms of Indigenous regional governance. Its process and recommendations had been devised in an era which recognised Indigenous empowerment through ATSIC and its regional councils, the “special place” of Indigenous people in Australian society arising from recognition of native title in Australian law, and the high importance of achieving a “true and lasting reconciliation” (AIATSIS, 1996, pp 2-3). These were no longer the priorities of government. Other key policy initiatives, such as the implementation of a Social Justice Package which the previous government had promised as the third tranche of its response to the High Court’s *Mabo* decision, and which had been widely canvassed with Aboriginal communities (see ATSISJC, 2009, Appendix 3), were also abandoned.

The shift in policy was accompanied by a rhetoric that reflected Howard’s commitment to govern for the mainstream and reject “noisy vested interests”. These themes were taken up in the maiden speech in Parliament of former (disendorsed) Liberal candidate, Pauline Hanson in 1996 which galvanised public opinion by its attacks on multiculturalism, the

the principle was “enormously circumscribed in practice” and concurs with Moreton-Robinson’s view that ‘self-management’ better describes what actually occurred (Moreton-Robinson, 2007, Introduction, p.4).

²⁴ The ACA Act was not subsequently reviewed again until 2001 when it was replaced by the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (CATSI Act) which commenced operation in 2007.

‘Aboriginal industry’, asylum seekers, ‘political correctness’ and elites (Manne, 2004, p.16). Hanson claimed to speak for the ‘mainstream’ when she described

... a type of reverse racism ... applied to mainstream Australians by those who promote political correctness and those who control the various taxpayer funded ‘industries’ that flourish in our society servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups ... Along with millions of Australians, I am fed up to the back teeth with the inequalities that are being promoted by the government and paid for by the taxpayer under the assumption that Aboriginals are the most disadvantaged people in Australia. (Parliament of Australia, 1996)

The Prime Minister’s failure to condemn these views, and his affirmation of Hanson’s right to express them, suggested strong sympathy with her opinions, or at least recognition of the political significance of their appeal to the white working class voters²⁵ who had come to be known as “Howard’s battlers” (Rolfe, 1999; Manne, 2004, p.16; Wilson & Turnbull, 2001; Clark, 2002; Langton, 1997). Howard’s own opinions in rejecting historical perspectives which he perceived as representing Australia’s history as racist and violent as a “black armband view of history” and as “one of the more insidious developments in Australian political life” that had attempted “to re-write Australian history in the service of a partisan political cause” (Clark, 2002) were made abundantly clear.

The Prime Minister was an active participant in what came to be known as the ‘history wars’²⁶ (Manne, 2001) and his election platform included a promise to rid the country of

²⁵ Several commentators (and the media at the time) saw the tolerance of Hanson’s views by conservative politicians as Howard commenced office as the introduction of Reagan-style ‘wedge politics’ in Australia (Langton, 1997). These tactics, aimed at “undermining the support base of key political opponents in an attempt to gain political ascendancy or to control the political agenda” (Wilson & Turnbull, 2001) were effectively applied in Indigenous affairs, welfare reform and in relation to the advocacy work of NFPs, which were depicted as self-serving and acting against the interests of the mainstream (see Langton, 1997; Wilson & Turnbull, 2001; Clark, 2002; Sawyer, 2002; Maddison et al., 2004; Fear, 2007). See also footnote 30.

²⁶ Manne (2009) argues that Prime Ministers Keating and Howard, were both active early participants in the ‘history wars’ in Australia, which he describes as “the bitter and still unresolved cultural struggle over the nature of the Indigenous dispossession and the place it should assume in Australian self-understanding”. In part, the ‘history wars’ focussed on a debate begun in the 1980s as to the extent of historic violence towards Aboriginal people in the colonial past. Historians such as Manning Clark, H.C. Coombes, Bain Attwood, Henry Reynolds and Lyndall Ryan addressed what Stanner (1991 [1968]) had called “The Great Australian Silence” about the impact of colonisation (Manne, 2009; O’Dowd, 2012). The debate escalated when historical accounts influenced the High Court’s decisions on native title in *Mabo* (1992) and *Wik* (1996), and the HREOC report on the removal of Aboriginal children from their families (the ‘Stolen Generations’) (1997). The most prominent opposing view was aggressively put by Keith Windschuttle (2002) in *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, but more widely the highly politicised debate centred on perceived attacks on Australia’s British heritage and cultural institutions (McKenna, 1997; Manne, 2001, 2009; Clark, 2002; Macintyre & Clark, 2003; Macintyre & Albrechtsen, 2003; Gunstone, 2004; O’Dowd, 2012).

‘political correctness’ (Clyne, 2005). The ‘black armband view’ was applied in important current political debates in Aboriginal affairs, such as the recognition of native title and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC) inquiry into the removal of Aboriginal children from their families, and the term was used “as populist rhetoric alongside terms such as ‘guilt industry’ and ‘Aboriginal industry’” (Clark, 2002). Howard and some of his ministers rejected the recognition of Indigenous rights as “symbolic gestures” which could undermine Reconciliation. In his opening address to the Australian Reconciliation Convention in 1997, the Prime Minister stated:

Reconciliation will not work if it puts a higher value on symbolic gestures and overblown promises rather than the practical needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in areas like health, housing, education and employment.

It will not work if it is premised solely on a sense of national guilt and shame. Rather we should acknowledge past injustices and focus our energies on addressing the root causes of current and future disadvantage among our indigenous people. (Howard, 1997)

The High Court’s first decision on native title in *Mabo* had recognised that European colonisation had left “a national legacy of unutterable shame”, prompting critics to claim that the decision “perpetuates a new form of racism” (Geoffrey Blainey, quoted in Clark, 2002). On election in 1996, the Howard Government intended radical amendments to the Native Title Act, and following the High Court’s *Wik* decision in December 1996 (which recognised that native title might co-exist with some pastoral leases) the Government developed a ‘Ten Point Plan’ to wind back Indigenous native title rights (Manne, 2004, pp 17-18). Prime Minister Howard claimed that “the pendulum has swung too far” in favour of Indigenous rights (quoted in Pratt, 2003b; Gunstone, 2008; and Robbins, 2007), and the Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, promised that the ‘Ten Point Plan’ would deliver “bucket-loads of extinguishment” of native title (quoted in Pratt, 2003b; Teehan, 2003; and Manne, 2004, p. 18).

Mackey (1999) and others (Manne, 2004, pp 70-73; Clyne, 2005) argue that the Howard Government mobilised “risk discourses” to construct the idea of an “endangered nation”. Native title rights were presented by opponents as a risk to Australia’s progress,

As John Howard expressed it, “the professional purveyors of guilt attacked Australia’s heritage and people were told they should apologise for pride in their culture, traditions, institutions and history” (*Future Directions*, Liberal Party of Australia, 1988, quoted in McKenna, 1997).

prosperity and unity (Mackey, 1999); similarly, debates in other policy areas such as providing protection to the growing number of asylum seekers arriving on boats were cast instead as threats to “border security”, and asylum seekers themselves described as “queue jumpers”, “illegal migrants” and potential terrorists rather than as refugees (Clyne, 2005; Fear, 2007).

On re-election in 1998, Prime Minister Howard made a personal commitment to ‘practical reconciliation’, differentiating his government’s approach from the human rights and social justice approach of the previous Labor Government which Howard and other ministers claimed had placed too much emphasis on ‘symbolic gestures’ (Cunningham & Baeza, 2005; Altman, 2004; Robbins, 2007). The outcomes of initiatives of the previous era, such as the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families which had reported in 1997 (*Bringing them home: The ‘Stolen Children’ report*) (HREOC, 1997), and the decade-long Aboriginal Reconciliation process that concluded in 2000 with recommendations for constitutional recognition and a treaty, fell into the category of ‘symbolic gestures’ that were sidelined and largely ignored (Sanders, 2005). The government firmly resisted making a formal apology to the ‘Stolen Generations’ as recommended by the *Bringing them Home* report and, in line with its rejection of ‘the black armband’ view of Australian history, a government submission to a Senate inquiry in 2000 questioned the extent of child removals and dismissed the term ‘Stolen Generation’ as “rhetoric” (Clark, 2002).

‘New arrangements’ in Indigenous affairs

Indigenous policy in the last two terms of the Howard Government was characterised by “an apparent ‘restlessness’ in arrangements” (ATSISJC, 2007, p.44) with successive major changes in policy developed and implemented in haste with no proof of their effectiveness and without consultation with Indigenous people. In 2002, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)²⁷ agreed to trial a “whole-of-governments cooperative approach” in

²⁷ COAG is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia. The members of the COAG are the Prime Minister (Chair), the State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). COAG was established in May 1992 (http://archive.coag.gov.au/about_coag/index.cfm).

up to 10 communities or regions (COAG, 2002).²⁸ The trials commenced in 2002 and 2003 in eight sites. Despite indications that they were failing to meet their objectives, and a lack of formal evaluation²⁹ and transparency about their progress, in 2004 the Commonwealth Government nevertheless decided to replicate the ‘whole of government’ service delivery model nationally as the centrepiece of its “new arrangements” in Indigenous affairs (ATSISJC, 2007, p.49).

Government hostility towards ATSIC, the peak Indigenous representative body, had persisted and a major review was commissioned in 2003. Even before the review panel had produced a public discussion paper, a separate body, ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services), was created to administer ATSIC programs in order “to promote good governance and improve accountability” (Pratt, 2003a). In April 2004, contrary to the major recommendations of the review, the Prime Minister announced the government’s intention to disband ATSIC, claiming it had been a “failed experiment” (Pratt & Bennett, 2004; Altman, 2004; Sanders, 2006). In July 2004, ATSIC was disbanded: its functions and staff together with funds of approximately \$A1 billion were allocated into mainstream government departments, and ATSIC/ATSI offices were replaced by Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs). A National Indigenous Council was appointed to advise the government (SCAIA, 2005, p.3), while Indigenous leaders whose “focus on rights-based approaches were characterised as inappropriate in light of the growing sense of past policy failure and current crisis” were marginalised from the national debate (Hunt, 2008, p.34). The themes of past policy failure, of wasted funds despite past good intentions and the failure of Aboriginal people themselves were repeatedly reinforced during the last two terms of the Howard Government and paved the way for what Sanders describes as a “generational revolution” in Indigenous affairs which combined disowning the work of the previous generation with a significant ideological swing to the right (Sanders, 2008, 2013).³⁰

²⁸ The COAG trials aimed “to improve the way governments interact with each other and with communities to deliver more effective responses to the needs of indigenous Australians” (COAG, 2002). See also Shergold (2004) for a discussion of the objectives of the trials.

²⁹ The COAG trials were subsequently evaluated (Gray, 2006; Morgan Disney, 2006), with mixed findings: although there had been progress at some sites, overall the achievements were limited despite the investment of significant resources (Hunt, 2008, p.37).

³⁰ The view that past policy and Aboriginal people themselves had failed was not confined to the political right. In 2000, prominent Cape York Indigenous leader, Noel Pearson, had critiqued passive welfare and the failure of Aboriginal people to take responsibility and to address excessive

The disestablishment of ATSIC marked a significant policy turning point. It reflected the Prime Minister's strongly held view that services and programs for Indigenous people should be delivered 'in a mainstream way' (Pratt & Bennett, 2004) and demonstrated the political value of Indigenous affairs in electoral strategy. Howard had never agreed in principle with the concept of ATSIC, either of Indigenous-specific representation, or of provision of separately funded, Indigenous-specific services. The political opportunity to remove ATSIC did not arise until late in his third term in office when in March 2004, with a federal election due later that year, the Labor Opposition Leader, Mark Latham, announced Labor's intention to disband ATSIC (but to replace it with another representative body)³¹ (Robbins, 2007). The Prime Minister's announcement that ATSIC would be abolished (without a replacement representative body) came two weeks later; in May ATSIC was stripped of most of its funding through the annual Budget process and legislation to abolish ATSIC was introduced (Rowse, 2006, p.168).

ATSIC had not had responsibility for provision of services to Indigenous people across all policy areas (health and education, for instance, had been administered by Commonwealth and state government departments) and its discretionary budget had been limited and tightly controlled. Its intended role was not to replace, but to supplement the delivery of mainstream government services to Indigenous people, although as a broad ranging inquiry into Indigenous funding in 1999-2001 had established, ATSIC-funded Indigenous-specific programs had been expected to do far more than they were designed for: mainstream programs and services had failed to meet the needs of Indigenous people because of barriers to access (CGC, 2001, p.xvi; Altman, 2004). Nevertheless, ATSIC had critics in many quarters and was widely perceived to have 'failed' to address Indigenous disadvantage.

alcohol abuse, domestic violence and truancy (Pearson, 2000). Pearson's views received support from anthropologist, Peter Sutton (Sutton, 2001, 2009) and an Indigenous Northern Territory Labor parliamentarian, John Ah Kit (2002); see Sanders (2013).

³¹ Latham's announcement gave little detail about his proposed alternative. Broadly, it outlined an intention to replace ATSIC with a directly elected national body that would not have the power to make spending decisions, but would oversee regionally controlled programs. Labor's Indigenous Affairs spokesperson, Kerry O'Brien, stated that self-determination would be enhanced by devolving greater decision-making power to communities (Metherell, 2004). Labor echoed the government position that ATSIC had failed to fix the "endemic problems" of Indigenous communities (Metherell, 2004), but according to Latham's diary account, the impetus for his announcement was that he received a tip-off that "the Government was about to abolish ATSIC, trying to wedge us", and he had pre-empted them by "getting in first" (Latham, 2005, p.279). Other Latham diary entries suggest that the Opposition believed it had been 'wedged' on Aboriginal issues and needed to "go harder" on these issues to win back disaffected voters (see *National Indigenous Times*, 2005).

The then Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Amanda Vanstone, described the government's new approach as a "quiet revolution in Indigenous affairs" (Vanstone, 2005a). One of the key aspects of the new approach was "genuinely giving Indigenous Australians a voice" (Vanstone, 2005a) through a more direct relationship with government. It involved a 'whole of government' response (based on the as yet unevaluated COAG trials), 'real partnerships' with Indigenous communities and direct negotiation of 'shared responsibility agreements' (SRAs), which tied specific purpose funding to agreed actions on the part of the community (Robbins, 2005, 2007; Humpage, 2005, 2008; Gray & Sanders, 2006; Lawrence & Gibson, 2007). The 'whole of government' framework principles emphasised "harnessing the mainstream" and supporting Indigenous communities "to harness the engagement of corporate, non-government and philanthropic sectors" (COAG, 2004). Although the principles included "fostering opportunities for indigenous delivered services", to the public the theme of Indigenous failure and corruption was reinforced as the Minister signalled that the past practice of preferred delivery of services by Aboriginal organisations would not necessarily continue:

Where specialist Indigenous services are required, they must be the best possible services we can offer. This raises another contentious issue. The history of these services is that they've been provided through Indigenous organisations. Some do a tremendous job but there has been waste, there has been corruption and that means service provision hasn't been what it should be. If we continue to regard these organisations as untouchable and unaccountable we are failing our Indigenous citizens yet again. The proposition I'm putting is simple. If you're funded to deliver a service, you should deliver it. If you don't, we'll get someone else to do it (Vanstone, 2005a).

More broadly, the "new arrangements" in Indigenous policy reflected the general shift in welfare policy towards 'mutual obligation' and welfare to work reform. These reflected the government's overarching policy of combining "economic policy liberalisation and a modern conservatism in social policy" as complementary and mutually strengthening principles that would promote "opportunity, incentive and responsibility over dependence and welfarism" and support "the full realisation of individual potential as well as the reality of social obligation" (Howard, 1999). Strongly influenced by the 'new paternalism' espoused by American political scientist, Lawrence Mead (Mead, 1997; Abbott, 2000), mutual obligation aimed to attack 'welfare dependency' through expansion of mainstream Work for the Dole schemes, first introduced in 1997, and increasingly strict compliance obligations and work search activity tests for those in receipt of welfare payments (Shaver, 2001; Mendes, 2005b; Hartman & Darab, 2006).

Mutual obligation underpinned the findings and recommendations of the McClure Report on welfare reform in 2000 (chaired by the Mission Australia CEO, Patrick McClure), which was of the view that “individuals in receipt of income support also had an obligation to seek to participate economically and/or socially” (Dawkins, 2001; RGRW, 2000). SRAs similarly emphasised mutual obligation, but on the part of Indigenous communities. SRAs came under strong criticism as paternalistic and racially discriminatory, making funding for services and needed infrastructure “conditional on behaviour change and other commitments not required of non-Indigenous communities” (Cooper, 2005; see also McCausland & Levy, 2006). Lawrence and Gibson’s analysis points out that SRAs mobilised “longstanding colonial discourses of Aboriginal people and communities as welfare dependent and ungovernable” (Lawrence & Gibson, 2007), and reinforced public perceptions of crisis and failure. Although portrayed as the centrepiece of government policy, and given a high priority (and substantial publicity) by the government (Gray & Sanders, 2006), the \$27 million expenditure on the 120 SRAs that had been signed by November 2005 represented only about 1% of the Commonwealth’s Indigenous-specific budget of \$3 billion (Cooper, 2005; Gray & Sanders, 2006), and there were practical difficulties on the government’s side in the lack of sufficiently senior staff in the new ICC offices who had the capacity to undertake the role of ‘solutions broker’ that negotiation of SRAs required (Gray & Sanders, 2006).

Evaluation reports of the COAG trial sites (Gray, 2006; Morgan Disney, 2006) and an overview evaluation of 90 SRAs (Morgan Disney, 2007) found that both initiatives had encountered some major obstacles: the COAG trials especially had achieved limited results in light of the significant resources dedicated to them (Hunt, 2008, p.37), while in respect of SRAs, communities had generally fulfilled their SRA obligations, but there had been failures and delays by governments in meeting *their* commitments (Humpage, 2005; Morgan Disney, 2007). Notwithstanding the title of the SRA evaluation, *Don’t Let’s Lose Another Good Idea*, by 2006 there were already signals that the COAG trials were to be abandoned and transitioned into more comprehensive ‘Regional Partnership Agreements’ (RPAs), another “new” approach (ATSISJC, 2007, pp 57-58, 83).

RPAs were to be something like a comprehensive or region-wide SRA, but the difference was “blurred” (Gray & Sanders, 2006). Some RPAs had been concurrently developing under a MOU signed in 2005 between the Australian Government and the Minerals Council of Australia that aimed at increased Indigenous employment and the development of

Indigenous businesses in eight pilot sites (ATSISJC, 2007, pp 83-84; Desert Knowledge CRC, 2008). However, as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner pointed out, a significant flaw in the expected transition to RPAs was that as a result of the abolition of ATSIC, there were now no regional Indigenous representative structures with which to negotiate and enter into regional partnerships (ATSISJC, 2007, pp 84, 114-118). The Commissioner's 2006 Social Justice Report listed a bewildering array of recent reforms, policy and program changes, parliamentary inquiries and legislation, all taking place concurrently, and criticised the government's evident lack of interest in ensuring that Indigenous people could participate in these processes:

... the lack of engagement generally with Indigenous peoples ensures that the system of government, of policy making and service delivery, is a passive system that deliberately prevents the active engagement of Indigenous peoples. This contradicts the central policy aims of the new arrangements, which includes commitments to partnerships, shared responsibility and mutual obligation.

It is paradoxical for the Government to criticise Indigenous people for being passive victims and stuck in a welfare mentality yet to continually reinforce a policy development framework that is passive and devoid of opportunity for active engagement by Indigenous peoples. (ATSISJC, 2007, p.123)

2.2.4 From mainstream to Intervention

The Howard era was characterised by an overtly combative approach towards opposition to its policy direction in Indigenous affairs and hostility towards 'separateness' and recognition of cultural difference and specific Indigenous rights. In September 2007, Australia refused to ratify the UNDRIP because as the then Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough,³² put it, the declaration "puts one bunch of Australians in a privileged position over others" (Nason & Franklin, 2007). There was also a tendency to use Aboriginal issues, claims of Indigenous policy 'failure' and 'dog-whistle' politics (coded messages to voters to signal empathy with their concerns about issues such as immigration, welfare and race) for political advantage (Fear, 2007; Dodson, 2007). In the lead up to the 2007 election at which the Coalition Government was defeated, Mal Brough, the last minister for Indigenous Affairs of the Howard era, announced two major initiatives: the closure of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme (a form of work for the dole which had been in operation in Indigenous

³² The Hon Mal Brough was Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs between 28 January 2006 and 3 December 2007.

communities since 1977 and was a major source of employment for regional and remote Aboriginal people), to be replaced (in theory) by ‘real jobs’ and employment training (Brough & Hockey, 2007); and the Northern Territory Emergency Response (the NTER, or ‘the Intervention’) in response to an inquiry into child sexual abuse in the Northern Territory (Wild & Anderson, 2007; Brough, 2007).

The Intervention was implemented by legislation which passed rapidly through parliament with the support of the Labor Opposition³³ and included a number of controversial measures³⁴ that required the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. Critics of the Intervention (Hinkson, 2007; Brown & Brown, 2007; Yu et al., 2008; Altman, 2007; Altman & Watson, 2009; AIDA, 2010) have pointed out that notwithstanding that some elements were welcomed by communities, the approach of the intervention ignored or directly contradicted the recommendations of the report which was the ostensible trigger for its introduction, while many of the measures appeared to have little to do with protection of children and more to do with undermining the operation of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* and enforcing a neo-paternalist, neo-assimilationist approach to controlling the lives of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (Altman, 2007; Altman & Hinkson, 2007; Howard, 2007; Stringer, 2007; Watson, 2009; Howitt, 2012).

These radical interventions in the dying days of the Howard Government were consistent with the government’s policy orientation over the previous decade: they were proclaimed and implemented without consultation with Indigenous peoples on the basis that past Indigenous policies of self-determination had failed (Sanders, 2006; Sanders & Hunt, 2010) and sought to entrench radical reforms in Indigenous policy while embedding and extending welfare reforms, such as empowering government to ‘quarantine’ welfare income (Humpage, 2005). The NTER also entrenched the coercive practices established

³³ The three bills which implemented the NTER – approximately 500 pages of complex legislation – were passed within two weeks in August 2007. The Government permitted a one day Senate inquiry, allowing 48 hours’ notice for submissions (Hinkson, 2007, pp 2-3).

³⁴ Key elements of the Intervention were: quarantining of social welfare payments (income management) in 73 prescribed discrete communities, controls on alcohol and pornography, the use of the military, compulsory child health checks, increased policing in remote communities, the appointment of community-based Government Business Managers with considerable powers to terminate or arbitrarily alter contracts to ‘oversee Commonwealth interests’, and compulsory land acquisition and removal of community control of entry (the permit system) into prescribed communities (Howard, 2007; Altman, 2007; Stringer, 2007).

by SRAs and reinforced underlying notions of Aboriginal people as “failed or ungovernable citizens” and remote Aboriginal communities as “failed or ungovernable places” (Lawrence & Gibson, 2007).

The dramatic announcement and broad sweep of the NTER were accounted for by purported Indigenous pathology so as to appear to be justified, and even reasonable, humanitarian responses to it (Watson, 2009). As Patrick Dodson, the former Chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation put it,

A cultural genocide agenda has been foisted on the Australian public in the context of extensive media coverage about the social collapse of Indigenous communities, centred on sexual abuse of children and rampant violence fuelled by alcohol and drugs. Rather than explaining the human tragedy caused by decades of under-investment by governments in capital and social infrastructure, the Howard Government has promoted a neo-conservative public discourse in which Aboriginal people’s failure to take responsibility has become the central tenet of the debate ... policies of coercive intervention and dismantling of the building blocks of self-determination have been broadly painted as correcting three decades of progressive liberalism that have resulted in degrading welfare dependency. (Dodson, 2007)

A recent report on a project on the media and Indigenous policy in Australia (McCallum et al., 2012) opens with a quote from Baum et al.:

In the past few years, and particularly since the publication of the Little Children Are Sacred [Report, 2007] ... policy debates in the Australian media have presented Aboriginal issues as if they are unsolvable and intransigent and caused by ‘deviant’ characteristics inherent in Aboriginal communities. (Baum et al., 2007)

Increasingly, the media is a critical player in driving policy and in turn is managed and manipulated in a “mediatised” policy-making process: policy-makers “pre-empt, monitor and use news media strategically in their policy-making practices” (McCallum et al., 2012).

More than most other policy fields, the development of Indigenous affairs policy is played out through public media, with journalists taking a central role in both constructing and representing Indigenous people and issues as problems to be solved. ... Indigenous affairs policy is rooted in the bureaucratic process of colonisation and the complex history of Australian federalism. It is inherently political and subject to strong partisan ideologies. (McCallum et al., 2012, pp 3-4)

McCallum and Waller describe the NTER as an extreme example of “mediatised” policy-making and the template for media-driven policymaking (McCallum & Waller, 2012). Policy-makers think and plan in terms of how issues will ‘play’ in the media. This concert of effort between bureaucrats and mainstream media disadvantages and disempowers

Indigenous people in policy debates: as Sullivan observes, the unacknowledged ‘clients’ of Indigenous services are non-Indigenous voters and the political class that is responsive to them, and the wishes of white Australia formed through media reporting are significantly more powerful than those of the Indigenous people who receive them (Sullivan, 2011a, p.76). The shift in public opinion from some degree of public support for an Indigenous rights-based agenda to acceptance of a supposed Aboriginal pathology and policy failure was largely complete by the end of the Howard Liberal-National government in 2007.

2.3 Policy developments under Labor, 2007-2013

On its election in November 2007, the policies, language and actions of the new Labor Government towards the NFP sector were markedly less combative and more collaborative. In Opposition, Labor had promised to consult on all policy issues that affected the community sector (Staples, 2008, p.279), acknowledged the role and importance of the sector and sought partnership to address entrenched social exclusion and disadvantage (Gillard, 2007b, 2007a). The Australian Labor Party (ALP) was elected under the leadership of Kevin Rudd with a policy platform of social inclusion and a commitment to rebuild a new relationship between government and the community sector based on reciprocity and trust (ALP, 2007). Labor would restore “the sector’s right to advocate and participate actively in public debate” (ALP, 2007) and consult it on the development of a National Compact such as had been adopted in the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand (ALP, 2007; Sidoti et al., 2009; Butcher, 2011; Butcher et al., 2012).³⁵ In early 2008 the Government announced the removal of the ‘gag’ clauses that had effectively silenced criticism under the previous administration (Staples, 2008, p.272). The policy approach was more collaborative, but the fundamental shifts of the previous decade essentially remained in place: the ‘New Public Management’ and performance management of competitive tendering and contracting of services remained firmly entrenched, while the pre-eminence of major NFPs as preferred contractors and in policy influence has continued (Phillips & Goodwin, 2013).

³⁵ Such compacts had already been developed in some states and territories in Australia: Victoria (2002), the Australian Capital Territory (2004), New South Wales (2006) and Tasmania (2006) (Butcher, 2011; Sidoti et al., 2009).

2.3.1 Productivity Commission inquiry into the NFP sector

In 2009, the Productivity Commission was tasked by the Rudd Government to conduct an inquiry into the contribution of the NFP sector, the fifth major review of the sector since 1996. The Productivity Commission report of 2010 provides a detailed analysis of the state of the sector and its relationship with government. It identified the shift from grant funding to purchase of service contracting as a significant contributor to a deterioration in the relationship between government and the sector, which had become “adversarial and lacking in trust”. NFPs were suspicious of government and resistant to governments wanting more influence over the design and delivery of services (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.383), while contracting was seen by the sector to be driven by measurement of outputs rather than the quality of services.

The Commission noted that the benefits for government in engaging NFPs in the delivery of human services included their flexibility, their ability to package services for the target client group, value for money, and because they are representative of the clients targeted by specific programs (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.305), however the shift to purchase of service contracting and increasing dependence of NFPs on government funding carried risks that could undermine these advantages. These included “mission drift”, NFPs taking on the characteristics and behaviours of government agencies (isomorphism), weaker connections with communities, diminution of the advocacy role of NFPs, a perception that NFPs are simply a delivery arm of government, and increased government influence over NFPs internal structure and decision-making about allocation of resources and responding to client needs (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.307). While government agencies described their relationships with non-profit organisations as “partnerships”, NFPs were more likely to view them as “master-servant relationships” that imposed ‘top down’ solutions that required their compliance (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.309; see also Lyons, 2007).³⁶

³⁶ This perspective is supported by McGuire and O'Neill (2008) in their analysis of the influence of the Report on Government Services (ROGS) on accountability relationships between funders and NFPs. ROGS, initiated in 1993 as a national ‘whole of government’ performance reporting framework, “tilts the balance in performance reporting to the interests of funders and quantitative measurement” (McGuire L. and O'Neill, 2008, p.257) and increases pressure for upward accountability. Human services in particular pose challenges for performance measurement: NFPs are caught between potentially conflicting priorities of policy-makers and clients, and a divergence between these conflicting interests can result in policy failure (McGuire L. and O'Neill, 2008; see also Johnson-Abdelmalik, 2011).

Some of the recommendations of the Productivity Commission's inquiry were already elements of Labor Government policy, such as an Office of the Not-for-Profit Sector and a National Compact, and proposed regulation of the sector through a Registrar for Community and Charitable Purpose Organisations – a “one-stop-shop for reporting for governance, financial accountability, tax endorsement and fundraising”.³⁷ An independent national regulator of charities, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) commenced operation in January 2013, and the *Charities Bill*, passed in late June 2013, came into effect on 1 January 2014.³⁸

Increasing dependence of the non-profit sector on government

Australian governments have withdrawn from direct provision of some services (for example employment and child welfare) while greatly expanding payments for delivery of human services (Lyons, 2009). Under the Howard Government, total government funding (Commonwealth, state and territory) to the sector increased from \$10.1 billion to \$25.5 billion between 1999/2000 and 2006/07 (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.300). The expansion of government funding of NFPs to deliver human services has had a transformational effect on the sector to the extent that many NFPs have become increasingly, and in some cases entirely, dependent on government funding (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.302).³⁹ While a large number of NFPs receive relatively small amounts of government funding (less than \$100,000 per year), some large NFPs receive very substantial amounts, some more than \$100 million per year (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.300). In the community services sector, dependency on government funding appears to be increasing. The ACOSS 2007-08 survey of community services organisations found that governments provided approximately 77% of total funding of NFPs delivering community and welfare services (ACOSS (Australian Council of Social

³⁷ While a Registrar for Community and Charitable organisations for mainstream NFPs was not introduced until 2013, accountability and administration of Aboriginal community organisations has been regulated for decades, first under the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976* and now under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (the CATSI Act).

³⁸ Following the election of a conservative Coalition government led by Tony Abbott in September 2013, the Minister for Social Services, Kevin Andrews, has announced the government's intention to 'scrap' the ACNC (Karvelas, 2013).

³⁹ The Productivity Commission's recent survey of government agencies with responsibility for provision of human services indicated that for nearly half of these agencies, 75% or more of the value of the government funded services delivered by external organisations is provided by NFPs (Productivity Commission, 2010, pp 300-305).

Services), 2008, p.22), while the 2009-10 survey found that more than 83% of income was derived from government sources (ACOSS, 2011, p.51).⁴⁰

2.3.2 Increased 'market share' and policy influence of large NFPs

Lyons (2009) disputes the widely-held view that governments have massively privatised and outsourced services, arguing that there has been a general expansion in response to increased demand, however he observes that the privatisation of some government services, such as the Commonwealth Employment Service in 1998, provided some NFPs with significant opportunities for major growth (Lyons, 2009; Productivity Commission, 2010, p.302). The Productivity Commission reported that competitive tendering was seen by the NFP sector to be inherently disadvantageous to smaller, locally-based organisations while favouring larger nationalised bodies which “may have a poor understanding of local factors and relationships critical to achieving real outcomes” (Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia, quoted in Productivity Commission, 2010, Appendix J; see also O'Shea et al., 2007, pp. 58-59).

Several authors (e.g. Butcher, 2006; Wanna et al., 2010, pp. 49, 152) support the view that the marketisation of services has created an uneven playing field that inherently favours larger, more bureaucratic organisations:

TSOs [*third sector organisations*] have evolved from essentially mendicant organisations to professionalized service providers and/or lobbyists concerned with capturing and maintaining 'market share' within the mixed economy of health and social services. In general, larger TSOs have been more successful in capturing market share, in part because they often exhibit high levels of organisational and administrative sophistication. (Butcher, 2006, p.83)

Wanna et al. (2010) explain that because of the scrutiny of public sector agencies, the tendency to favour large organisations is

a deliberate strategy on the part of governments to manage commercial, legal and reputational risks by inviting tenders only from organisations with the 'critical mass' to provide assurance of commercial or operational viability, responsiveness, financial and performance reporting, and economic and technical efficiency. (Wanna et al., 2010, p.152)

⁴⁰ Income sources such as donations (8.7%), client fees (5.2%) and corporate funding (0.6%) formed a relatively small proportion of total income; other income sources such as membership fees, sale of goods, and interest on investments provided only 4.6% (ACOSS (Australian Council of Social Services), 2011, p.51).

Large, bureaucratic organisations win a disproportionate share of tenders for service provision because the complex and costly nature of due diligence processes preclude most small to medium organisations from tendering (Wanna et al., 2010, p.152-4).

Other factors may also contribute to the success of large, well-known organisations in maintaining their 'market share'. These include the resources and capacity to prepare funding submissions, brand recognition, the increased role of large NFPs in policy research (discussed below) and direct source procurement by funding bodies. In response to increasing competition in the sector, NFPs are increasingly adopting corporate branding techniques (Stride & Lee, 2007; Goerke, 2003) that are designed not only to generate the trust of donors and contracting governments, but position them to secure high-level corporate partnerships and attract high calibre board members and employees (Quelch et al., 2004). As a colleague in the Macquarie University–Australian Red Cross ARC Linkage Partnership research team observed,

In branding themselves, not-for-profits position themselves as trustworthy entities: immune to the politics of government and the profit motives of private enterprise, and infused with positive moral values that enable them to do good in the world.⁴¹

McDonald points out that there are commonly-held myths and assumptions about the non-profit sector, its desirable characteristics and capacity to do 'good' service delivery (McDonald, 1999; McDonald & Marston, 2002). Organisations that conform to these institutionalised myths gain increased legitimacy and improve their survival advantages: "In other words, their way of organising is believed to be 'good' and as a consequence is rewarded by external bodies (such as funding bodies)" (McDonald & Marston, 2002; see also Johnson-Abdelmalik, 2011).

A recent Australian study of 21 predominantly 'large' or 'very large' NFPs found that in the 2000s a significant growth in policy research positions in human service NFPs had taken place, in the context of the delegitimising of alternative forms of advocacy (discussed in section 2.2.2 above) and the increasing contracting out of service provision. Phillips and Goodwin (Phillips, 2010) argue that in the context of these shifts, the increasing importance of NFP policy research plays "an important legitimising role" as NFPs engage in policy research for "branding and reputation for marketing and

⁴¹ Dr. Julia Scott-Stevenson, personal communication, May 2012.

sponsorship”, to ensure they retain funding, because they see it is part of their mission, as a form of advocacy, and because “everyone else ... is doing it”.

2.3.3 Indigenous policy under Labor

Labor in Opposition had largely supported the dramatic changes in Indigenous affairs and the policy and approach of the Howard Government on issues such as the abolition of ATSIC and the Northern Territory Intervention (NTER). In office, there were some modifications such as the continuation of the CDEP program in remote and regional locations where there were weak labour markets (Australian Government, 2007), a belated formal apology to the Stolen Generations and adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but overall policy and action in this area remained essentially the same (Sanders & Hunt, 2010). The previous Labor Government (1983-1996) had been instrumental in some significant milestones in national Indigenous policy and recognition of Indigenous rights, such as the creation of ATSIC, the establishment of the Reconciliation process, the passage of the *Native Title Act* and the creation of the Indigenous Land Fund. In 1996, Labor policy had included the intention to implement a ‘social justice package’ to address entrenched Indigenous disadvantage. Eleven years later, neither this commitment, nor any proposal to wind back the Howard era reforms were present in the ALP’s 2007 election manifesto. Labor appeared to have accepted the wholesale shift from self-determination to mainstreaming and individualisation of services.

The NTER, one of the most controversial of the Howard Government interventions, was continued and most of its original provisions were extended for a further 10 years by the *Stronger Futures* legislation passed in 2012 by the Labor Government. Other elements of the Howard era have continued into the present policy environment, in particular the focus on improving data collection and on monitoring and addressing Indigenous disadvantage⁴² which is reflected in the policy of successive Commonwealth Governments and under the COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) (2007-2013) to ‘close the gaps’ in health, education and other social indicators, and to continue mainstreaming of Indigenous services (COAG Reform Council).

⁴² The biannual *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators* reports produced by the Productivity Commission commenced in 2003 as part of the COAG Reconciliation Framework.

2.4 Mainstreaming and the Indigenous community sector

Indigenous community organisations are occasionally mentioned as part of the Australian NFP sector (Lyons, 2001; Productivity Commission, 2010; Phillips, 2007), but their role, and the impact on them of wider policy changes affecting the sector is rarely considered in academic literature. As Sullivan observes, “The Aboriginal NFP sector goes widely unrecognised both as a significant part of the Australian not-for-profit landscape as a whole, and as a distinctive sector in its own right” (Sullivan, 2011a, p.47).

During the period of Indigenous self-determination/self-management from the early 1970s, a vibrant and diverse Indigenous ‘sector’ developed. It was (and is) composed of statutory bodies such as land councils created under state and territory land rights regimes, native title bodies, community government councils and formerly ATSIC and its regional councils, and some thousands of locally-based community organisations such as community-controlled Aboriginal health and legal services, employment services, housing associations and others that provide a wide range of human services such as family support, child care, education, aged care and more (Rowse, 2005; Hunt, 2008). In addition to approximately 2,500 Indigenous organisations currently registered by the national Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC)⁴³ many organisations are registered under state and territory legislation, and so the total figure may be of the order of approximately 6,000 (Rowse, 2005; Martin, 2003).

This mosaic of locally-based organisations has been a significant contributor to Aboriginal development, as well as a “critical ingredient in Aboriginal people’s material security” and “an expression of Aboriginal political identity” (Sullivan, 2011a, p.55), however it has received little recognition and is rarely seen as a distinctive nationwide network, in part because its locally-based nature, developed under the banner of self-determination, has encouraged fragmentation (Sullivan, 2011a, p.55; Hunt, 2008). Until the disestablishment of ATSIC in 2004, Indigenous organisations were preferred providers of Indigenous programs and services (COAG, 1992, para 6.15; ANAO, 2012b, p.40) and this preference was promoted through special programs that funded Indigenous-controlled services (Hunt, 2008). The role of ATSIC as a primary funder of Indigenous organisations also

⁴³ See home page of the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations, accessed September 2013 <http://www.oric.gov.au>.

shielded them to some extent from the effects of the introduction of NPM principles (Sullivan, 2011a, p.71-2), however with the introduction of ‘mainstreaming’ as the major tenet of Indigenous policy this is no longer the case. Rather, the accessibility of mainstream services, especially “for the 75% of Indigenous Australians who live in cities and regional centres” has been a major part of the strategy of successive governments (ANAO, 2012a, p.68).

Rowse has argued that the ‘new mainstreaming’ under the Howard Government was neither new, nor a significant departure from previous practice in that ‘mainstream’ government departments had always had, and retained, primary responsibility for providing services to Indigenous people: the shift in policy merely transferred funding for some Indigenous-specific programs to mainstream departments (Rowse, 2006). Early in the period of ‘new mainstreaming’, for example, Rowse argued that the Indigenous sector remained largely intact “as it does not necessarily make any difference to the work of an Indigenous organisation whether it gets its funds from one government agency or another” (Rowse, 2005). As an example, Rowse cited the shift of funding for Aboriginal community-controlled health services from ATSIC to the mainstream Commonwealth health department in 1995 (Rowse, 2006; see also Tickner, 2001p. 292, 300), and proposed that Indigenous people receiving services from government were still likely to be dealing with a publicly funded Indigenous organisation (Rowse, 2006). However, while the Aboriginal community-controlled primary health care sector even now continues to be funded through the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OAHTSIH) in the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (ANAO, 2012b), other parts of the Indigenous sector do not appear to have fared well in the mainstreaming era.

Although it is not clear whether there has been an overall reduction in the number of Aboriginal organisations, there are indications that they are losing contracts and funding opportunities to mainstream organisations and there has been a decrease in the number of Indigenous community sector organisations delivering health and community services, employment and training, education, child care and housing since 2007-08 (ORIC, 2013, pp 4, 14). FaHCSIA,⁴⁴ the lead agency in Indigenous service delivery and a major funder

⁴⁴ Following the change of government in September 2013, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) was renamed the Australian Government

of Indigenous-specific programs, manages Indigenous service provision through funding relationships with approximately 7,000 organisations: of these, only 8% were Indigenous by 2012 (ANAO, 2012b, p.65). A recent Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report found that the funding available to Indigenous community organisations is piecemeal and provided under multiple programs, requiring multiple acquittals: most funding agreements in the period 2007-2011 were worth less than \$60,000 and were for periods of less than 12 months. ANAO acknowledged that such short-term, low value contracts, together with significant frequent reporting requirements,⁴⁵ made it difficult for these organisations to predict future funding, attract staff and plan for the future, while imposing a high administrative load (ANAO, 2012b, p.64). The ANAO also found that the predominant use of grants as a funding mechanism had implications for the capacity of Indigenous organisations because of the time and resources that needed to be invested in intensive administrative processes, which in some cases made it not worth the effort to pursue small value grants, and because like other NFPs, they were not sufficiently funded to cover the cost of service provision. Overall these arrangements made it “challenging” for organisations to invest in their own capacity (ANAO, 2012b, pp 59-62).⁴⁶

In contrast, there has been a significant increase in the number of ‘mainstream’ NFPs which now provide services to Indigenous people and work with Indigenous communities. Large NFPs appear to have benefitted from the new funding arrangements as strong competitors for large multi-year, high value contracts both for mainstream programs that are intended to service Indigenous people, as well as programs targeted specifically to Indigenous communities. The low representation of Indigenous organisations amongst service providers even in Indigenous-specific programs funded by the lead agency

Department of Social Services (DSS). At 27 September 2013, the DSS website gave notice that the Indigenous Affairs portfolio would soon be moved to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). As FaHCSIA had responsibility for implementing the Commonwealth’s policy in Indigenous affairs, and was a major funder of Commonwealth Indigenous programs during the research and writing of this thesis, the name has been retained. Links to the former FaHCSIA website were functional in early 2014.

⁴⁵ The 820 Indigenous organisations funded were required to submit 20,671 performance, financial and acquittal reports (ANAO, 2012b, p.57).

⁴⁶ Despite excessive administrative burdens and chronic under-funding for operational and infrastructure costs, most Senior Executives regarded capacity development as the responsibility of Indigenous service providers rather than government; there was no over-arching strategy for Indigenous organisational capacity development, although it was a key COAG commitment under the NIRA (ANAO, 2012b, pp 94-102).

suggests a significant bias in favour of mainstream organisations. In a recent submission to the Commonwealth Financial Accountability Review 2012, Moran and Porter's paper on government procurement in Indigenous affairs suggests intentional favouring of non-Indigenous organisations:

Following the demise of ATSIC in 2005, the Australian Government had an unstated policy of withdrawing support to Indigenous organisations. Long held service delivery contracts were tendered out, leading to an influx of mainstream NGOs and private corporations. This undermined the sustainability of Indigenous organisations, and led to an overall increase in the number of service providers, and a further fracturing of an already crowded institutional landscape. (Moran & Porter, 2012)

A report by the Northern Territory Coordinator-General for Remote Services⁴⁷ in 2012 was critical of the Commonwealth Government's 'direct source'⁴⁸ procurement practice which appeared to have become the predominant model in the NT, stating that it had "actively driven the proliferation of non-Indigenous NFP organisations in remote service delivery often in direct competition with local community-based organisations", and that these NFPs had become preferred providers despite little or no prior experience of working with Aboriginal people, nor sector experience in the specialist services they were contracted to provide (ONTCCGRS, 2012, p.56).

While Moran and Porter suggest that withdrawal of funding to Indigenous organisations is an intentional, if unstated government policy, other factors may also have contributed to preferencing of mainstream organisations, such as risk management by funding bodies and the preclusion of small organisations from meeting the cost of due diligence requirements (referred to in section 2.3.1 above). Further, large mainstream organisations have the resources to employ submission-writers and to subscribe to services that provide current information on government tenders and contracts. It is also likely that funding decisions are influenced by cultural bias and a loss of 'corporate knowledge' of Indigenous communities and organisations resulting from the

⁴⁷ This position was taken up by the former Australian Red Cross Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy following her resignation from Red Cross in 2011.

⁴⁸ Direct Source procurement is a process in which an agency invites a potential supplier to make submissions such as quotes or tenders. Direct Sourcing is less competitive than open and select tendering as it does not provide the opportunity for a number of potential suppliers to compete for the provision of services (ANAO, 2010, p.17). The ANAO report on direct source procurement found that FaHCSIA obtained 37% of its procurements through direct sourcing, representing 54% of the total value of procurements (ANAO, 2010, p.53) (note this figure refers to all procurements for property and services by FaHCSIA).

mainstreaming policy, together with a decade of highly publicised hostility and complaint about the failure and corruption of Indigenous organisations. In 2004, the dispersal of ATSIC staff to new Indigenous Coordination Centres had immediate and unexpected consequences in the sudden loss of Indigenous staff from the Commonwealth public service (SCAIA, 2005, pp103-105). A staff member of a lead Commonwealth agency who was a participant in this study confided:

We see decisions made around these programs made by people who have probably never met an Aboriginal person – and I'm not exaggerating. We are seeing decisions made around Aboriginal programs made by people who have never administered a program. We are seeing decisions made around monitoring the outcomes of Aboriginal programs in a cultural vacuum ... now that's policy because it was made without reference to the community, it was made without reference to the practitioners, it was made in that cultural vacuum that now comprises decision-making around Aboriginal policy.

An example of decision-making in the absence of a depth of cultural experience is illustrated in Adams' de-identified case study of "Winanga-Li" (see below), where the funding body determined that the contract for an Indigenous community service should be awarded to a mainstream organisation because it had more effectively 'ticked the boxes' on cultural knowledge than an Aboriginal organisation with an Aboriginal board and staff who had a 17 year connection with the community involved.

In remote Australia, Dillon and Westbury put the case that many public servants are under-prepared to manage cross-cultural engagement issues in program delivery and have overwhelming incentives to meet centrally determined performance criteria (such as full expenditure of a budget allocation) but little motivation to ensure that programs are aligned with local cultural and social imperatives (Dillon & Westbury, 2007, pp 60-61).⁴⁹

As Morphy (2008) observes,

To government, a 'good' organisation is a compliant organisation that delivers programs according to government guidelines on budget and on time. To the extent that the intercultural nature of the organisation is recognised at all, it is perceived as

⁴⁹ In remote regions especially, these cultural and social imperatives pose challenges of "mutual incomprehension", as illustrated by McRae-Williams and Gerritsen (McRae-Williams & Gerritsen, 2010), and Kim Mahood in her essay "Katiya are like Toyotas: white workers on Australia's cultural frontier" (Mahood, 2012).

a problem, as bits of ‘museum culture’⁵⁰ that keep getting in the way of ‘good’ governance. (Morphy, 2008, p.138)

Case Study 2.1: “Winanga-Li”

“Winanga-Li”, an Aboriginal community organisation with an Aboriginal staff and board, has been established for 17 years in an outer urban district that has a large Aboriginal population. Winanga-Li has compiled and maintained a contact guide to local services and provided a referral service to local Indigenous people for some time, but has not been funded for this service. In mid-2009, FaHCSIA established the Community Support Services Program (CSS), which offered \$150,000 over three years for such a service. Winanga-Li applied for the funding. Two days before applications closed, a large faith-based organisation made contact to inform Winanga-Li that it intended to apply and proposing to cite Winanga-Li as the service site. This proposal was refused as there was no existing partnership and the organisation was considered to have a poor relationship with the local Indigenous community.

The contract was awarded to the faith-based organisation, despite having not yet found a delivery site. Winanga-Li lodged an appeal, supported by a petition signed by 300 people, but failed to overturn the decision. FaHCSIA provided its assessment of Winanga-Li’s application and had given it a score of only three points out of five on its ‘ability to connect with Indigenous people and their families’; the faith-based organisation had scored a perfect five. According to the assessor, Winanga-Li’s response “would have benefited from specifically identifying issues such as sorry business, men’s and women’s business, community elders, communication styles and a general awareness of indigenous culture...” In the view of Winanga-Li’s Aboriginal staff, these were not central issues in cultural sensitivity for this particular urban Aboriginal community.

The faith-based organisation met opposition from local Indigenous organisations and had difficulty securing a delivery site. It was not until six months after the contract was awarded that an Aboriginal drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre agreed to host it. More than a year after funding was granted, Winanga-Li continued to provide referrals at the same level as before. Winanga-Li refused to promote the CSS program because it did not have confidence in the faith-based organisation’s ability to provide quality services to its Indigenous community.

Source: Elise Adams (2010)

⁵⁰ In 2005, then Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Senator Amanda Vanstone referred to discrete Aboriginal communities, especially remote outstations or homelands as “cultural museums” (Vanstone, 2005b). See also Scrimgeour (2007), Briskman (2008), and Prout and Howitt (2009).

2.5 Conclusion

In the past two decades, the national policy frameworks in relation to the NFP sector and in Indigenous affairs have undergone profound changes which have ultimately created a new role for the non-Indigenous NFP sector in the delivery of Indigenous services. The recognition and acknowledgement of unique Indigenous rights to self-determination and acceptance of cultural difference were overturned in the Howard era's exploitation of Indigenous issues, discrediting of Indigenous organisations, and its focus on 'practical' reconciliation. In the contested space of welfare policy, the NFP sector has also undergone a transformation that has made it increasingly reliant on and compliant with government strategies. While NFPs claim a certain 'high moral ground' and are esteemed in public perception, they in fact have a vested interest in ensuring their survival and seek funding and policy influence to secure it.

The 'quiet revolution' proclaimed in 2005 has indeed been both quiet and a significant revolution in that it has remained relatively uncontested within Australian government administrations and it has had far broader impacts than merely channeling funding through a different department. While 'mainstreaming' of funding was well sign-posted, its corollary, large-scale channeling of funding for Indigenous community services through white, mainstream organisations rather than Indigenous ones has never been formally proclaimed or announced. The shifts in policy settings, especially over the past decade, have opened opportunities for non-Indigenous, or 'mainstream', organisations to compete for contracts to deliver both Indigenous-specific services and mainstream services that must now be accessed by Indigenous people. Many have become both service providers to and employers of Aboriginal people in cross-cultural contexts, while in some areas, the widespread network of locally-based Indigenous community organisations has been out-competed or sidelined in this process, having lost funding for activities they were previously engaged in or having missed out on new program and funding opportunities.

The implications of such change and the challenges involved for both mainstream and Indigenous organisations, for their Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) staff and for the communities receiving the services have received limited attention in the literature. Whether intentionally designed, or an accidental outcome that developed in the course of unfolding events, what remains unexplored and untested in this area of public policy is

the capacity of non-Indigenous organisations, given the past failure of mainstream services to meet the needs of Indigenous people. The greatly expanded role of non-Indigenous NFPs in Indigenous service delivery gives rise to critical questions: what is their capacity to engage with Aboriginal people, or to deliver culturally appropriate services and ensure they are accessible to Aboriginal clients and relevant to their needs? Are Aboriginal people willing to use these services? It is to that development that this thesis turns, drawing on the generosity and trust of Australian Red Cross and its staff to investigate the way that this important NFP institution has engaged at the critical cultural interfaces created by the changing policy frameworks discussed in this chapter. The next chapter considers this context and the challenges of intercultural engagement that confront mainstream organisations both in providing services that will meet Indigenous needs and as employers of Indigenous staff, identifying the particular interfaces at play in the case study and clarifying the approach adopted in this research.

Chapter 3. Context II: framing the challenges of intercultural engagement in a major NFP

We need to engage with Aboriginal people on the basis that we really do not know or understand aspects of their social reality and, more importantly, we cannot make sense of things from an Indigenous world view by simply extending our own brand of reason to cover the Indigenous world. ... There are manifold layers of complexity, streaming from the incommensurability of Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds, and from the fact that Indigenous social life itself is multiply ordered (and disordered) rather than uniform and standardised: a representation of Indigenous society that only exists in the minds of non-Indigenous people. (Blagg, 2008, p.50)

The developments in Indigenous affairs policy outlined in Chapter 2 opened significant new funding opportunities for the mainstream NFP sector to deliver Indigenous community and human services, and privileged non-Indigenous organisations as competitors for Indigenous-specific programs as presenting less risk in financial accountability to funding bodies. Given the extent of engagement of the mainstream sector in Indigenous-specific programs, it appears that the policy insistence on mainstream or ‘universal’⁵¹ services has shifted the major burden for delivery of these services to the mainstream sector. The first part of this chapter examines how tensions and ambiguities in public policy may have contributed to these developments, and how despite apparent intentions to ensure Indigenous engagement and representation in program design and delivery, in practice mainstreaming may result in less effective programs that have reduced Indigenous agency. These shifts in policy make it all the more critical that mainstream organisations, increasingly engaged in working with Indigenous

⁵¹ The Council of Australian Governments National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) refers to mainstream services as ‘universal’ services.

people, develop their own capacity for intercultural engagement. They need to recognise the need for, and processes of, working successfully with Indigenous people in ways that support rather than undermine Indigenous agency.

Australian Red Cross's new engagement with Aboriginal people began in the mid- 2000s, at the height of the policy upheavals in Indigenous affairs described in Chapter 2. The second part of this chapter provides a brief introduction to Australian Red Cross. As one of Australia's oldest and largest humanitarian organisations, and one of its best-known, Australian Red Cross occupies a special place in Australian culture and history and a unique niche as an "auxiliary to Government" in providing emergency relief. Yet it is an organisation previously little known to Indigenous Australians. A national reorientation of service priorities commenced in 2007 confirmed Australian Red Cross's commitment to work with Indigenous people as one of its key national priorities. In doing so, it entered a field that at least since the 1970s was already populated by a mosaic of locally-based Indigenous community organisations and a growing number of medium and large mainstream NFPs in an area of service that poses considerable challenges in intercultural engagement.

The failure of mainstream service agencies and mechanisms to adequately service Indigenous needs has been much debated since the 1980s (Gray & Sanders, 2006; Watson, 2010). The extent of their failure to meet Indigenous needs has been clearly understood since at least 2001, when the Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC) reported on its inquiry into Indigenous Funding (CGC, 2001). As policy has shifted to emphasise delivery of universal services, many government departments, research centres and Indigenous organisations have contributed to a body of practice guidelines to assist mainstream organisations to improve cultural sensitivity and increase Indigenous access. A growing body of literature in the fields of health and Indigenous social work (for example Baldry et al., 2006; Green & Baldry, 2008; Briskman, 2008; Fredericks, 2008, 2009; Walker & Sonn, 2010; Durey, 2010; Grote, 2008; Cleland et al., 2012) also considers cultural competence, ways to improve services and the need for decolonising practice.

There is little in academic literature, however, that considers how mainstream organisations might approach working with Aboriginal communities or the processes of change within organisations as they face new intercultural challenges in recruiting and employing Indigenous workers. In order to demonstrate their capacity to deliver accessible services,

contracts require organisations to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultures and establish their capacity for effective engagement. A common approach is to employ Aboriginal staff to do the ‘front-line’ work and this is often required by funding bodies (UnitingCare, 2007, p.7), but the nature of the work and the pressures of mainstream employment are often poorly understood by non-Indigenous employers. The final sections of the chapter explore Nakata’s concept of the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002) and Essed’s work on ‘everyday racism’ (Essed, 1991), amongst others, as central elements to frame the challenges of this intercultural engagement.

3.1 Indigenous program and service delivery

The stated intention of ‘mainstreaming’ was to improve Indigenous access to services and to devolve responsibility for ensuring the adequacy of services to mainstream departments. While many Indigenous community organisations expected that funding would continue to be channelled through them as locally-based community organisations, which after all had proven capacity to deliver culturally appropriate and effective local services, competitive tendering and contracting applied to Indigenous funding programs soon began to privilege mainstream organisations, as discussed in Chapter 2. This section considers the processes of ‘mainstreaming’ in more depth and shows that although jointly agreed COAG guidelines appear to emphasise the continuing importance of and commitment to engaging Indigenous people and organisations in the design and delivery of programs, in practice ‘new mainstreaming’ subtly shifted the implementation of policy through funding arrangements that made non-Indigenous NFPs ‘preferred providers’. With little experience and few community level connections guide them as to *how* to overcome barriers to Indigenous access to deliver such services effectively, the ‘new mainstreaming’ soon revealed that a new set of wicked complexities had been drawn into program and service delivery to Indigenous people.

3.1.1 Mainstreaming: policy tensions and ambiguity

Chapter 2 showed that the term ‘mainstreaming’ or ‘new mainstreaming’ (Gray & Sanders, 2006) was widely used in 2004 to describe the Howard Government’s decision to disestablish ATSIC and redistribute the funds it had previously administered to other Commonwealth Government departments, but in fact, the process of mainstreaming was already underway. By the early 2000s, it was Commonwealth policy to rely on

mainstream services to meet the needs of Indigenous people in urban and regional areas and allocate Indigenous-specific resources to “areas of greatest need” in remote areas where mainstream services were limited or unavailable (HORSCATSIA, 2001, p.20).⁵²

The most significant shift that appears to have occurred in the mid-2000s was a withdrawal from the guiding principles of COAG in 1992, which had given pre-eminence to “empowerment, self-determination and self-management by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders”. Instead, the 2004 COAG framework principles emphasised “harnessing the mainstream” and “supporting Indigenous communities to harness the engagement of corporate, non-government and philanthropic sectors”, while giving only a mention to “fostering opportunities for indigenous delivered services” (COAG, 2004).

The new iterations of policy under the COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) (2009, 2012) – the ‘Closing the Gap’ policy⁵³ – contain more extensive *Service Delivery Principles for Services for Indigenous Australians*⁵⁴ to provide guidance in the design and delivery of programs, but the six principles are vague, ambiguous and possibly self-contradictory. Although they appear to promote Indigenous engagement in the design and delivery of programs and services, on closer examination the *Indigenous engagement principle* requires only that Indigenous engagement, empowerment and representation are “appropriate”. The *Sustainability principle* states that attention should be given to “building the capacity **of both Indigenous people and of services** to meet the needs of Indigenous people” (emphasis added) and almost as an afterthought adds: “recognising when Indigenous delivery is an important contributor to outcomes ... and in those instances fostering opportunities for Indigenous service delivery” (COAG, 2009; 2012, Schedule D).

⁵² Sullivan, for example, argues that the shift to the present policy era, which is essentially to ensure that state and territory governments take their share for responsibility for adequate provision of Indigenous services, was marked by COAG’s original commitment in 1992 to ensure that Indigenous people receive “no less a provision of services than other Australian citizens” (Sullivan, 2011b).

⁵³ Closing the Gap has six specific national targets relating to health and life expectancy, educational attainment and employment outcomes, underpinned by seven “interlinked action areas or ‘building blocks’”: early childhood, schooling, health, economic participation, healthy homes, safe communities, and governance and leadership (ANAO, 2012a, p.38).

⁵⁴ An abbreviated summary of the *Service Delivery Principles* is provided on the former FaHCSIA (now DSS) website at: http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/indigenous-australians/programs-services/closing-the-gap/closing-the-gap-national-indigenous-reform-agreement#A_1. The principles are set out in full in Schedule D of the NIRA (COAG, 2009, 2012).

Such broad guidelines left open to interpretation a wide range of circumstances in which bureaucrats and decision-makers may fail to recognise the need for Indigenous service delivery, or may not themselves have sufficient knowledge or capacity to make the judgement. A recent report on the Commonwealth's strategy in Indigenous expenditure was scathing about the "inadequacy of skills possessed by many APS personnel required to effectively work with and engage Indigenous people and communities" (DOFD, 2010, p. 350).

Critiques of the NIRA by Sullivan (2011b) and Cooper (2011) draw attention to the tensions between the stated aims of the NIRA/Closing the Gap policy – i.e. to improve Indigenous benchmarks in a number of key social indicators – and the counter-productive effects of the implementation of policy through mainstream mechanisms that by-pass Aboriginal organisations and disempower and disconnect Aboriginal people from policy development and participation in the design and delivery of programs. Sullivan refers to the present era of Indigenous policy as "normalisation", and points out:

Normalisation is a positive goal if this means that Aboriginal people can expect a standard of living at the national norm. It is a challenge if it means that Aboriginal people are required to reflect socially, culturally and individually an idealised profile of the normal citizen established by the remote processes of bureaucratic public policy making. (Sullivan, 2011b)

3.1.2 Indigenous funding arrangements

Funding arrangements in Indigenous affairs are extraordinarily complex. In 2011, 210 Indigenous-specific programs and sub-programs were administered by more than 40 different agencies across 17 portfolios (ANAO, 2012a, p.36, para 1.7).⁵⁵ Despite recent government efforts to establish what is spent where under the COAG arrangements, it is still difficult to gain a clear understanding of program expenditure and objectives.⁵⁶ The first estimate of all Indigenous expenditure by all governments was published in 2010, and a second *Indigenous Expenditure Report* was released in 2012 (Productivity Commission, 2012a). Total Indigenous expenditure by the Commonwealth, states and territories in 2010-11 was estimated to be \$25.4 billion. Of this, the Commonwealth

⁵⁵ In 2011–12, Australian Government Indigenous Expenditure included 101 programs, 109 program components (sub-programs) and 104 service components (ANAO, 2012a, p.36).

⁵⁶ The ANAO report, *Australian Government Coordination Arrangements for Indigenous Programs* (ANAO, 2012a), chapter 4, provides information about several processes used to estimate Indigenous expenditure.

contributed \$11.5 billion in direct expenditure (\$8.3 billion in mainstream expenditure and \$3.2 billion in Indigenous specific programs) (ANAO, 2012a, p.37, para 1.9).

Current Commonwealth policy was stated frankly in a previously confidential report to Cabinet in 2010:⁵⁷

For Indigenous people living in urban and regional Australia, mainstream programs should be the regular and preferred delivery mechanism unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary. (DOFD, 2010, p.74)

Achieving the COAG Closing the Gap targets is therefore “dependent on improvements in the quality of the mainstream services for the 75 per cent of Indigenous Australians who live in urban and regional areas” (ANAO, 2012a, p.24) even though it is recognised that they are “less likely than non-Indigenous Australians to access or gain the full benefit from mainstream programs mainly because of economic and cultural differences” (ANAO, 2012a, p.34). This highlights the need not only for mainstream organisations to ensure that they have intercultural capacity that will facilitate equitable Indigenous access and effective program delivery, but for more sophisticated processes within funding bodies to assess this capacity.

Conversely, it is acknowledged that the 25% of Indigenous Australians who live in remote and very remote Australia reside in areas that are “difficult for mainstream government programs to reach” (ANAO, 2012a, p.34) and therefore most Indigenous-specific expenditure is directed towards remote areas. The broad distinction between ‘mainstream’ programs in urban and regional Australia, and ‘Indigenous-specific’ programs for remote and very remote Australia might suggest that the major role for non-Aboriginal NFP organisations would lie in urban and regional areas. Yet mainstream NFP providers are now well established contractors in remote as well as urban and regional communities, despite often lacking experience of working with Aboriginal people in these areas and expertise in the specialist services contracted (ONTCCRS, 2012, pp 55-58). A number of program evaluations have also established that mainstream organisations experience considerable difficulty in overcoming Indigenous barriers to participation in

⁵⁷ The 2010 *Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure* Report to the Australian Government prepared by the Department of Finance and Deregulation was a confidential Cabinet document which was released under the Freedom of Information Act in August 2011 (http://www.finance.gov.au/foi/disclosure-log/2011/foi_10-27_strategic_reviews.html).

remote areas. Recurring problems included difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified and experienced staff, lack of infrastructure and accommodation in remote communities, lack of prior relationships, and transport issues associated with the distance of discrete communities from major population centres (Scougall, 2008; Flaxman et al., 2009; Muir et al., 2009; Muir et al., 2010; OIPC, 2010). One reason for the high level of engagement of mainstream NFPs in remote areas is that program and service delivery is increasingly through the high value, multi-year tenders that favour the large mainstream organisations and through direct sourcing of these programs (ONTCCGRS, 2012, p.56).

3.1.3 Mainstreaming in practice

The way the policy shift to mainstreaming was implemented in practice and the challenges posed for the mainstream NFP sector are illustrated in evaluations of the Commonwealth's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy over the periods 2000-2004 and 2004-2009. The first, covering the period 2000-2004 (Scougall, 2008), prior to the disestablishment of ATSIC, evaluated Indigenous-initiated projects linked with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous auspice partners. Most of these projects had succeeded in building new partnerships, but for the most part these were with Indigenous organisations and government agencies, while few were with mainstream non-government organisations (Scougall, 2008, p.61). The study found that the choice of an appropriate project auspice had critical bearing on project success:

Where the auspice is a non-Indigenous body without existing relationships with the Indigenous community, difficulties are likely to be experienced in developing relationships within the limited lifespan of the project. Such organisations need to invest heavily in building trust with participants. (Scougall, 2008, p.vi)

In contrast, evaluations of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy in the later period, 2004-2009, under the COAG framework and following the disestablishment of ATSIC, have an entirely different flavour (Flaxman et al., 2009; Muir et al., 2009; Muir et al., 2010). These focus on the Communities for Children (CfC) program, a mainstream (or universal) program targeted to disadvantaged communities, including 'hard to reach' Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. In the CfC model, delegated 'facilitating partners', or lead agencies, manage the overall funding allocation and work with 'community partners' to deliver agreed community initiatives.

According to the funding information provided on the FaHCSIA website,⁵⁸ all of the facilitating partners appear to have been large mainstream NFPs, and the community partners were also often mainstream organisations rather than Indigenous ones. Rather than Indigenous communities initiating their own projects, the CfC process merely “consulted community leaders, organisations and Indigenous service users” (Flaxman et al., 2009, p.7) to identify community needs and in planning and implementing programs. One evaluation did not have time or resources to conduct research with Indigenous people who were recipients of the services, so the general tenor of the report is to convey the views of non-Indigenous service providers and the challenges *they* confronted in gaining Aboriginal participation. The research reported that the organisations implementing CfC were unable to achieve widespread, effective Indigenous consultation in the program time frame, especially in remote areas (Muir et al., 2010; Muir et al., 2009, p.xiii; Flaxman et al., 2009, p.v). It was also “challenging for service providers in large, diverse communities to identify and target Indigenous families” (Flaxman et al., 2009, p.vi).

The Flaxman et al. study of the first period (2000-2004) established that significant progress had been made towards the objectives of the strategy in the Indigenous projects evaluated, while evaluations of the program in the later period (2004-2009) report the reluctance of Aboriginal people to participate in mainstream services. One stated that it could not be established that the expansion of services had actually resulted in Indigenous families accessing or engaging with the services (Flaxman et al., 2009, p.vi). The evaluations all report that there were major difficulties for non-Indigenous organisations, especially those without prior relationships with Indigenous communities.

CfC remains a flagship program which is currently funded by the Commonwealth under Indigenous-specific funding grants. It is unclear whether publicly available information on funding for the program provides a full picture, and again, it is beyond the scope of this study to conduct a full analysis of individual programs. Drawing on information published on the FaHCSIA website, it appears that all grants to facilitating partners were made to large mainstream organisations. Several large NFPs – Anglicare, Mission Australia, The Benevolent Society, The Smith Family, The Salvation Army,

⁵⁸ Information on Indigenous grant funding is available on the former FaHCSIA (now DSS) website at <http://www.dss.gov.au/grants-funding/grants-funding>.

CatholicCare/The Catholic Church, and UnitingCare/The Uniting Church – received funding for the facilitating partner role at multiple sites in the period 2009-2012. The total value of facilitating partner grants was more than \$227 million of total program expenditure of \$428 million (FaHCSIA, 2013). In addition many grants for sub-components and ‘direct’ grants for CfC sub-programs were also made to mainstream NFPs. As case study 3.1 below illustrates, the preferential funding of large mainstream organisations may also encourage a tendency for lead agencies to favour like organisations, even when sub-contracting program elements that are specifically targeted to the Indigenous community.

Case study 3.1: CfC in a remote town

Large scale evaluations report the number of ‘engagements’ with ‘clients’ but do not convey the detail of the nature of engagements at specific locations. In one remote town, which has a large number of well-established Aboriginal organisations that have operated since the 1970s, the CfC lead agency is a large faith-based organisation. One of its funded community partners is another faith-based organisation (a different Christian denomination) which has opened a new office in the town in order to deliver the contracted services, which are family financial management education to distant remote communities and a play group for Aboriginal town camp families (which is located at the premises of a third faith-based organisation). Amongst the existing Aboriginal community organisations are at least two with RTO status that have serviced these remote communities for many years (the communities are in culturally and linguistically distinct regions), while a third well-established town-based organisation has provided a broad range of community services to town camps since the 1970s. Yet there appeared to be no interaction or relationship between the NFP providers and these Aboriginal organisations. In action and delivery, the net effect of the program in this location appears to be a lost opportunity for effectiveness in providing the services and a loss of funding opportunity for local Aboriginal organisations that have the cultural capacity to deliver them. In contrast, non-Indigenous organisations without proven intercultural capacity have received funding that has enabled at least one to open new premises.*

** Registered Training Organisation*

Sources: information for this case study was drawn from newsletters and websites of the faith-based organisations, and from the websites of the relevant Aboriginal organisations.

A significant concern about current policy, its implementation in practice and the preferential funding of non-Indigenous organisations is the likely impact on the network of locally-based Indigenous community organisations. As Hunt observed as early as 2005, it appeared that the Commonwealth wanted to by-pass existing capacity in the Indigenous sector (Hunt, 2005b, p.22). Anecdotal evidence collected from Aboriginal participants in

this study suggests that in at least several states, Aboriginal organisations have been defunded, have folded or amalgamated, greatly reducing the range and number of local organisations and restricting the range of their activities. This view was further reinforced by a participant who held a senior position with a leading Commonwealth funding agency:

[In 2003-04] ... there was upwards of 100 organisations listed that were funded for almost every activity known to humans. However if you look at the year 2010-11, the same region, the same funding component of Government expenditure would have less than a dozen and not for the sort of activities that support community viability ... That gap's been filled by UnitingCare, Wesley, Anglicare, Lutheran Community Care, the Salvation Army, Centacare ... they receive the contracts to do all sorts of things in Aboriginal communities that previously the communities did for themselves.⁵⁹

The ANAO Report, *Capacity Development for Indigenous Service Delivery*, expressed concern about the high number of small value, short term grants to Indigenous organisations and the associated administrative burdens which undermined the capacity of local organisations and posed risks to the achievement of program outcomes (ANAO, 2012b, p.20). A reduction in Indigenous organisational capacity also has wider implications because of the likelihood that it will or already has undermined community capacity for constructive engagements through local organisations – for example in consultation processes or in developing working partnerships with mainstream organisations.

3.1.4 Barriers to access in mainstream services

In 2001, the CGC *Report on Indigenous Funding* (2001) stated:

The mainstream programs provided by the Commonwealth do not adequately meet the needs of Indigenous people because of barriers to access. These barriers include the way programs are designed, how they are funded, how they are presented and their cost to users. In remote areas, there are additional barriers to access arising from the lack of services and long distances necessary to access those that do exist. (CGC, 2001, p.xvi)

The access barriers identified by the CGC have been widely reproduced since 2001 (ANAO, 2012a, p.70; ATSIJJC, 2007, p.35). In summary, they included:

⁵⁹ As discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.1.4), participant identifiers (such as location and position type) are not provided following research participants' quotes because doing so could provide information that could identify individuals and so breach their confidentiality and the ethics protocols under which the research was conducted.

- the design of services to meet the requirements of the most common (non-Indigenous) users, so that the extreme disadvantage and special needs of Indigenous people could not be met
- requirements for accessing services did not take account of the lifestyles of Indigenous people
- financial barriers and difficulties of access (e.g. lack of public transport)
- workforce issues and lack of experienced staff trained to work in cross-cultural contexts or with complex multiple problems, and the low number of Indigenous staff
- the legacy of history, previous unpleasant experience with mainstream services, and culturally inappropriate services.

Many government departments, especially at state government level, have produced practice guidelines and protocols with the aim of helping government employees and non-government service providers to work more effectively and in more culturally appropriate ways with Aboriginal clients and communities.⁶⁰ These often provide factual information about Indigenous disadvantage, the history of dispossession and past experience of welfare services (for example, the removal of children from their families), guidance as to terminology and language, introductory information about Aboriginal cultures, communication styles and practice tips. As one of these points out,

It is useful to increase our awareness of these issues and learn how to work more effectively with Aboriginal communities. Improving our ability to better identify culturally appropriate pathways will help us to address some of these issues in a sensitive and respectful manner. (NSW DoCS, 2009, p.6)

There is a risk, however, that such practice guidelines reduce advice on cultural appropriateness to an over-generalised shorthand of behavioural protocols, without succeeding in communicating either the nature of intercultural competence and capacity and the skills needed to achieve it, nor the locational and situational specificities that are critical to understanding and forming relationships that underpin effective engagement.

FaHCSIA's 14 page *Toolkit for Indigenous Service Provision*⁶¹ (FaHCSIA, n.d.) is rudimentary in contrast to some of the materials available.⁶² Its purpose is to help the

⁶⁰ The NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet's *Aboriginal Engagement Strategies* is a compendium of the resources available from state, territory and Commonwealth governments, universities and research centres. The NSW Government also has a central website at which all of the resources can be downloaded at: http://www.hsnnet.nsw.gov.au/group_home.aspx?grpID=803

⁶¹ http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/toolkit_service_providers.pdf

organisations that FaHCSIA funds “ensure that Indigenous Australians have the same level of access to services and facilities as the rest of the community”, yet the *Toolkit* seems pitched at non-Indigenous organisations that have had little or no prior engagement with Indigenous communities, suggesting for example that they “Consider a movie night for staff that features films describing historical and contemporary Indigenous Australia” and explaining why it is important to “find ways to engage organisations and the broader Indigenous community” – in other words, it is very much targeted at ‘beginners’.

Under the Labor Government (2007-2013), FaHCSIA was designated the lead agency with responsibility for implementing the Commonwealth’s overarching strategy in Indigenous affairs and was responsible for 31% of Commonwealth direct expenditure on Indigenous programs. In 2012, more than 92% of the organisations it funded to deliver these programs were non-Indigenous (ANAO, 2012b, p.65). Given its key role, it is surprising that the Commonwealth’s lead agency did not offer a more sophisticated resource and especially that there were not higher expectations (and requirements) of the funded organisations’ capacity for culturally competent service delivery. A recent Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report (2012a) was critical of another toolkit, also developed by FaHCSIA to help other government agencies “harness the mainstream”, pointing out that it did not “specify changes to service delivery systems, for example, to ensure that service delivery agencies are culturally competent to deliver good outcomes for Indigenous people” (ANAO, 2012a, pp 72-73).

⁶² For example, the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, on the Australian Government Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website, has published resource sheets and issues papers that consider the complexities and challenges of engaging with Indigenous communities and conditions for developing effective relationships – see for example Hunt (2013a, 2013b).

3.2 Australian Red Cross

As the Australian national society of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC),⁶³ Australian Red Cross is “one of the oldest and most prestigious voluntary organisations in Australia” (Oppenheimer, 1999, p.xix) and part of the world’s largest humanitarian network. Red Cross was founded in Geneva in 1863 by Henri Dunant⁶⁴ and others with the aim of providing humanitarian aid to victims of war and conflict.⁶⁵ The IFRC and its 188 national societies operate under seven Fundamental Principles (Table 3.1) and its distinctive symbols (the red cross, red crescent and red crystal)⁶⁶ are recognised in international law under the Geneva Convention (Australian Red Cross, 2012c, pp 10-11). As part of the global International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Australian Red Cross is unique in having a specific mandate to act as an independent auxiliary to public authorities in humanitarian work, a relationship which is recognised in international law and domestically in the Australian Red Cross Royal Charter. This role distinguishes the IFRC movement and Australian Red Cross from United Nations agencies, international and national non-government organisations (NGOs) and other humanitarian organisations (Australian Red Cross, 2012c). This section of the chapter explores the foundation of Australian Red Cross, the development of its organisational culture, the importance of its review of service delivery in 2007, and the appointment of former Hawke Labor Government Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Robert Tickner, as Australian Red Cross CEO in 2005.

⁶³ The IFRC’s 188 national societies employ approximately 300,000 people and represent more than 13 million volunteers. Information on the IFRC in this section is drawn from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies website at <http://www.ifrc.org/>, accessed September 2013.

⁶⁴ Dunant was awarded the first Nobel Peace Prize in 1901.

⁶⁵ The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is the custodian of the Geneva conventions and responsible for directing the movement’s international relief activities in situations of war, promoting international humanitarian law (IHL), tracing missing people and reuniting separated families, and other humanitarian activities during armed conflict.

⁶⁶ The emblems have a protective purpose (to protect non-combatant medical or religious personnel in conflict) and an indicative purpose (used in peace to indicate that a national society’s operations conform to Fundamental Principles and aims of the IFRC Movement) (Australian Red Cross, 2012c, pp 10-11).

3.2.1 Foundation and culture

Australian Red Cross was established as a branch of the British Red Cross Society in August 1914, soon after the outbreak of World War I (Oppenheimer, 1999, pp 9-11). Close connections with royalty and the aristocracy were a “customary feature” of Red Cross societies (Oppenheimer, 1999, p.3). In Britain, the establishment and development of the British Red Cross Society in the late 19th century enjoyed royal patronage and owed much to the efforts of titled ‘Ladies of Rank’ (Oppenheimer, 1999, p.5). These connections with the leaders of society were imported into the early Australian Red Cross movement when Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, a member of the British Society, came to Australia as the wife of the Australian Governor-General and was instrumental in establishing the Australian branch as its founding President within a week of the outbreak of war (Oppenheimer, 1999, p.5).

Using a combination of her extended contacts in Britain and her position as wife of the Governor-General in Australian society, she presided over a large and increasingly prestigious organisation.

The practice of Vice-regal patronage of the national and state societies is a central part of Red Cross culture and history, and the position of national patron is still held by the Australian Governor-General.⁶⁷

The creation of Australian Red Cross in wartime quickly established its role: providing support to the sick and wounded, and supplying medical equipment, ambulances and personnel for hospitals in Australia and abroad.⁶⁸ Oppenheimer records its effectiveness at fundraising and popularity as an organisation which quickly became an Australian institution. By 1918, 2,200 branches had been established in suburbs and country towns and the society had more than 100,000 members, 80% of whom were women (Oppenheimer, 1999, p.13). Australian Red Cross became a national society in its own right in 1927 and was incorporated under Royal Charter in 1941 (Australian Red Cross, 2011b).

⁶⁷ The Governor-General of Australia, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce is the present patron. When Red Cross was established in 1914, the national headquarters operated from Government House (then located in Melbourne) and the wives of the State Governors led each state division. As a result of recent restructuring of the role and powers of state and territory boards, state Governors (and the Northern Territory Administrator) are no longer patrons of the state and territory divisions.

⁶⁸ A Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau was also established in Egypt in 1915 (a result of the Gallipoli campaign) by Vera Deakin, the daughter of former Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, for which she was awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1919.

Table 3.1 The Fundamental Principles of the IFRC

Humanity	The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect human life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.
Impartiality	It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.
Neutrality	In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.
Independence	The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.
Voluntary service	It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.
Unity	There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry its humanitarian work throughout its territory.
Universality	The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

Source: IFRC website ,
<http://www.ifrc.org/en/who-we-are/vision-and-mission/the-seven-fundamental-principles/>

The culture and identity of Australian Red Cross are closely linked with mainstream Australia culture and 20th century history. Australian Red Cross's humanitarian role in support of Australian service personnel in two world wars, its mounting of national fundraising appeals and provision of emergency relief in natural disasters in Australia and internationally (cyclones, bushfires, floods, earthquakes and tsunamis), and its operation of the national blood service for many decades⁶⁹ make the organisation a highly-regarded and still highly-respected national institution. The staff, and especially the leadership and management of Red Cross are predominantly of white Australian background (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B; Coombes et al., 2013), while the national spread of the membership reaches deep into the heart of rural white Australia and shares and reflects

⁶⁹ The first blood transfusion service was operated by Red Cross in Victoria from 1929.

its traditional values. Despite increasing professionalisation, the branch structure, membership and volunteer base still play an important role in Australian Red Cross and its organisational culture. There are some 650 branches,⁷⁰ 85 regional offices and at August 2012, approximately 3,000 staff, 18,800 active members and 33,800 active volunteers (Australian Red Cross, 2012a; 2012e, p. 1–23).

3.2.2 Service renewal, new priorities and ‘One Red Cross’

Compared with other large humanitarian organisations in Australia, Australian Red Cross came relatively late to its engagement with Aboriginal people: its 2007 Annual Report acknowledged that it had been “under-represented” in this work and reported that Australian Red Cross had begun to invest “significant resources” in rural and remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia, and had made a new commitment to “working in partnership with communities” (Australian Red Cross, 2007a, p.14). An Indigenous Strategy Group, composed of senior managers, Aboriginal staff and external advisers, had been formed in 2006. In February 2007, the National Board approved *Policy Statement 05 Indigenous Core Policy Principles* (see Appendix C) and made a major financial commitment to support the rapid expansion of breakfast clubs in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

In July 2007, Australian Red Cross commenced a comprehensive review of all of its services and programs (Australian Red Cross, 2008a, p.4), culminating in the *New Strategic Direction for Red Cross Services*, endorsed by the National Board on 21 June 2008. In place of some 130 diverse programs that reflected the previous priorities and interests of state boards, staff, members and volunteers, Red Cross shifted its national policy focus to seven key priority areas and authorised the Chief Executive Officer to implement the transition to the new strategic direction over a three year period.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Estimate provided by Australian Red Cross Research Department, 6 Jan 2014. (In contrast there are currently 562 local governing bodies in Australia, see Australian Local Government Association: <http://alga.asn.au/?ID=59&Menu=41,83>.) At branch meetings, Red Cross members confirm the Australian Red Cross pledge: “We pledge ourselves as members of Red Cross to work for the improvement of health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering and to uphold the Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.”

⁷¹ “Historic Framework for Red Cross Services Reform”, Red Cross internal communication, June 2008.

Broadly, the strategic direction for services aimed to target the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. The seven key priority areas identified were:

- Strengthening disaster and emergency services
- Increasing international aid and development
- Addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage⁷²
- Overcoming social exclusion by providing bridges back into the community
- Tackling entrenched locational disadvantage
- Championing international humanitarian law
- Addressing the impact of migration (Australian Red Cross, 2008b)

As well as the specific priority of addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage, other priority areas such as “Overcoming social exclusion”, “Tackling entrenched locational disadvantage” and “Strengthening disaster and emergency services”, were also expected to involve a high level of Indigenous engagement. Confirmation of the new strategic priorities meant not only a flurry of new activity in pursuit of funding sources and recruitment of professional staff to support or expand programs in these areas, but also large-scale ‘transitioning’ out of some activities and programs, and closure of some offices.

At the same time, Australian Red Cross was engaged in a broader national process of self-transformation from eight virtually independent state and territory societies, each with its own board, Executive Director and management structure, to ‘One Red Cross’ under one National Board and overarching national management. As a result, support functions such as human resources (then called People and Learning), financial services, and marketing and fundraising, were re-organised to service a national organisation rather than operating as separate state entities with their own policies and financial arrangements. State and territory boards, although not disbanded, lost their executive decision-making powers and became instead ‘advisory’ boards. This process was completed in October 2010 by amendment of the Red Cross Royal Charter (Australian Red Cross, 2012d).

⁷² This key priority became “Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” in later Australian Red Cross Annual Reports from 2010 (Australian Red Cross, 2010b).

3.2.3 A “painful self-assessment”

Many in Red Cross credited the new commitment to address Aboriginal disadvantage to the appointment and leadership of Robert Tickner, a former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (1990-1996) in the Australian federal (Labor) government, as Red Cross’s Chief Executive Officer in February 2005 (Australian Red Cross, 2005). Some in Red Cross believed there had been no Aboriginal staff in Red Cross prior to his appointment, but Tickner himself credited his predecessors with having recognised Red Cross’s notable absence in this area.

In Australian Red Cross we have recently begun the challenging process of re-examining all our programs to see if they remain currently relevant and address our core work of working to support the most vulnerable in our community. We have discovered that in some instances, we have not involved ourselves in key areas of social policy where we really have a capacity to make a difference and so some of the most vulnerable members of the community have been neglected by us. Sometimes this involves a painful self assessment and even before I came into the organisation, Australian Red Cross had realised that for 90 years of our existence we had failed to quite a large extent to involve ourselves in the support of Indigenous communities. (Tickner, 2006)

Red Cross’s “painful self-assessment” and change of direction was influenced not simply by some sort of crisis of conscience, however, as in its international *Strategy 2010* (1999), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) had adopted and created for the Federation as a whole “a mission of quite stunning ambition” (2005): **“to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity”** (original emphasis).

In its mid-term review of *Strategy 2010*, the IFRC reported that the new direction in strategy had had an enormous influence throughout the Red Cross movement and had been the “foundation stone upon which National Societies and their Secretariat have developed their own strategies and planned their activities” (IFRC, 2005, p.7). Australian Red Cross had responded to the IFRC *Strategy 2010* in 2002 with the *Australian Red Cross Strategy 2005*, a Visioning Project in 2005, and the *Australian Red Cross Strategy 2010*. In line with the mission of the international movement, a key element of Australian Red Cross’s strategy was to “make a difference” for vulnerable people: giving priority to those most in need, addressing immediate needs, building capacity and developing resilience.

If Australian Red Cross was shifting towards initiating work with Aboriginal communities before Tickner's appointment, the new CEO demonstrated a strong personal commitment to increasing Red Cross's engagement and widely employing Aboriginal staff, and he championed the issue at the highest levels of organisational leadership. Several research participants mentioned that Tickner had a goal to employ 500 Aboriginal staff,⁷³ and the CEO had shown a keen interest in and commitment to the development and expansion of Red Cross's activities in this area, internally and externally. This was demonstrated by his public statements and speeches (Tickner, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009b, 2009a, 2010) and his personal attendance at the opening of new offices in remote areas, and at meetings and workshops, including the first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Forum in 2009.

The Indigenous Core Policy Principles endorsed in early 2007 lay the foundations of Red Cross policy in design and delivery of Aboriginal programs. They acknowledge the detrimental and continuing impact of "past government and community practices, policies and attitudes" on the social, economic, cultural and spiritual lives of Aboriginal people, and make a long term commitment to tackle Indigenous vulnerability, giving priority to those most in need, and doing "what others don't do or don't do well enough". Tackling vulnerability in Aboriginal communities would involve working in partnership with Aboriginal communities, seeking initiatives that would be owned and driven by the community and would build sustainable capacity. The core principles are founded on respectful, flexible, two-way mutual learning: where possible Indigenous staff and volunteers are to deliver programs, and priority is to be given to employing Aboriginal staff at all levels; in applying for funding, Red Cross is to work closely with communities to ensure that proposals have their support and take into account their needs and requirements.

In January 2008 the first National Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, Olga Havnen, was appointed. Following her appointment, a number of additional high level policy documents were rapidly produced and endorsed by the Red Cross National Board (Table 3.2).

⁷³ The current policy is to achieve an Indigenous employment rate of 6% of the total Australian Red Cross workforce. At current staff levels, 500 Aboriginal staff would equate to approximately 16% of the workforce.

Table 3.2 Australian Red Cross key policy documents 2007-2012

2007	Policy Statement 05 – Indigenous Core Policy Principles
2008	Indigenous Advocacy Framework
2008	A Renewed Commitment to Tackling Disadvantage
2009	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy 2009-2015
2009	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Sub-strategy 2009-2015
2009	Practice Manual – Guidelines for Red Cross staff and volunteers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities
2010	Ways of Working – practitioner guidelines
2012	Australian Red Cross Reconciliation Action Plan July 2012- December 2013
	Tips for Managers (development commenced 2010, now being incorporated into organisational cross-cultural curriculum)

The Macquarie University–Australian Red Cross research partnership began in 2008 during this period of major change within Red Cross, and this PhD research project began in 2009, at a time when many of the key policy documents were still being finalised and many new Aboriginal staff were recruited. The arrival of these documents in various draft forms and then in the final, board-endorsed versions added to the atmosphere of rapid progress, confidence and a somewhat chaotic enthusiasm. This busy activity culminated in December 2009 with an invitation to all Indigenous staff to meet in Brisbane at Red Cross’s first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Forum. The Forum was an important milestone in marking a point at which Red Cross had made major strides towards reaching its goals in Aboriginal employment, and its cost at a time when many budgets had been reduced in the financially-straitened aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis was seen as a demonstration of Red Cross’s commitment to its Indigenous staff.

This Forum was an important event for many Aboriginal staff and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. It marked an important point for this research project as well, as an invitation to present information to the Forum about our forthcoming research under the Macquarie-Red Cross research partnership was extended to Professor Richard Howitt and to me. The opportunity to meet with the Aboriginal staff, to answer questions about the research, and especially to be seen and assessed by them proved to be a valuable opportunity and an important element of the research methodology, as it established a personal link with many who would later decide to take part in the research.

3.3 Challenges of intercultural engagement for NFPs

Like other mainstream NFPs, Australian Red Cross brought its existing history and culture to its engagement with Indigenous people. The final section of this chapter reviews the academic literature on intercultural engagements between mainstream organisations and Indigenous people and, drawing on Nakata's concept of the cultural interface, discusses how these internal and external interfaces were conceptualised in this research project. The chapter concludes with a discussion of everyday racism at the cultural interface to contextualise the discussion of dominant culture values of mainstream organisations in the empirical chapters that follow.

3.3.1 Literature overview

There is little academic literature that considers how mainstream organisations might approach a new engagement with Aboriginal communities or what might be involved in the processes of change within organisations as they face new intercultural challenges. In Australia, Perkons and Brown's study of a mainstream non-government organisation (NGO) (Perkons & Brown, 2010) and Hunt's research on the work of international NGOs (INGOs) engaged in capacity development with Aboriginal communities in Australia (Hunt, 2005a, 2005b, 2010) are amongst the few. Perkons and Brown's paper is almost the only one in the Australian literature which documents the organisational processes involved in a significant expansion of a mainstream organisation's work with Indigenous Australians; similarly there are very few reports and evaluations in the 'grey' literature. In the late 1990s, the Brotherhood of St Laurence undertook research on Koori⁷⁴ workers (Sully, 1997), and more recently some NGOs, for example, The Smith Family and UnitingCare, have conducted research or published accounts of their "learning journey" as mainstream organisations expanding their engagement with Indigenous communities and services (UnitingCare, 2007; 2008; Smith Family, 2008).

Hunt's work in particular fills an important gap in the literature on community based capacity development, based on the principles of international development, in Aboriginal Australia (Hunt, 2005a; 2005b, p.22) and reports detailed studies of

⁷⁴ The term used by Aboriginal people in Victoria and New South Wales to mean 'Aboriginal people' or 'Aboriginal person', derived from Aboriginal languages of south-eastern Australia.

development partnerships between International NGOs (INGOs) (for example, Oxfam and Caritas Australia) working with Aboriginal communities (Hunt, 2010). These add to existing literature on community development in Aboriginal communities (for example, Eversole, 2003; Burchill et al., 2006; Campbell et al., 2007; Campbell & Hunt, 2010) and provide valuable insights into the challenges of relationship building and power-sharing in support of Indigenous initiatives. Hunt's work differs from this study, however, in that her research specifically addressed development ('bottom-up'), rather than service-delivery ('top-down') approaches (Hunt, 2010) in which self-determination, Indigenous agency and human rights/social justice principles were central to the engagement. The INGOs Hunt studied did not appear to have received government funding to undertake their projects and had flexibility and discretion in applying their own resources to the projects and conducting them according to their organisational principles. Opportunities for this type of development approach are very limited in most of the programs undertaken on behalf of government by mainstream NFPs as they are contracted services which specify pre-determined program outcomes.

A body of literature, in particular in health and Indigenous social work, has considered how mainstream service providers need to change their practices and services to deliver culturally appropriate, accessible services to Indigenous clients (for example, Baldry et al., 2006; Green & Baldry, 2008; Grote, 2008; Fredericks, 2008; 2009; Durey, 2010; Walker & Sonn, 2010; Cleland et al., 2012). This literature argues powerfully for decolonising practice that recognises non-Indigenous race privilege, validates Indigenous wisdom and acknowledges and works proactively in support of Indigenous rights and social justice (for example, Weaver, 1999, p.223; Briskman, 2008, p.83, 85). Weaver's work with Native American social workers also establishes that acquired skills, knowledge (of history, culture and contemporary realities), sensitivity and awareness of one's own biases are needed for cultural competence in working with Indigenous communities (Weaver, 1999).

There are a number of challenges associated with building such practice into the expanding work of mainstream organisations in Indigenous service delivery. One is that the nature of the services does not necessarily require the appointment of qualified specialist social workers or health practitioners who could bring these insights to the work. Another is that the services are generally delivered by large organisations predominantly staffed by non-Indigenous people, many of whom have had little experience of Aboriginal people and cultures, or understanding of the past history of

oppression, intergenerational trauma and current racism. Even trained non-Indigenous social workers are unlikely to recognise the political dimensions of their practice (Briskman, 2008, p.83) or have “an appreciation of the impact of past and present racism on clients and communities” (Briskman, 2008, p.87). The idea of holding a film night, for example – as recommended by FaHCSIA – as a first step to introducing mainstream staff to some of this history is not a bad idea in itself, but it is unlikely to bring about rapid development of organisation-wide intercultural capacity or overcome individuals’ resistance to learning about it (Johnstone & Kanitsaki, 2008).

For Christian faith-based NFPs in Australia, whether as lead agencies or partners, history adds a particular burden. Churches in Australia have a long history of engagement with Aboriginal people: some of this history was a form of protection in establishing missions in “secluded places” as a safe haven in the “killing times” (Head et al., 1997; Tatz, 1999, p.326; Harris, 2003), but churches were also

... active agents of various governmental policies, such as protection-segregation, assimilation, so-called integration and some of the latter-day notions like self-determination and self-management. More than agents, they were delegated an astonishing array of unchallengeable powers. (Tatz, 1999, p.326)

Government policies and church practices “went hand in hand” in the implementation of forced child removals (Briskman, 2001). A number of faith-based organisations have acknowledged and apologised for their roles in the removal of children (Briskman, 2001) and have been proactive in Reconciliation initiatives and advocacy for Aboriginal Australians as part of a broader social justice agenda.

Some of this burden of history rests more generally on ‘white’ organisations for whom the assumption of privilege and its deep colonizing effects (see for example, Rose, 1999; Howitt, 2012) resonate with the historical activities of church and state. As recipients of past “well-intentioned” white services, Aboriginal people are all too familiar with this history, and continue to live with its consequences in trans-generational trauma (Atkinson, 2002). As is often stated in the practice resources, they are likely to be suspicious of mainstream organisations and reluctant to use their services (see for example, Creighton, n.d.). The history of racially discriminatory practices, the widespread removal of Aboriginal children and the complicity of white, especially faith-based organisations and welfare workers in contributing to these practices is widely known and Aboriginal people may not only mistrust the organisations, but also Aboriginal people

working in them who may be seen as “working for government” (Creighton, n.d.; Perkons & Brown, 2010).

Aboriginal people historically have been excluded to a significant extent from the mainstream: in work, economic participation, equitable educational opportunities and other services. As an organisation with little previous engagement with Aboriginal people, Australian Red Cross does not carry the historical ‘baggage’ of many faith-based organisations, but it does carry the cultural baggage of the culture and attitudes of dominant society in its past exclusion and indifference: notwithstanding its fundamental principles of humanitarianism and neutrality, as an organisation it neither sought nor encouraged Aboriginal participation. It was so little-known to Aboriginal people that it was often reported that in remote areas the Red Cross symbol was understood at first to represent a faith-based Christian organisation.

Understanding and working effectively with Indigenous cultural diversity are amongst the many challenges posed for mainstream organisations. Cultural differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews, especially in remote communities, present challenges of “mutual incomprehension” (McRae-Williams & Gerritsen, 2010; Mahood, 2012) and in several documented cases have clearly impacted negatively on the effectiveness of programs designed by government agencies and delivered by mainstream organisations (OIPC, 2010, p.i-viii; ONTCGRS, 2012, pp 57-8). In urban and regional areas, lack of knowledge of local cultures, Aboriginal families and communities, and lack of engagement with Aboriginal organisations also present significant challenges for non-Indigenous organisations. The skills necessary for cultural competency (Weaver, 1999) are often lacking in mainstream organisations, especially those without past organisational experience of working with Indigenous communities.

A common way to address shortfalls in organisational intercultural capacity is to employ Aboriginal staff to work with Aboriginal clients and communities, and this may also be a condition of contract of the funding body (UnitingCare, 2007), however such workers “may well struggle with their community obligations in a non-supportive work environment where white privilege abounds” (Briskman, 2008, p.89). In their study of Aboriginal workers and managers, Williams and Thorpe identified cultural ignorance of non-Indigenous co-workers, racism, and the “emotional labour” and “obligatory community labour” required of Aboriginal employees as major contributors to emotional

exhaustion, burnout and other high levels of occupational stress and injury (Williams & Chapman, 2005). In particular, Aboriginal managers who were in regular contact with the mainstream – for example, with “non-Aboriginal superiors, managers, bureaucrats and answerable to non-Aboriginal policies and protocols as well as those of the Aboriginal community” – had the highest levels of emotional exhaustion in the study (Williams et al., 2003, pp 107-108). Aboriginal workers employed by mainstream organisations to fill the cultural gap and provide the expertise needed for Aboriginal program delivery are necessarily at this interface with the mainstream (and with their community) all the time.

3.3.2 Conceptualising the cultural interface in the work of the NFP sector

Nakata proposes the cultural interface as “an alternate way of thinking about Indigenous and Western domains” of knowledge, rather than commencing from principles of duality between culture and mainstream – partly because this approach obscures the complexities of this intersection and partly because these conceptual frameworks “seek to capture a form of culture that fits with Western ways of understanding ‘difference’” (Nakata, 2002). Nakata explains:

I see the Cultural Interface as the place where we live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place that shapes our futures and more to the point the place where we are active agents in our own lives – where we make decisions – our lifeworld. For Indigenous peoples our context, remote or urban, is already circumscribed by the discursive space of the Cultural Interface. We don't go to work or school, enter another domain, interact and leave it there when we come home again. The boundaries are simply not that clear. The fact that we go to work means we live at the interface of both, and home life is in part circumscribed by the fact that we do. Social and family organization has to and does to varying degrees orient itself to that reality. This does not mean we passively accept the constraints of this space – to the contrary – rejection, resistance, subversiveness, pragmatism, ambivalence, accommodation, participation, cooperation – the gamut of human response is evident in Indigenous histories since European contact. It is a place of tension that requires constant negotiation. (Nakata, 2002, p.285)

Nakata's theorisation of the cultural interface in the sphere of education parallels the idea of the “liminal spaces” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous domains that Blagg describes in the context of the justice system (Blagg, 2008, pp 50-55), what Moreton-Robinson and Runciman call the “cultural borderlands” (quoted in Williams & Chapman, 2005, p.3 ; Williams et al., 2003, p.vii), and Howitt (2001a) refers to as the “frontiers, borders, edges” of co-existence. Nakata's description of the cultural interface as lifeworld is a powerful way to describe not only the intersection of Western and Indigenous

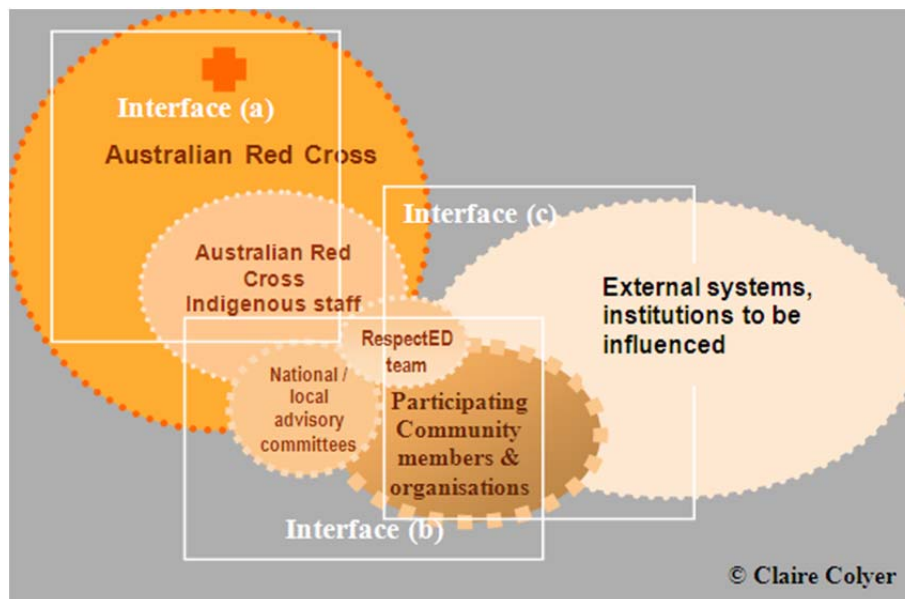
knowledge systems, but also the everyday lived experiences of Indigenous people in their interaction with dominant society and its structures.

In approaching the research for this thesis, I have drawn on this concept as a starting point for understanding and a framework for analysing the experiences of individuals working cross-culturally in mainstream and Aboriginal programs, and between different stakeholders in a complex system. For mainstream organisations working with Indigenous people, intercultural engagement operates internally and externally through a series of overlapping interfaces. These were shown in Chapter 1, Figure 1.1 in a simplified model of some of the main interfaces. For this research, the broader idea of the cultural interface was to be explored specifically in the context of one NFP, Australian Red Cross, and the particular circumstances of that organisation's programs, including the case of RespectED, a new family and community violence prevention program, which was nominated as a suitable focus for the thesis research. Figure 3.1 presents the interfaces which were conceived as shaping that research context and which will be explored and expanded in later chapters: between Australian Red Cross's Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, between Indigenous staff and their employer organisation, and, through its staff, between the organisation and communities and community members.

The diagram represents the interfaces as they were broadly conceptualised for both phases of the research project:

- a) the interface between Australian Red Cross and its Indigenous staff
- b) the interface between Red Cross RespectED program staff, external advisory committees and community members who participate in the program
- c) the interface between community members engaged in the RespectED program and their broader community, including organisations and service providers that community participants would engage with as they implemented community violence prevention strategies. (As discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 7, implementation of the RespectED program at community level was slower than anticipated and this interface could not be researched in the timeframe of the project.)

Figure 3.1 Cultural interfaces in the research context



In practice most non-Indigenous staff of a large organisation have little or no contact with Aboriginal employees or clients and those who do engage at the cultural interface do not 'live there' all the time. In contrast, Indigenous people in a mainstream workplace are at the centre of multiple cultural interfaces which must be constantly negotiated, and which often involve experiences of cultural misunderstanding, paternalism and racism.

3.3.3 Everyday racism at the cultural interface: mainstreaming as deep colonising

Experiences of racism are part of everyday lived experience for many Indigenous Australians (Williams et al., 2003, pp 59-60, 74-86, 103-107; Paradies et al., 2008; Paradies & Cunningham, 2009; Dudgeon et al., 2010, pp 35-38): it is "invasive, pervasive and unrelenting" (Dudgeon et al., 2010, p. 37). A small but growing body of literature on racism towards Indigenous people in Australia shows that experiences of racial abuse and disrespect are common (Dunn et al., 2009; Paradies & Cunningham, 2009) and negatively impact the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people (Paradies et al., 2008; Dudgeon et al., 2010). Negative attitudes to Indigenous people are often fed by 'false beliefs' (for example, that Aboriginal people receive special benefits) and stereotypes (welfare dependency, drunkenness, failure to assimilate) (Pedersen et al., 2000; Dunn et al., 2004; Pedersen et al., 2005; Pedersen et al., 2006; Forrest & Dunn, 2006).

Several authors distinguish between ‘old racism’ – a broadly socio-biological understanding of race – and ‘new’, ‘modern’ or ‘cultural’ racism (for example, Dunn et al., 2004; Augoustinos et al., 2005; Dufty, 2009; Dudgeon et al., 2010) and distinctions are also made between individual or interpersonal racism, and institutional, systemic and structural racism (terms that are often used interchangeably). While ‘modern’ racism is considered to be more prevalent, a significant minority of non-Indigenous Australians still hold ‘old racist’ views of racial superiority (Dunn et al., 2004). In contrast, modern or cultural racism is more subtle and covert and more readily deniable (Augoustinos et al., 2005; Dudgeon et al., 2010). This is the kind of “casual racism” that has recently received considerable media attention in Australia (see Figure 3.2). It is “part of the atmosphere of a society ... part of the tacit, assumed way of doing things” and is evident in widespread attitudes of “assumed essential racial differences, and of victim-blaming attributions for poor health, education and employment outcomes” (Dudgeon et al., 2010, p.37; see also Essed, 1991, pp 13-14).

Figure 3.2 “It’s all about me”



The Sun Herald, Sunday, 2 June 2013
(reproduced with kind permission of the artist, Cathy Wilcox)

Of particular interest to this study is the way this casual, everyday racism occurs in practice. Experiences of racism were not a primary focus of this research, but what emerged from the interviews, especially with Aboriginal staff, were numerous experiences

that resonated strongly with the way Essed described and conceptualised everyday racism as a social process that reinforces ideologies and structures of racism through familiar everyday practices and interactions (Essed, 1991, pp 44, 50-51). Racism “is transmitted in routine practices that seem ‘normal’, at least for the dominant group” and is often not recognised or acknowledged (Essed, 1991, p.10). It may be covert, denied and even unintentional, but as Essed points out, intentionality is not “a necessary component of the definition of racism” (p.50). What is at work is not purely interpersonal, but systemic domination that continually reinforces the power of the mainstream: “Whites can dominate Blacks without the former necessarily being aware of the ways in which the system is so structured that it is their interests rather than those of Blacks that are met” (Essed, 1991, p.40).

Rose (1999) deploys the image of a “hall of mirrors” to illustrate the bi-polarity of power as a system in which the dominant cannot receive feedback that would cause it to change itself: it “mistakes its reflection for the world, sees its own reflections endlessly ... and not surprisingly, finds continual verification of itself and its world view”. This unwillingness (or inability) to hear, reflect and self-examine is depicted in the cartoon in Figure 3.2. One of the many challenges for white organisations working in this field is to develop institutional reflexivity – the capacity to question their own processes and practices, and to recognise that the attitudes of non-Indigenous staff are part of the dominant culture and reinforce entrenched systemic racism unless purposefully addressed. Intercultural competence in mainstream organisations requires a capacity for reflexivity that recognises the invisibility of its own “whiteness” (Young, 2004) and enables a re-positioning and decentring of ‘self’ that recognises its own cultural positioning (rather than simply seeing it as the ‘norm’) and responds respectfully and constructively to alternative worldviews. This process must be managed and directed at an organisational level and is not only the responsibility of individual workers.

A further challenge for NFPs arises from their involvement in the mainstreaming of Indigenous services. Equitable access to culturally appropriate mainstream services is undoubtedly needed, but as outlined earlier in this chapter, the implementation of policies to ‘harness the mainstream’ has had consequences in sidelining Indigenous organisations and disempowering Indigenous agency in ways that are unlikely to be visible to mainstream NFPs. Rose (1999) uses the term “deep colonizing” to describe deeply embedded colonising practices that are “so institutionalized ... they are almost

unnoticed”, even in institutions that are intended to reverse processes of colonisation – or, as in this case, that provide services to help ‘close the gap’. These are not simply “negligible side effects of essentially benign endeavours”: their very embeddedness may conceal or “naturalize” continuing colonising processes (Rose, 1999). As preferred providers for delivery of Indigenous programs and services on behalf of government, NFPs may inadvertently contribute to such deep colonising practices through ignorance of policy history and lack of intercultural expertise, for example by:

- competing to deliver programs that would be delivered more effectively by local Indigenous organisations;
- inability to develop essential relationships of trust or consult effectively because they lack local knowledge and networks;
- by-passing or sidelining local Indigenous community and organisational capacity;
- applying dominant culture values and expectations in the way programs and services are delivered.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted how implementation of the policy of ‘new mainstreaming’ has worked to support the expansion of non-Indigenous NFPs in new engagements with Indigenous people and communities, while reducing effective engagement of Indigenous people in the design and delivery of the programs and services. Although barriers to Indigenous participation in mainstream services are well documented, it appears that insufficient attention has been given to the intercultural capacities needed, either by the lead Commonwealth Government funding agencies or by mainstream organisations contracted to deliver the programs. However, the nature of the challenges involved in developing effective intercultural capacity may not be readily visible to either NFPs, or to funding bodies which also lack these capacities. Evaluations of programs delivered under the policy framework of ‘new mainstreaming’ as it has been applied since 2004 indicate that mainstream or ‘white’ NFPs have faced considerable challenges in even engaging and consulting with Aboriginal communities. To date, little research has been undertaken on this new role for NFPs, but a body of literature in the health and social work fields suggests that a wide range of intercultural skills and an emphasis on decolonising and rights-based practice in these professions are critical to effective service provision. The following chapters explore the experiences of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff in this intercultural engagement, considering first the view of the cultural interface within a major NFP from the perspective of Aboriginal staff of Australian Red Cross.

Chapter 4. Experiences at the cultural interface: Aboriginal staff perspectives

You know, while I've come across a lot of people that are really, really good-hearted and just generally all-round nice people, there's that part of that cultural competency and cultural knowledge that they really don't understand.

Australian Red Cross's new commitment to working with Aboriginal people and communities resulted in a substantial increase in the number of Aboriginal staff in Red Cross in just a few years. Whilst these new employees were in many respects just like any other new employees, they also formed a particular cohort of individuals whose life histories and personal circumstances were often profoundly different from those of the great majority of their non-Aboriginal colleagues. For them, to join Red Cross was to enter a somewhat alien space of which most knew little and where few Aboriginal people had ventured before. While Red Cross had a commitment to increase its employment of Aboriginal staff generally, in practice most of these pioneers were hired into roles intended to make Red Cross programs and services accessible to Aboriginal people. For their part, most of the new Aboriginal staff were simply looking for work and had been attracted to jobs in which they could bring their diverse past professional and personal experience into roles that would help their own people.

This chapter explores the cultural interface which Nakata so eloquently describes as “a place of tension that requires constant negotiation”, from the perspective of Australian Red Cross's Aboriginal staff. While this research discovered many commonalities amongst these participants, there were also very diverse circumstances, experiences and opinions. As Nakata observes, the cultural interface is a place where responses vary enormously: it is a place where individuals negotiate and navigate their own way, making “daily choices about what to accept, buy into, resist, refute, etc.” reflecting and expressing the intersections of their past and of previous generations as well as “contemporary

understandings of what lies ahead or what must be dealt with in the present” (Nakata, 2002).

The early part of the chapter sketches the location of Aboriginal staff in Red Cross, their type of employment, experience of recruitment and their perspectives of Red Cross as an employer and as an organisation. Later sections explore the culture of Red Cross and the intercultural experiences of Aboriginal staff with Red Cross managers and colleagues, members and volunteers, and their perspective on their role in providing a cultural bridge to Aboriginal clients and communities.

4.1 Aboriginal employment in Australian Red Cross

In 2006, Red Cross had few activities or programs targeted to Aboriginal people and employed perhaps ten Aboriginal staff;⁷⁵ by May 2009 there were 67 (Australian Red Cross, 2009a),⁷⁶ and by December 2009, when Red Cross held its first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Forum, approximately 82 Indigenous employees were working in some 20 locations in Queensland, Northern Territory, South Australia and New South Wales. Half (exactly 50%) had joined Red Cross within the previous 12 months. Almost all had joined Red Cross during a period of major change, restructuring and upheaval as the organisation merged from eight separate societies to one national body, made major shifts in strategic direction and devised new national policies. Indeed, not only were most of these new Aboriginal staff part of this period of major change, their presence was also a product of the new direction.

⁷⁵ The estimate of approximately 10 Aboriginal staff in 2006 is based on the personal knowledge of participants who were employed at that time (who usually estimated fewer than six) and data about length of service collated in preparation for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff forum in December 2009. Firm figures of Aboriginal staff numbers were difficult to obtain as Red Cross did not have systems that enabled it to generate this information until late 2012.

⁷⁶ Indigenous employee numbers include full-time, part-time and casual staff. In May 2009, 41 were full-time, the remainder were part-time (13) and casual (13). Factors such as rapid staff turnover, and the fact that individuals may not have chosen to provide this personal information also influence the accuracy of the data from this period (Australian Red Cross, 2009a). In February 2012, Australian Red Cross launched a cultural diversity census (Australian Red Cross, 2012f). Accurate statistics on Indigenous staff were not obtained until after December 2012 (N. Jenkins, Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Engagement, personal communication, 15 January 2014).

4.1.1 Policy aims

Australian Red Cross aspires to an Aboriginal employment level of at least 6%⁷⁷ of its total workforce and to employ Aboriginal staff in a variety of position classifications at all levels in the organisation (Key Outcome 1, Australian Red Cross, 2009a). To date, in early 2014, neither goal has been reached. Indigenous staff numbers (including part-time and casual staff) have so far peaked at about 110-120 in 2011, and 130 in 2013 (i.e. approximately 4% of total workforce) but the numbers have fluctuated, having dropped to approximately 90 in 2012 (Australian Red Cross, 2012f) (see Table 4.1). Failure to reach the 6% goal was partly due to the overall expansion of the Red Cross workforce.⁷⁸ High staff turnover was also a major factor, in part due to the high proportion of Aboriginal staff working on fixed (or ‘maximum term’) contracts.⁷⁹

Despite the intention to employ Aboriginal staff in diverse positions at every level, in practice most Aboriginal staff were employed in poorly-paid service delivery programs (Table 4.2) and were scarcely present in the mainstream structures of Red Cross. Almost none were employed in administration, human resources (HR), emergency services, finance, business services, fund raising marketing and communications, and very few were in management roles or in senior organisational positions. The great majority of Aboriginal staff worked in what Red Cross termed ‘services and programs’, often in government-funded direct service delivery programs where their role was oriented to individual client case management. Most of these program staff were employed on contracts determined by the length of Red Cross’s service contract and were not permanent employees. In line with the social and community services sector as a whole, the positions were poorly paid and Aboriginal female staff outnumbered males by more than two to one (Table 4.3).

⁷⁷ This target is more than double the proportion of Indigenous people in the general Australian population. The Indigenous population in Australia was estimated at 2.5% of the total population at the 2006 census (ABS, 2007).

⁷⁸ K. Stevens, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, personal communication, 5 October 2011.

⁷⁹ A 2013 review of Red Cross’s progress against the key outcomes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Sub-Strategy found that 45% of Indigenous staff were employed on ‘maximum term’ contracts, compared with 21% of all staff for the organisation as a whole.

Table 4.1 Australian Red Cross Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees 2009 and 2011

	May 2009	Sep 2011
NSW	1	6
NT	17	23
QLD	26	47
SA	12	18
TAS	0	1
VIC	0	1
WA	9	12
National	2	0
Total	67	108

Sources: Australian Red Cross *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aboriginal Employment and Retention Sub-strategy* (2009a) and data supplied by Australian Red Cross, October 2011

Table 4.2 Australian Red Cross Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff by pay range, 2009 -2013

Pay Range	2009	2011	2012	2013
Level 4	0	0	1	0
Level 3	5	5	7	11
Level 2	10	13	10	11
Level 1	54	90	72	106
Totals	69	108	90	128

Sources: Australian Red Cross *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aboriginal Employment and Retention Sub-strategy* (2009a) and data supplied by Australian Red Cross, October 2011 and October 2013

Table 4.3 Australian Red Cross Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff by attendance type and gender

	May 2009	Sept 2011		May 2009	Sept 2011
Fulltime	41	82	Female	47	79
Parttime	13	13	Male	20	29
Casual	13	13			
Total	67	108		67	108

Sources: Australian Red Cross *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aboriginal Employment and Retention Sub-strategy* and data supplied by Australian Red Cross, October 2011

4.1.2 Location of Aboriginal staff

As Aboriginal staff rarely occupied general or administrative positions, very few were employed in major Red Cross centres such as the National head office (Melbourne) or the state/territory head offices in each state capital where most of those positions were located. The great majority were located in regional or outer regional centres where service programs were located (Figure 4.1). Some worked in regional offices where Red Cross has a long established presence (for example regional coastal centres in Queensland), while others were employed in new or greatly expanded regional offices that had a majority, or only, Aboriginal staff (South Australia, Western Australia). Aboriginal staff were often employed in 'clusters' (e.g. in discrete programs, in a separate location, or in a regional office where most staff were Aboriginal). In some cases isolated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff were the only Red Cross presence in a remote town. Further afield, some locally-based residents in discrete remote communities were employed by Red Cross on a part-time basis to assist in delivery of programs serviced from larger centres.⁸⁰

At the time the field research for this thesis was conducted (2010-2011), Aboriginal staff were largely employed in Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory (NT) and Western Australia, but there were very few Aboriginal employees in New South Wales (two) and Victoria (one), or in Tasmania (nil). The lack of Aboriginal staff and programs in New South Wales was a surprising anomaly as it is the state with the largest Aboriginal population and its capital, Sydney, has the largest urban Aboriginal population in Australia (Biddle, 2009). There were other regional anomalies as well: for example in Queensland (the state which had the highest number of Aboriginal employees) only one Aboriginal staff member was employed in the major centre of the far northern coastal region, although this region had the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in that state after the capital, Brisbane (Biddle, 2009; QTT, 2013) (refer to map 4.2).

⁸⁰ No remote community employees participated in the research, but some participants' responsibilities included visiting these communities and supervising such workers.

4.1.3 State and territory approaches to Aboriginal employment and programs

By 2010, different approaches to programs and engagements with Aboriginal clients and communities had developed in the states/territories where most Red Cross Aboriginal staff were employed. In Queensland, the state with the highest number of Aboriginal staff, most were employed in government-funded mainstream ('universal') programs that did not specifically target Aboriginal clients or communities – for example, targeted to families in crisis, children at risk, homelessness, financial literacy. Workers in these programs were not necessarily matched with Aboriginal clients but worked with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (as did non-Aboriginal colleagues working in the same program). Aboriginal staff in Queensland were mainly located in regional centres where Red Cross had an existing presence and a membership and volunteer base, but their location in these centres appeared to relate directly to whether Red Cross had secured contracts (usually from the state government) to deliver specific programs. These programs provided a vehicle for Aboriginal employment – at least for the life of the service contract – but the programs did not necessarily relate to each other or share common clients. Some community development work was beginning in a large discrete community in central Queensland and further outreach into more remote towns in the north-west was underway.

In contrast, Aboriginal staff in South Australia were largely centred in Port Augusta (approximately 300 km north-west of the capital, Adelaide), a hub that serviced the immediate region and more distant communities in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands ('the lands') in northern South Australia with a range of loosely related programs targeted specifically to Aboriginal people and communities. These concentrated on child nutrition and family budgeting (breakfast clubs and FOODcents) or youth (SAM Our Way). The programs and the approach had a community development 'flavour' and were supported by other Red Cross activities such as First Aid training. Almost all the staff based at the Port Augusta office were Aboriginal, and office space was made available to a local Aboriginal community group, Men in Black.

Red Cross in the NT had some long-standing prior activities in Aboriginal communities, such as a school holiday program conducted in some discrete communities by non-Aboriginal staff and volunteers from southern states, a youth drop-in centre in Darwin and some activities on the Tiwi Islands. In 2007, the National Board approved a major

Figure 4.1 Location of Australian Red Cross Aboriginal staff, December 2009



Source: Australian Red Cross

commitment of Red Cross internal resources to the NT to establish breakfast clubs in remote communities. A further rapid expansion of Aboriginal programs was made possible over the next two years by substantial public funding, largely from the Commonwealth Government, through contracts for the facilitating partner role in the CfC program, for delivery of PHaMS (Personal Helpers and Mentors Support, a mental health support program), financial literacy and family budgeting training in remote communities, and Youth in Communities (YIC) a multi-year, multi-million dollar program to provide youth worker training and activities in several remote communities. This enormous increase in funding availability was associated with the Northern Territory Emergency Response ('the Intervention') (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.4). Within two years, Red Cross in the NT claimed to have programs in approximately 140 communities, largely run from the major towns, Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs, and a small presence in

Tennant Creek. At the time the research was conducted, a significant proportion of the Darwin-based staff working in Aboriginal programs were non-Aboriginal, in marked contrast to other states. The majority of Aboriginal staff were residents of discrete remote communities and worked in programs serviced from the Darwin office.

In Western Australia, as in South Australia, Red Cross had concentrated its efforts in just a few locations. The major ones were very remote from the state head office in Perth: new offices in Broome (approximately 2,200 km from the capital, Perth) and Kalgoorlie (approximately 600 km east of Perth) served the Kimberley in the state's north and the Eastern Goldfields respectively.⁸¹ Red Cross in this state had large multi-year contracts from the Commonwealth Government to deliver PHaMS through the new offices and additional grants and contracts for other programs such as the Young Carer program and a community referral service. A small presence was also located in Kwinana (40 km south of Perth). In 2009, Aboriginal staff were also located at Bridgewater in the state's south-west, but this appeared to have ceased when funding to Red Cross for their activities ended and their contracts and roles were not extended.

4.2 Joining the Red Cross workforce

As described in Chapter 1, the qualitative research methodology employed in the research used in-depth, semi-structured interviews that followed a broad line of inquiry but were conducted in a relaxed and informal way so that participants could tell their stories in their own way. All participants were invited to begin by saying something about themselves and how they had come to join Australian Red Cross, and this elicited sometimes quite detailed responses about the individuals' family background, early life experiences and work histories, although this data was not readily quantifiable. It became evident quite early in the field research that Aboriginal staff perspectives about how and why they had come to work at Red Cross were quite different from those of non-Aboriginal staff, and also from the organisation's perspective, which assumed widespread knowledge of Red Cross. This section explores Aboriginal participants' motivations for applying for a job with Red Cross and the experience of recruitment and induction, before considering their experiences as employees in the following section.

⁸¹ The new Australian Red Cross offices were officially opened by the CEO, Robert Tickner, in Broome in August 2009, and in Kalgoorlie in October 2010.

4.2.1 Motivation

The most common reason Aboriginal research participants gave for taking a position in Red Cross was that they needed a job and were highly motivated to work in a role that provided an opportunity to “help my people”.

Oh, just something different. It was nothing to do with the Red Cross – but they seem to think so! It was just something different and I'd loved working with my people. And I thought, well, you know, maybe I've done the young ones long enough. Maybe it's time to have a go at the older ones.⁸²

Well, to me, as an Indigenous person, I feel – how do I say it? – I feel I've got to play this important role for my people at this time, and this program is a place for me to take charge and do that. That's how I feel personally ... my passion is to help my Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

For some a job with Red Cross offered stable employment, even if short-term (e.g. a 12 month contract). Some joined because Red Cross had won funding to deliver services in a field or a program they had previously worked in and had ‘followed the money’. A small number answered a job advertisement ‘cold’, not knowing much about the organisation or anyone who worked there, but more recent recruits were encouraged by ‘word of mouth’ or knew Aboriginal people who already worked for Red Cross, especially in locations where there were a number of Aboriginal staff. A small minority were attracted by Red Cross’s humanitarian philosophy, Fundamental Principles and commitment to working with Aboriginal people.

... I wanted to work for Red Cross because of its Principles and values, and International Law, and I made a choice a long time ago to only work for organisations that I admired ... I knew enough about Robert Tickner to be fairly sure that he would be trying to change it in the long run ... he'd only recently taken over and I read an article about what he was trying to do in the Red Cross and I thought, ‘oh, I'd really like to get in and help with that, and maybe I'm just the sort of person they're looking for’. So far that hasn't surfaced but it still might. I'm not going to give up yet.

⁸² As discussed in chapter 1 (section 1.1.4), participant identifiers are not provided following quotes from their interviews because of the relatively small number of potential participants, especially Indigenous staff, in specific locations. In many cases, doing so would provide sufficient information to identify individuals and so breach their confidentiality and the ethics protocols under which the research was conducted.

The great majority knew little about Red Cross before they took a job in the organisation. For most, their knowledge could be summed up as 'blood and disaster', that is, the Red Cross Blood Service and Red Cross's emergency relief role in Australia or overseas.

I certainly didn't know about Red Cross before I joined here. I just thought it was blood! [laughs] And I didn't want anything to do with blood!

I just thought of it as the corner shops⁸³ and the blood and disasters.

Well, I just thought "the Blood Bank"... And I knew them for international aid and stuff like that, you know, the Red Cross appeal. My kids used to do that for school and that. But that's all I knew about Red Cross.

Most Aboriginal participants were pleasantly surprised to discover the diversity of Red Cross programs and generally had a positive view of Red Cross's recent commitment to employ Aboriginal staff and work with Aboriginal people. For most, their primary commitment was to their particular job, rather than the organisation, but most felt Red Cross was sincere in its desire to deliver good services. For the earlier recruits, the newness of Red Cross's activity in this area was often evidenced by lack of office space, equipment, computers and IT systems, and having to write case notes by hand.

Some questioned Red Cross's motives and why it had not worked with or employed Aboriginal people before. One of the first Aboriginal employees who had seen a subsequent influx of new programs and Aboriginal staff observed:

You've got to start somewhere, eh? [laughs] ... I'm not sure why they've only just started when they're actually in Australia – you know Australian Red Cross for Australian people? [laughs] I don't get that. Maybe it was the time that it was – because Red Cross in Australia is almost 100 years old and when you go back 100 years it was a white dominated country and so they've just continued that, but they've had plenty of time to change.

A more recent recruit had applied despite previous doubts:

... when I heard there were Indigenous staff on board up here, probably a year or two years ago in my previous job, I thought "Well, what are they doing up there?" You know? What would Red Cross know about Indigenous people? That was my question at the time. What do they know about what our people want? And what do they want with our people? You know, what can they do for us? ... What are

⁸³ Like several other major NFPs, Australian Red Cross runs a chain of shops that sell donated goods to raise additional funds.

their plans and agenda? Can they change anything? Everyone's been trying to change us! (laughs)

Another recent recruit:

I think they're very committed to providing a service. I'm unsure about their methodology on how they provide a service. I've got a few concerns. Their understanding of how to deal with Aboriginal people is a little concern.

Some felt personal conflict because Red Cross was seen as a competitor for Aboriginal funding:

I suppose there was a conscious conflict there in regards to how Red Cross was looked at in the community by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community people, so yeah, it was like "don't tell anybody you're working for Red Cross" because there's quite a strong dislike for 'em, yeah – you know, Red Cross sort of taking – and this is the terminology that is being used out there – it's taking away black dollars.

4.2.2 Recruitment and induction

In general, Red Cross was not well known to Aboriginal people and for most Aboriginal staff, joining a major NFP was a new experience. The skills and previous work experience of the participants were diverse. Some had worked in government departments and agencies and in private enterprise. Long experience in the social and community services sector was common, sometimes in church organisations and smaller NGOs, but more usually in community-controlled Aboriginal organisations overseen by ORIC.

Many Aboriginal participants commented on the recruitment process as an intimidating hurdle that would prevent many capable people from even attempting to get a job with Red Cross.

The way they word em! Like, you just read it and think, "Oh, I haven't got those qualifications" Like, it's just intimidating! And one of my girlfriends ... she rang me up and she went, "Oh, my goodness, I've just got a job description off them." She says, "I can't do that!" And I said, "Look, just ... You're a Koori lady," I said, "don't worry about the job description. Pretty much it's what you've done." I said, "It's scary, isn't it, like that?"

For some the recruitment experience suggested Red Cross had little knowledge about the people and communities it wished to reach, for example, advertising jobs in an

Indigenous newspaper not readily available and not much read in the recruitment area for the position:

If you want to build your relationships and your bridges with Aboriginal people, you need to put it in the paper that they read, and it's certainly not that one because it doesn't go out there!

Many thought that recruitment processes, requiring a formal application that addressed selection criteria, were too formal and complex.

Selection criterias are ... yeah, they're hard for anyone, but I know that even within Indigenous organisations in this town ... well, you won't get many applications from Indigenous people, written applications. You could have 25 people ring up about a job and ask to get the application package and you might get, if you're lucky, four written applications ... But I do know that in a lot of cases with Murris, for whatever reasons, it is harder or it feels like it's harder, to talk yourself up and say how wonderful you are, especially to write it down ... maybe it is your literacy skills aren't up to the point that you think they should be up to so you're ashamed to write that way because you think, "well that's not good enough, I don't know all those big words ..."

Soon after their recruitment, almost all participants attended a formal Red Cross induction of one or two days duration, usually conducted at the state head office.⁸⁴

Induction provided a general overview of the history and Fundamental Principles of the movement and Red Cross organisational processes, but in most states did not include information about Red Cross's Aboriginal work and policies. The humanitarian Principles of the movement often resonated strongly with individuals' personal values and as is discussed further in this chapter, the Principles of 'neutrality' and 'impartiality' in particular were valued by Aboriginal staff.

4.3 Working for Red Cross

It was common for Aboriginal participants to speak of their work with Red Cross as 'working in mainstream', meaning that they worked for a culturally mainstream (or 'white') organisation (distinguishing this from working for an Aboriginal community organisation) and sometimes meaning that the program they worked in was 'mainstream',

⁸⁴ In 2010 and 2011, Australian Red Cross Divisions in the states and territories had different induction processes, as these had operated as separate societies until that time. Darwin, the capital and state head office of the NT appeared to be an exception. In 2010 a program manager in the NT stated that formal inductions had not been conducted there for approximately two years. Induction provides new employees with information about the foundation history of Red Cross in aid of war victims, Red Cross's role in international conflict and international humanitarian law and its unique place as auxiliary to government in provision of emergency services.

that is, a general service available to all clients, rather than specifically targeted to Aboriginal people. Most of the Aboriginal staff worked in client case management or community development officer positions that were generally poorly paid, in line with generally poor rates in the sector.⁸⁵

In one state, Red Cross pay rates were better than the local average and Aboriginal staff considered themselves well paid, but the great majority thought the pay was poor. A number, especially mature staff, had skills well beyond the level of their appointments in relatively junior positions. Some brought not only decades of work experience (and sometimes tertiary qualifications), but also extensive experience as board members/chairs and CEOs of community organisations with multi-million dollar budgets. These made them attractive employees because of their cultural and networking skills, and esteem in the community, but these qualities often appeared to be unrecognised by Red Cross and underutilised (or were utilised but without acknowledgement and financial recognition).

Most Aboriginal participants reported satisfaction with their job and in working for Red Cross, despite some frustrations. Some expressed pride in working for a large, reputable organisation and because there was a ‘respect’ factor in being an Aboriginal person who worked for Red Cross:

No, I was pretty proud! Yeah. I was proud to say, “I’m Aboriginal and I work for Red Cross.” It was good. I suppose it was like a bit of a milestone for me ...

I’m totally proud! ... When anyone asks me where I work and what do you do, yeah, I’m very, very proud and not ashamed at all ... Yeah, it was nice, like when I was fishing around, who’s got the money for homelessness in [this town], it was nice to know that Red Cross had it. Yes, it was, really.

Makes you proud. You’re identified as Murri⁸⁶ and you’re working for an organisation that’s worldwide and well recognised ...

⁸⁵ Wages in the social and community services sector were expected to improve following the Fair Work Australia equal remuneration decision in February 2012, with substantial pay increases of between 18-41% awarded, to be paid in nine installments over eight years, commencing December 2012. The judgement noted that pay rates in the industry were the direct result of funding arrangements: “Governments fund programs based on factors such as limiting the cost of programs to the public purse and the competition that exists for grants. Funding is linked to outputs not inputs. Current levels are linked to historical funding levels. Voluntary labour, budgetary restraints and competition for funding have historically contributed to funding arrangements and continue to do so” (<http://www.fwa.gov.au/decisionssigned/html/2012fwafb1000.htm>).

⁸⁶ Queensland and northern New South Wales term meaning ‘Aboriginal person’

This section explores the experience of working for Red Cross, focussing on training and career opportunities, staff perspectives of Red Cross's high level Indigenous policies and strategies, views of leadership and management, and the impact of distance and isolation.

4.3.1 Training, career path and job security

Participants were not directly asked about their educational background, but the topic sometimes came up in the context of personal or family history, often in terms of having had “not much education”. The great majority had grown up in regional or remote Australia and, for older participants especially, in an era when few Aboriginal people completed high school, an educational disadvantage which continues in the present (Bradley et al., 2007; Biddle et al., 2004). For some, the prospect of professional development and training was one of the attractions of the job and most participants agreed that all the training needed to do the job (e.g. in Red Cross systems and reporting software) was offered and available (“We’re all trained out!”). Some were also supported to acquire or improve formal qualifications, usually due to the efforts of their immediate manager, and some had also taken up opportunities to train in other Red Cross areas such as First Aid and Emergency Activation.⁸⁷

Most Aboriginal participants said they would like a future with Red Cross – ongoing work and possibly promotion – but a high proportion were on fixed contracts tied to the funding contract for their program.⁸⁸ One participant in this situation was confident that Red Cross would try to retain her:

I mean, I know that something else will come up. They're not going to let me go. That's another good thing. They really, really try and keep you. If they know that there's something, some other thing that can help you they encourage you to go and do that you know, to build your job prospects I guess, and that's what I've done ...

⁸⁷ Australian Red Cross staff may volunteer to be mobilised to provide personal support to victims of natural disasters (flood, bushfire etc.) and usually receive Emergency Activation training prior to mobilisation.

⁸⁸ During the field research this was clearly the case for many because of the nature of the program they worked in and its funding source, but was confirmed by internal Red Cross research in 2013, which found that 44% of Aboriginal staff were on fixed or ‘maximum term’ contracts, compared with 18% for Red Cross staff as a whole.

Others were less confident and felt great job insecurity as they were aware that funding for their positions would run out and so were actively seeking other employment.⁸⁹

Opportunities for mentoring and a career path in Red Cross appeared to many Aboriginal employees to be very limited. Most worked in service programs in small teams (usually headed by non-Aboriginal managers) or in smaller offices where there were few opportunities for advancement. Even if a better job in a larger centre were available and offered, relocation may have been out of the question for many for family and community reasons. Many participants commented that there were few Aboriginal people in general positions or in management, except in the very few Indigenous-identified positions in senior management. An Aboriginal program manager who held a master's degree and had previous senior management experience observed:

I just think that Aboriginal people are often not seen as competent enough to take on a role ... It's just to do with your perception of people's capabilities, I think ... a bit of a hangover from the days when all Aboriginal people were either kitchen hands or farm hands ... I guess the reality is, the last printout I saw of Indigenous staff, there was nobody in senior positions excepting Leeanne, Olga⁹⁰ – you know the Indigenous-specific roles ... I mean, Red Cross is now doing well on getting the numbers of Indigenous people up, but they're all at a lower level ... and there's no senior generic positions with Aboriginal people in them.

An Aboriginal case manager described a history that was not uncommon:

I'd like to be in management level because I've been a case manager for 25 years. I even set up an organisation. You know, I did volunteer for six years, then we set up an organisation, got it incorporated, the community backed me. I was working with all services and everything. Even got the funding, and it was big dollars. So I've sat in management. I've done it, I've coordinated ... And I'm just sitting here in case management, seeing others ...

⁸⁹ The internal review conducted in 2013 identified the disproportionately high levels of Aboriginal staff employed as casual staff and on fixed or 'maximum term' contracts as a significant contributor to high Aboriginal staff turnover and recommended that all Indigenous staff positions be reviewed and transitioned to ongoing employment where appropriate. This process had commenced by January 2014 (Australian Red Cross, 2014).

⁹⁰ Leeanne Enoch, at state Group Manager level, headed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit in Queensland; Olga Havnen, at senior management level and a member of the National Management Team (now Senior Management Team), was employed at National office level as Head, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy (HATSIS)

4.3.2 National policies, strategies and leadership

The commitment at senior levels in Red Cross, and in particular, the leadership and engagement of the CEO, Robert Tickner, were seen by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants as the critical driving force in the organisation's policy focus on addressing Aboriginal disadvantage. Several Aboriginal participants commented favourably that Tickner had made a commitment to achieving a goal of employing 500 Aboriginal people in the organisation. Events such as the first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Forum ('the Forum', discussed in detail in Chapter 5), held in Brisbane in December 2009, and the attendance of the CEO and other senior staff built confidence that Red Cross considered Aboriginal employment and its Aboriginal staff a high priority.

The high level strategies and policies (listed in Chapter 3, section 3.2.3) were also seen to demonstrate a public commitment as well as providing a blueprint for Red Cross's approach and aims. These included overarching core policy principles, a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy⁹¹ (see Appendix C), a strategy for employment and retention of Aboriginal staff and a practice manual⁹² to provide general guidance on how to work in Aboriginal communities.

The research participants gave diverse responses about these documents. Most Aboriginal staff who had attended the Forum were aware of them as they had been discussed and distributed there, but newer staff especially were often not well informed about them. New or finalised policy documents were often delivered to staff by email or link to the Red Cross intranet, and were barely noticed. In most states they had not been mentioned at the formal staff induction, and when they were shown to research participants at their interview, several asked where they could obtain them. Aboriginal participants were generally most aware of, and most interested in, the strategy for Aboriginal employment and retention.

For some, the existence of the documents was in itself a recognition of an Aboriginal presence in Red Cross,

⁹¹ The national strategy was supplemented by corresponding state and territory strategic plans.

⁹² *Guidelines for Red Cross staff and volunteers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities*

I love these [policy documents]. I should really spend time looking at it a bit more. And you know what I like about this sort of stuff? It's showing that Aboriginal ownership of it, and that there is Aboriginal people in the organisation.

but in general there was a widespread sense of disconnection between the high level policies and what happens 'on the ground'. They were generally regarded as largely irrelevant to daily working life and there was some scepticism about whether the policy intentions would or could be translated into reality.

Obviously for Red Cross they have to have strategies in place at the higher end, but you know, to get our work done we don't really need that to work with our community ... The strategies and all those things and that, sort of doesn't fit in with us. It's just, they're all words and we're actually people [laughs]. Yeah, maybe that's where it goes wrong.

So you get this feeling that oh, we'll just continue doing what we know we have to do on the ground ... So there's that disconnect. Yeah – I don't know, that's the thing that I worry about the most, that undervaluing of the huge knowledge that's sitting inside the organisation; this constant sort of looking outside ourselves for the knowledge.

I'm a bit sceptical. I think Red Cross has to do a lot more to really meet our needs. It's got great writing, it's got great stuff in writing. All of this I've seen before. I really think it's action that we really, really need, so I guess it's getting that writing into action is probably where I'm at in life.

The thing is, that's all great stuff, but that's not what's happened here. But if it happens in the future that's a good thing.

In one state/territory, Aboriginal staff had been involved in the early development of an Indigenous strategy for that state, but this was a protracted process which encountered the difficulty of trying to integrate an Aboriginal perspective that recognised cultural diversity with the organisation's 'one size fits all' approach:

To me it was just hot air, just talk. I really couldn't see it being implemented ... they weren't understanding what we were trying to achieve and what we were trying to do, because it was always still coming from mainstream understanding and model – trying to fit in with the marketing models that Red Cross have got, and the kits that they've got – that pre-packaged idea, pre-packaged kit ... Where we were coming from is an Aboriginal perspective, which is different. You can't take kits and you can't [take] their idea necessarily and directly translate it into this and make it work, so there was always going to be a difficulty having this stuff here [the strategies] marry up to Red Cross's mainstream thinking, and personally, it sounds good, but I don't think it's ever going to happen really.

The practice manual was oriented towards work in discrete remote communities and the cultural guidelines it contains were written from this perspective (and appear to have

been largely aimed at non-Aboriginal staff). An Aboriginal staff member who worked in an urban mainstream program with an otherwise non-Aboriginal team felt it was valuable to have written guidelines, but that more locally specific information should be added to them. When the draft of the practice manual was distributed at the Forum she had passed it on to her non-Aboriginal manager.

I still have that and I showed my manager and she said, “You know what? That’s exactly what we need” ... That’s fairly good. That is really good. Not a lot of organisations that you work in in a lifetime will have something like this ...

The practice manual was regarded by most of the Aboriginal staff (who knew of it) as ‘good as far as it goes’ – an introduction, perhaps more relevant to non-Aboriginal staff, but not providing much information specifically relevant to their own region or community. One questioned the lack of training to support the manual and whether non-Aboriginal staff had read it or were even aware of it:

Has anybody had any training in that? Nup ... I reckon if you did a survey of the managers, how many have actually read it, how many do you think you’d get a yes from? (laughs) ... There wouldn’t be too many because I’ve spoken to a couple who don’t know of its existence. It came out in an email one day and that’s just dire. Yeah, that’s just Aboriginal stuff ... bang, delete.

4.3.3 Geographic distance and isolation

The great majority of Aboriginal staff – 90% at December 2009 – were located outside the Red Cross head offices⁹³ and were therefore isolated from the central policy and decision-making centres of Red Cross, from senior managers, and from employment support such as Human Resources (HR), Finance, and Information Technology (IT) services. The actual distance from these centres was in a few cases relatively short (for example, an outer urban area) but, in most cases, hundreds or thousands of kilometres distant. Some staff worked with clients or supervised casual staff based in discrete communities who were even more distant from the major Red Cross centres. A few full-time ‘stand alone’ staff represented Red Cross in remote locations, but isolation of Aboriginal staff may of course not be only geographical: some were part of a ‘virtual team’ and although located in a Red Cross office could be thousands of kilometres from others

⁹³ Data on location of Aboriginal staff at December 2009 was provided by Australian Red Cross in March 2010. Of the Aboriginal research participants interviewed during 2010-2011, 82% worked in regional or remote locations.

working in the same program, while others felt isolated by racism, exclusion and miscommunication.

I don't know if it's just a black thing, I have no idea, but you know, you get people who just walk in and just talk to everybody else around you but don't acknowledge you.

Distance from major centres could have advantages for Aboriginal staff working in small program units or regional offices where the majority of the team were Aboriginal people.

I think we have a very close unit. We're not over-managed by anyone and we sort of remain autonomous within ourselves, we can strengthen this team or we can weaken it, whichever way – I think we achieve results better than we would down in the city.

Having this office all Indigenous, you know, we have an understanding of the Indigenous issues ... I can go to my boss who has that deep understanding of what I'm trying to ask her ... I think, being all Aboriginal and working in that Aboriginal area is the hugest, hugest benefit. I don't think that we could work... we would just hit brick walls if most of the staff was non-Indigenous ...

Because of the physical distance, however, communication with management and dealing with administrative matters and support services meant dealing with distant, (almost invariably) non-Aboriginal head office staff who had little comprehension of the realities of everyday life for their Aboriginal colleagues. Some problems were practical – for example, a remote staff member may not be able to access banking facilities – and head office staff were often simply not aware of the distances that staff had to travel, or the difficulties of accessing even basic facilities, communications and resources in remote communities and even regional centres.

One time she got overpaid and she had to pay money back but then that meant that her pay was down and it took our salary mob almost a week and a half to put that money back in her account, which meant that for over a week she literally didn't have any money for food. And then recently I was concerned that she might not get paid because my manager was away and she hadn't put in a time sheet and I couldn't get a hold of her, and the response was "Well, she should just put in her timesheet," and I went, "No, she's only getting paid a very small amount to work part-time in a community and she's a grandmother that's looking after all of her grandkids... and she needs to be able to buy food."

... our staff member in [remote community], there was a problem with her pay ... and it was a Wednesday before the Easter long weekend ... I rang up national payroll. "Well, can't she just go down to the bank and get some money out?" "No. She can't. There is no keycard. There's one bank. It's open between 8 and 12. She doesn't have any excess money" ... just absolutely no concept. You know we've gone to this national finance system and they've got no idea what it's like working with communities ... She had all these kids in the house to feed and there just wasn't that understanding at that level of just how much impact that has.

Many (including non-Aboriginal staff) were frustrated by inflexible HR and Finance practices and ignorance at various organisational levels about everyday work life, and cultural pressures and responsibilities.

Some of the core functions in Red Cross – say for example, interface with HR – a lot of the staff won't phone HR because they can't understand what HR say to them and they want to apply mainstream policies to them, which sometimes doesn't work. So there's a lot of distance. Maybe if they were all sitting in the same office it might make a difference but we are 2,000 miles away, it doesn't work.

4.3.4 Matrix management and distance

The matrix management⁹⁴ system in place in Red Cross meant that Aboriginal staff reported to an immediate supervisor or program manager, and also to more senior line managers at state and sometimes national level who were located elsewhere, usually in the state head office hundreds of kilometres away and sometimes interstate. Matrix management was generally disliked and found to be confusing: sometimes different directions and even conflicting instructions were given by different levels of management. Some had little interaction with their senior managers, while others felt they intervened too much, over-directed and 'micro-managed' from a distance.

Some felt pressured by the expectations of senior managers who had little understanding of the realities of their working and operating environment. Staff who worked in discrete Indigenous communities found it very difficult to explain the nature of the difficulties they confronted daily to distant managers, many of whom lacked personal experience of working in remote areas. Reporting responsibilities, to meet Red Cross's or the funding body's requirements, could be the cause of anxiety and stress.

... well sometimes I suspected they thought I was making excuses and that I was a bit of a liar because I wasn't fulfilling their objectives at the time, meeting their deadlines, getting reports back on certain things – I just lived in dread of it, you know – “We haven't run any programs this month because the places we run the

⁹⁴ A matrix management system is used when an organisation chooses to have two (or more) organisational groupings or orientations in equal balance at the same hierarchical level, thereby setting up a dual authority structure, rather than unity of control. This balance of formal power distinguishes the way a matrix structure handles interdependencies: “... in the matrix structure, different line managers are equally and jointly responsible for the same decisions” (Mintzberg, 1979, pp 169-170). Mintzberg notes that matrix organisations can be difficult to work in: “Reporting to more than one superior introduces ‘role conflict’; unclear expectations introduce ‘role ambiguity’; and too many demands placed on the individual ... introduces ‘role overload’” (Mintzberg, 1979, pp 174-175).

programs are all flooded out, they're under water ... The house has leaked badly, power's off, no one's got any dry clothes in the house." Those issues, you know? They're very real issues but when you report those things back you thinking 'oh this feller, he's having us on'. You just knew they were thinking that from the responses.

In another state/territory, a worker based in a very remote region with responsibilities in several geographically dispersed communities tried a different approach:

I probably drive people crazy with my reports, because each day I write a little bit on my report, so it nearly ends up a book at the end of the month! ... OK, I had planned next week to do this, this, and this. A funeral's happened, there's a fight in that community, the car's broke down, or whatever. I haven't been able to do it. Or, at the last minute something else has come up that I've deemed as more important. So Red Cross has been great with that, I've never been questioned on any of that, and as I said, by giving detailed reports as to what I've done and why I've done it, that's probably perhaps what's addressed that.

4.4 Aboriginal staff at the cultural interfaces

As individuals, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members managed multiple cultural interfaces and layers of responsibility and pressure – as community member, family member and Red Cross employee, working within their own community, often in jobs that were very stressful. They needed not only the professional skills and experience to perform the work role, but also intercultural skills that enabled them to act as a bridge between cultures and to function (and survive) in a mainstream workplace. At the same time they were generally managing considerable pressures away from work. More than one participant expressed this in terms such as: “I’m Aboriginal when I walk in the door here, and I’m Aboriginal when I go home”, meaning not only an identity that was different from the culturally dominant values of Red Cross and of mainstream Australia, but also the practical circumstances of having grown up in and/or living in communities that were dealing with the consequences of Australia’s colonial past and with continuing disadvantage. Many worked in jobs and in community circumstances that meant they were ‘on call’ all the time, both inside and outside work hours, and there were additional pressures and expectations associated with being a Red Cross staff member and representative of a white organisation. These multiple stresses on staff were similar to those identified by Williams and Thorpe as the “emotional labour” and “obligatory community labour” (discussed in Chapter 3) that contribute to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Williams & Chapman, 2005).

The final section of this chapter explores the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal staff at several (overlapping and intersecting) cultural interfaces: at the ‘front line’ with Indigenous communities, with Australian Red Cross as an organisation – with its culture, managers, members and volunteers, and with the Fundamental Principles of the IFRC movement – and as suppliers of a needed cultural resource within Red Cross.

4.4.1 At the interface between Red Cross and the Indigenous community

The role of Aboriginal staff at the interface between Red Cross and Aboriginal communities seemed to be little recognised or understood by the organisation. Many staff at this interface felt the organisation gave inadequate support to them to cope with its stresses and responsibilities: that is, being ‘the face’ of Red Cross, working respectfully with local cultural protocols, being always available to the community and clients, and working in high stress jobs and in circumstances that could be unpredictable and volatile.

Because we can do the job, we can go out and many of us live in our own communities so we know exactly what we need to do, what are the cultural protocols that we have to uphold, and we know how to go about engaging and implementing and evaluating – like, we know how to do all of that stuff – but it’s just having the organisational support as well behind us if we’re going out and doing this work, just being supported in our job.

Lack of organisational and management understanding of the diversity of cultures and cultural responsibilities and how these needed to be accommodated and responded to was a frustration for Aboriginal staff at this ‘front line’:

... I think that’s our biggest problem – that cultural gap, or that gap between our two cultures has never been, I don’t know, expressed or translated in a way that both people can understand. And I see that every day in my job role, you know, like we’ve got a system and a process of ways of doing things that sometimes is not quite understood from the Aboriginal people that I work with, and as an Aboriginal person myself, like I struggle with that all the time, you know, because I know both the cultural way of life and I know the western way of life of, if you want something done, you’ve got to do it yourself [laughs], and within culture, you know, we say, “No, we do things together. You’re not an individual, you’re part of this great big collective.”

Most participants felt that as Aboriginal people, they were held to higher standards than would be expected of non-Aboriginal staff: even if not from that community, an Aboriginal staff member would be expected to behave according to local cultural rules and avoid breaches of protocol that would reflect badly on Red Cross and which could also lead to physical retribution for the staff member. There were also family responsibilities,

loyalties and conflicts to be carefully negotiated. Aboriginal participants often felt they not only represented Red Cross, they were in effect ‘vouching’ for the organisation and inviting it into their communities, and that to the community, responsibility for how Red Cross approached its task and what it achieved would be seen to rest with them and how they had conducted themselves.

All our names are attached to it. The fact that that is with [us] and the fact all us local people will then be reminded. No-one's going to remember the [head office manager] and the [regional manager]. They're going to remember all of us, for what we've done in our roles.

The Red Cross Fundamental Principles were often very important to Aboriginal participants, both because they reflected their personal values, and because they provided recognised guidelines which helped them to negotiate intercultural pathways. The principles of ‘neutrality’, ‘impartiality’ and ‘independence’ were the most frequently mentioned as being particularly important as they helped staff to position themselves in a neutral zone which to some extent freed them from the pressures of community and family conflict in their work.

Working under the Seven Fundamental Principles of Red Cross, gives us the flexibility and the freedom to work with all Indigenous family groups/tribes without the family feuding pressure to our team. Once we explain this to our communities, they understand that we have to work with everyone, and we don't get the pressures from feuding family groups.

The Seven Principles? I think they are good ... I think we're safe in the Seven Principles ... and I think that's a good foundation for us who are working in them ... the Neutrality – it's given that we tell people that we can't take sides ... The Impartiality stuff – yeah, I think it's a good guidance for us and I think it safeguards us, because it can be hard work in Aboriginal communities. You know, there's such a big demand on workers and so having those principles just allow us to be in a bit of a safe side.

However, some were ambivalent about some of the principles and one participant described them as “a big can of worms”, especially ‘neutrality’ and ‘impartiality’, for Aboriginal people delivering services or working in their own community where they had family obligations. Another, working in a mainstream program, said that it was difficult to be completely impartial even for those who had been with Red Cross for a while and had adapted to its ways:

... It's great that you can go and do a job with those principles but then again, when it comes to culturally working with your people – and this was at the conference as well ... our principles, professionally, are still going to be there;

traditionally, that goes out the window, and you're working with your mob ... our heart is with our people, you know?

Another source of ambivalence was the extent to which one could be expected to be 'impartial' and 'neutral' in one's personal political beliefs. In the context of the long history of oppression and exclusion of Aboriginal people, it is not surprising that many of the Aboriginal staff interviewed held strong views about Indigenous policies, locally and nationally, and were concerned about the extent to which their employment with Red Cross might impede their right to protest or publicly declare their views:

That is something that I have conflict within myself about, because I politically cannot stand very neutral when it comes to a decision that needs to be made to enable us to survive as Aboriginal people for our kids and our grandchildren, and I think that bit of conflict will be sitting in the background of most Aboriginal people, I believe, working within Red Cross ... I don't know whether other people have, but as an Aboriginal and a First Australian it's certainly there with me and I've run it through my mind quite a few times.

4.4.2 Red Cross culture

From an Aboriginal staff perspective, the interface with Red Cross, and the interfaces within the organisation were complex and multi-layered. It was not only a workplace: Red Cross was also (in Australian terms) an old institution with long-standing links to deeply-held (white) Australian cultural values and national identity, and to concepts tied to Australian foundation myths from which Indigenous people have been excluded or in which their presence was invisible. As discussed in Chapter 2, Red Cross's history in Australia is strongly associated with the dominant culture and its values and this was still evident in the makeup of the national and state/territory advisory boards and senior management (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B), and amongst members and volunteers, especially in rural and regional areas – the regions where almost all Aboriginal staff live and work. Aboriginal people historically have not been seen as, or felt themselves to be, much associated with the Red Cross movement, as explained by a mature age participant:

It's been pretty much away from us, at a distance. I do remember seeing it when I was a child, young. In fact I used to march for Red Cross under that banner, in my little white veil and Red Cross on the front of it. So that then stayed at a distance to me, not part and parcel of my community until I've started working for Red Cross and seeing it first-hand. To me it's quite an old ... really the hierarchy of it is very strong ... it likes to be in its comfort zone. I think it's very much based – to me – what I see of Red Cross was a lot of older women, very wealthy women, property owners. They were the role models that I saw of Red Cross.

Red Cross's origins as the Australian branch of the British Red Cross society at the outbreak of World War I (Oppenheimer, 1999, pp 5-11), and its subsequent role in nursing and assisting returned servicemen during and after World War I and World War II still featured prominently in the photographs and historic posters that decorated the walls of the state/territory and national head offices, along with memorial boards listing past Australian Red Cross Society presidents and patrons, usually vice-regal governors-general and their wives, who often held titles (such as knighthoods) granted under the British honours system. These mementos of Red Cross history created an atmosphere that reflected an organisation that, in its upper echelons was representative of the 'cream' of Australian society, and in its membership and volunteer base was composed of solid, mainstream Australia. They also reflected a time when Australia's immigration policy was openly racist, and internal state policies of protectionism and assimilation exerted extraordinary state control over the lives of Aboriginal people, and for some Aboriginal staff were a reminder of an era of exclusion and reinforced a view of history in which Aboriginal people had no place.

For me personally, I know that those people probably did the right thing in their day but I just wonder ... They worked in an era when we were seen as not equal and I wasn't there so I don't want to pass judgment but I have questions ... and when I look at all those photos are there any Aboriginal faces in those photos? Has anybody ever researched the contribution of Aboriginal Islander people to the Red Cross movement back in that era? Can they find something that they can trot out and put on display?

Several Aboriginal staff mentioned feeling uncomfortable and out of place when visiting the capital city head offices, which were felt to be unwelcoming:

And even as an employee coming in here the first time, this building, it doesn't – for me as an Aboriginal person, I find it very, very – daunting, I guess. And, OK, I know I would like to see a little bit more Aboriginal content around the place – [Aboriginal] flags flying.

You don't know sometimes whether to say hello when you come into this office. You don't know where, how, you're going to be approached ...

Some mentioned that head office staff assumed they were external visitors, asking visiting Aboriginal staff if they were lost or needed help:

Yeah, "Who are they?", or "What are they doing here?" "Are you Okay?" I'm sitting outside waiting to get put in and someone said "Are you Okay? How can we help you?" and I said, "Oh, I'm staff. I'm just waiting to get in the door," (laughs) and that felt a bit funny for us, cause like – people just – like you're still I guess having – they haven't got a lot of Aboriginal staff there.

During the field research at a workshop held in a state capital, some Aboriginal participants (including a senior manager) went to the head office to collect workshop materials outside business hours but were challenged by a staff member and refused entry until the Executive Director could be contacted.

Some participants were conscious that the shift to working with Aboriginal communities did not sit comfortably with all of Red Cross's existing staff and this had been central to their experience as an employee.

I think coming in and you knew the culture, trying to change the culture of Red Cross, I know there was times we heard comments, "Oh, another Aboriginal program starting," you know, from our work colleagues and stuff. So it's also changing the mindset of those who have been in the roles longer.

4.4.3 "White workplaces are bloody tough for Kooris"

A sense of frustration with management and a lack of organisational cultural understanding were recurring themes in interviews with Aboriginal staff, and these difficulties were especially compounded for those working in isolation from other Aboriginal people (that is, who had no Aboriginal colleagues in their immediate workplace). Only a very few non-Aboriginal managers were praised by Aboriginal staff, usually for personal qualities and skills that supported them in their work, such as flexibility, willingness to listen, respecting the staff member's knowledge of their community, cultural understanding, giving priority to community needs, being a 'caring' person open to new ideas, and appreciation of the pressures on their staff.

She was so connected with our culture and our ways. We praise her. We're so proud of her.

Brilliant! ... She's culturally appropriate. Fully understands the issues that we face working and living in our community.

Those who praised their managers were aware that Aboriginal colleagues in other locations had difficulties with theirs, as this issue had been hotly discussed at the national Forum in Brisbane:

It was just huge when we went over there and we were gobsmacked, listening to all them talk about the issues they face on a day-to-day basis, and how their managers don't understand, and we couldn't say a bad thing about us [ours].

Listening to some of their issues, you just think, “God, we’re so lucky,” so I think in terms of the retention of our staff here in [this state], that reflects very highly on [the Executive Director] as being very supportive of all her staff, but in particular with the Aboriginal staff.

In discussing managers, use of the term ‘micro-manager’ by Aboriginal staff was a serious (but all too common) criticism: many felt that they were ‘micro-managed’ and were not trusted. ‘Micro-management’ and controlling behaviour is questioning “where are you? what are you doing? where you’ve been”, over-directing and not allowing the person room and flexibility to do the job: “I think they try to micromanage too much. You know, it’s just constantly. I think they just think people sit here and do nothing.”

Micro-management was resented because it demonstrated lack of trust and a lack of understanding of Aboriginal communities and cultures, and the responsibility of Aboriginal staff to work in culturally respectful ways to be effective.

It’s not always easy starting out in an Aboriginal community because, you know, when you’ve got funding, it’s always about stats and numbers. When you’re new to an Aboriginal community sometimes the work’d probably take you six months before it actually gets off the ground, because you know you like to set all the ground work and networks and get that done first before you can start some activities on the ground, cause there’s all these other issues that’s going on. You know, our communities go from funeral to funeral to funeral, so that then puts a dampener on any program that’s trying to be run ... So that then sort of puts you back two or three weeks, and then you start getting questioned, like “Why isn’t this done?” or “How come this hasn’t been done?”, which we have to be respectful of what else is going on in our community.

Even with a sympathetic and culturally aware manager, a white workplace was challenging for Aboriginal staff because of different work styles:

Yeah, I’ve got a good manager. I still think there are some areas she can learn on and she admits to that. It’s still a white workplace. I still like to break off and get away with my own mob now and then, you know? We like to get away and have a good yarn and things, but again, it’s kind of trying as well I think. The jury’s still out on that as well – and I say this because I think white workplaces are bloody tough for Kooris to fit into, you know? If you give us our work, what we need to do, what we have to do, and let us do it our way you’ll get better work from us and you’d get better and more satisfied people. If you try and impose your way of doing things, a non-Aboriginal way, and watch us and count every second then we just get pissed off with that and it will stop our good. It kills our good spirit you know that we have and which is what we need. We are very free spirited people, and we know what we have to do. You lay out what needs to be done, we’ll do it. We may do it in our own way but it will still get done. You can’t expect us to do it in a non-Aboriginal way and achieve things. I think that needs a bit more work on that one.

While most Aboriginal participants shared a workplace with Aboriginal colleagues, a small number worked in a section or office where there were no other Aboriginal staff. Aboriginal staff in that situation, and those who were amongst the first appointments in a non-Aboriginal workplace, had the most difficult experiences.

It wasn't good at the start. It was very, very conservative mainstream, but with having me here it's helped change things ... has helped make it more user-friendly for Indigenous people, I think.

A participant drew on his previous experience as the only Aboriginal liaison officer in a government department to describe the loneliness of being the only Indigenous person in a workplace.

... there's nothing more lonely ... when you haven't got anybody to talk to who knows where you're coming from, you know? You get a lot of people who think they know, they read in the books and everything like that.

Another found her solitary office-based role very difficult and was grateful to a supportive supervisor for occasional days working in the community:

Yeah, it's a lot of isolation. Like, just talking to the elders, and they sort of said to me, "Oh, how many's out there with you?" And I went, "Me." And they go "Well, how do you put up with that?" I went, "Yeah, it is hard." Then when I go out in the community and I go and start talking to people, especially people I know and I've worked with, and I think I don't want to go back. You miss 'em. I think it's a bit unfair, yeah.

A staff member who described the white workplace as 'tough' for Aboriginal people explained:

They're competitive. They're based on a lot of power – and watching each other and particularly watching Aboriginal people, watching us. We feel we're watched all the time, every minute of the day ... watching us so we fail. "Okay, I told you so". It's just a competitive environment, yeah, and it's an attitude thing as well. It's ... yeah, based on power and competition. Because that's an attitude thing, you have to change people's attitude and the young now are just grasping that but not the older ones. They still hang onto that.

4.4.4 Ignorance and 'everyday racism'

But, it's also another strange thing that you can't actually explain, you can only feel it when racism actually is happening to you. You can see it in their face and you can actually feel it and that's why it becomes so hard to explain because you can just feel it and feelings are – you know when it's happening.

Most Aboriginal participants would not have described Red Cross as a racist organisation, but rather one that lacked cultural awareness. Nevertheless, a number described unpleasant and painful experiences with non-Aboriginal managers and staff, branch members and volunteers. These ranged from one-off incidents to persistent and recurring behaviour from managers, colleagues and others with whom Aboriginal staff came in contact at work. Sometimes, the behaviour was overtly racist, but more often it was subtle behaviour that reflected underlying attitudes or assumptions. Several participants talked of former colleagues who ‘couldn’t hack it’ and had left Red Cross. In general, participants who had experienced racist behaviour had dealt with it themselves and either did not ask for organisational support to address the behaviour, or did not receive an effective response. Structural racism is a complex and difficult issue to address, but as the following examples illustrate, was a key issue for Red Cross in the development of its intercultural capacity.

The discomfort of Aboriginal staff visiting head offices, the assumptions of colleagues, the mistrust of managers, the watchfulness of co-workers are all elements of what Essed terms “everyday racism”, enacted through complex relations of acts and attitudes (Essed, 1991, p.3). As Essed puts it, “Actors do not always have knowledge about, much less do they intend all of, the consequences of their actions” and for this very reason, the acts and attitudes of everyday racism can be quite unintentional (Essed, 1991, pp 45-46).

Participants were often reluctant to attribute unpleasant behaviour to racism or preferred to see it in a different light: some interactions were thought to be ‘unthinking’ or ‘ignorant’ rather than intentionally racist:

Basically, people are very ignorant, so ignorance, basically, is the number one. People don’t realise they’re doing things that aren’t culturally appropriate until it’s pointed out to them.

What kinds of things?

Just tones of voice, eye contact, body language, just your general demeanour and manner when you’re around people, Aboriginal people. If you don’t consider certain things it can be offensive; it can be deemed unfriendly ... it can be perceived by Aboriginal people to be offensive and racist even though I don’t believe that was ever the intention. So it’s just ignorance about being culturally aware, you know?

In some cases, being unsure whether racist attitudes were the cause of conflict with a manager or another staff member was in itself a major part of the distress felt. A staff member who experienced a number of distressing incidents with her supervisor that

culminated in the intervention of the state's Executive Director thought that racism had been involved, but did not want the matter dealt with on that basis:

I did think it, but I didn't want to go down that path, because I always think positive and let's turn things around and we're in society now where a lot of Indigenous people are stepping up and getting out there ... you know, 'if you'll walk with me, I'll walk with you'. I stand by, I think of those Principles.

Reluctance to label behaviour as racist was quite common, but despite uncertainty as to what really underlay some behaviour, many told of incidents they had found hurtful and which portrayed offensive underlying attitudes.

... it's within your thinking, isn't it, and unless you've tried to change that thinking, it will stay there ... I suppose I don't know whether you'd call it racism. People don't like using that word but it's there isn't it? And it's what has shaped our country, the racist policies, so let's not try and push them out of the way and say "no, nothing's been there". They have been there and our country was based upon that, its racist policies, making less of us than what we really were and if people want to look at their history properly they will see that. Yeah, I think it's there. It's got a little way to go yet. Let's not sit there and pretend that it's not there because it won't fix itself.

Some Aboriginal staff stand up to racist comments and behaviour, while others choose to ignore it or draw on well-honed survival skills.

*I was faced with a lot of racism to start off with ... Even today there's a group of volunteers I go to visit and I know that they don't like me because I'm Aboriginal. But, I say to myself, "that's their problem, it's not my problem" so they have to deal with it. I don't have to deal with it. So sometimes when I'm faced with that I make them, I'll be **more** friendly to them [laughs]. What I'm trying to do is actually get them to see the person that I am, not the colour of my skin.*

A community development worker whose job required her to be out of the office frequently addressed an issue directly with colleagues:

I had to pull them up in the workplace where they'd say "oh, you're back again" or "you're gone again" ... or "Oh, I thought you were gone but you're still here, you're hiding behind the wall". Just comments like that. I think those comments got racial connotations to it, because I don't say nothing when they go. I won't, when they come back, "Oh, you're back!" or "You're gone again!" And I had to say to them, "Listen, don't talk to me like that. Sorry, I don't like that talk". They stopped it a bit now.

Some made formal complaints but not only were they uncertain about the motivation for the behaviour themselves, HR and management also often seemed unable to deal with such complaints or identify the nature of the issue:

They'd only come to me if there was no one else around to help 'em to fix the photocopier or to get some stationary or something for them ... They would walk in, sign in or whatever they need to do and walk straight out; they didn't even acknowledge me ... I did get fed up with it. I did go to the Group Manager about it ... he had spoken to a couple of these people about you know, just no acknowledgement whatsoever and he said to me, "I don't think this has got anything to do with being Indigenous and if it does it'd be going further than this." He said, "I just think they're 'having a day'." I said, "When? Every day is a bad day for them?"

Those who had complained found their concerns were often put down to a personality clash or some other cause and such disputes sometimes dragged on for months without resolution. In general, conflict between Aboriginal staff or between Aboriginal staff and non-Aboriginal colleagues and managers did not seem to be well understood or managed (and this may be true of the management of conflict in the organisation more generally).

The interface with members and volunteers

Increased employment of Aboriginal staff was only one aspect of multiple major transitions for Red Cross. Some of the locations and regional offices where Aboriginal staff were employed had become much more diverse within a short time and in some places, the 'old' Red Cross had come up against a 'new' Red Cross almost dramatically – the 'old' Red Cross being often elderly, conservative, non-Aboriginal branch members and volunteers; the 'new' being the more ethnically diverse, often greatly expanded employed staff now working in that location.⁹⁵ At one regional office, local Aboriginal community members conducted a smoking ceremony⁹⁶ at the newly renovated office to heal some of these divisions, and members and volunteers were invited to participate. According to the

⁹⁵ Warburton and McDonald provide a case study of 'old' and 'new' volunteers that illustrates the tensions in older, established NFP organisations arising from the increasing emphasis on efficiency and regulation in the sector (Warburton, 2009; McDonald & Warburton, 2003).

⁹⁶ Smoking ceremonies occur widely throughout Australia and may be associated with traditional law ceremony, a cleansing process following a death, a welcoming ceremony, or a ceremony to mark an important event and ensure successful outcomes and harmonious relationships. Green leaves are burnt to create a smoky fire and participants usually walk through the smoke. For a detailed description of such a ceremony in a traditional setting see Doohan (2008, pp 155-139).

Regional Manager, this had greatly reduced tensions between volunteers and staff and assisted the development of relationships with the local Indigenous community.⁹⁷

Members and volunteers often had little contact with Red Cross staff, in part because the requirements relating to delivery of contracted services meant that they were not engaged in the same activities. In some cases the two did not meet at all – in towns where new offices had been established, the predominantly Aboriginal staff who worked for Red Cross often had no contact at all with local branches and members, in contrast to the usual close interaction between offices and branches. In these locations, the structural racism of an informal ‘apartheid’ between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities that has historically subsisted and largely continues in country towns (and urban centres) (Biddle, 2009; Carter & Hollinsworth, 2009) was reflected in Red Cross. In some locations, there were efforts to bridge this divide and build local support for Aboriginal initiatives, such as an Aboriginal staff member presenting at a zone meeting and ‘afternoon teas’ where members could meet with local staff.

It was quite common for participants to mention in interviews that their town was a racist (or “very racist”) town. Aboriginal staff who did have frequent contact with the broader Red Cross membership or general community therefore had an extra layer of intercultural engagement to deal with in their work.

I went out to [regional town] because it was part of my job, and I was to meet with the president out there at the time ... So we met for coffee and her attitude towards me as soon as she saw me, it just changed, you know? And all she did was talk about the Aboriginal people of [that town] and how she hates them and then I said to her “You do realise that I’m an Aboriginal woman?” and she went “I can see that”.

One participant at first disliked driving the work car because of the stares she received from local people:

I think they came across to me as “What are you doing in our car?” “How come an Aboriginal person’s driving a Red Cross car?” Because to me, like I said, it’s very territorial, Red Cross. It’s territorial in the people who’ve always been involved in it and that’s understandable, I mean it’s a – very much a grass roots organisation. Its challenge is to bring all grass roots people together. That’s Red Cross’s challenge – and to make us all comfortable. We have to feel comfortable in that space. ... I’m still not fully comfortable in it, I can tell you!

⁹⁷ J. Smith, Australian Red Cross Regional Manager, personal communication, 20 May 2010.

In early 2010, a number of Aboriginal staff from Queensland, South Australia and the NT were mobilised for emergency activation in Queensland regions affected by severe flooding. They worked in evacuation centres, door-knocked in flood-affected areas, and supported people who needed assistance. Most found it a rewarding experience, but for some there were distressing experiences of racism from some non-Aboriginal Red Cross staff and volunteers and representatives of other agencies. Similar problems had occurred two years before so there was some frustration that these issues had occurred again. Following complaints to Red Cross management, a debriefing was held for Queensland Aboriginal staff shortly before the interviews for this research were conducted. Even those who weren't involved in the deployment were distressed and angry about behaviour and attitudes towards local Aboriginal people and even to Aboriginal staff of Red Cross.

I wasn't there, but I sat through a morning of debriefing ... Some of the comments that were made were down right racist ... When I heard the stories of what happened I kept sitting there going "this is 2010? This is a humane organisation?"

*Aboriginal people in their community and also Aboriginal Red Cross staff – actually **staff**, Red Cross **staff**! These are non-Indigenous volunteers – racist remarks and even how they treated them, like children, you know, mistrust. You know, "you do this and you do that". We were not there, our job was not there to be sent to go sweep floors and do this and do that, be everybody's lackey. So that was pretty bad.*

This preferential treatment towards non-Indigenous people despite the core values of the Red Cross Fundamental Principles caused particular resentment.

... when you put that shirt on, you know, if you're racist in your home or in your community that's your business but when you put a shirt on that has Red Cross and you're a volunteer, then you need to be neutral and impartial and treat all people who come in for assistance with good will and grace. But yeah, we had volunteers separating all the Aboriginal people down one end of the evac centre and non-Indigenous people up the other end and you know, just toast for them, but bacon and eggs for them – that kind of business.

An Aboriginal staff member on deployment was offended by heavy drinking and partying of non-Aboriginal Red Cross staff and emergency workers from other agencies because of the consequences for the reputations of Aboriginal workers.

See that might be all right for non-Indigenous people when they go into a community, but when you're Indigenous, you know, that word gets around that tiny little town and there you are in this Red Cross tabard, and you're going up and knocking on doors and helping these people. You know what Murris are going to say when they see you? They're going to say "oh look, she was pissed [drunk] the other night. She's going to come and try and tell us how to help ourselves." That's what really got to me.

For some, the stories that emerged from the Queensland floods underscored Red Cross's inexperience in working with Aboriginal people:

So I think it's an organisation that means well in the world of the Aboriginal and Islander people but they just haven't got the learning experience yet to be there.

Despite Red Cross's commitment to put solutions in place after the debriefing in 2010, it was reported at the second national Forum held in late 2012 that Aboriginal staff deployed during the Queensland floods in the summer of 2010-2011 had further similar experiences. These events illustrate the nature of the challenge for Red Cross in achieving organisation-wide intercultural change, and especially of reaching into the broadly-based membership and volunteer base.

4.4.5 Aboriginal staff as a cultural resource for Red Cross

Aboriginal staff often saw and described themselves as a cultural resource for Red Cross, directly providing cultural expertise and also by 'educating' non-Aboriginal colleagues. They held the cultural knowledge that enabled Red Cross to compete for funding to deliver programs to Aboriginal clients and communities and knew that without them Red Cross would have had very limited capacity to conduct the programs.

In mainstream programs where a mixed team worked with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients (e.g. Queensland), Aboriginal staff advised colleagues on cultural matters, explained why clients responded as they did, and sometimes had to 'fix things up' if a colleague did not have the cultural knowledge to deal appropriately with a client, or did not take the advice given. Aboriginal research participants said they welcomed non-Aboriginal colleagues seeking their advice but found it frustrating to have to repeatedly give it to new staff, or to have the advice ignored. Similarly, interest in Aboriginal culture was welcome if the interest was genuine, but at times participants felt the person asking wanted to reinforce their own preconceptions and prejudices, or expected their colleague to 'know everything' or speak for all Aboriginal people and cultures. This educational role placed an extra, very real burden on Aboriginal employees:

... the big challenge is, you have the job that you've been employed to do and depending on how advanced the organisation is, you could be spending up to 70% more time, extra, on top of your job, educating, right? ... That's a big challenge for Indigenous people ... there's all this extra work to do, to actually teach people about your culture so that they can interact with you properly or that they can adjust

their service approach so that your people get a better service. That's a big challenge.

As well as everyday 'education', Red Cross also drew on its Aboriginal staff at times to build greater awareness amongst non-Aboriginal staff and members, for example, inviting Aboriginal staff to speak at zone meetings and annual general meetings.

In offices where most staff were Aboriginal and the programs were targeted to Aboriginal communities, there were fewer demands to 'educate' peer colleagues but Aboriginal staff provided a cultural resource for the organisation through their intercultural capacity to deliver programs, work with communities and act as a bridge between cultures.

We're the glue. We're the ones that have to go out and actually speak. We're the ones that have to walk two roles, because we go down to community and then we come back to the professional stuff, and so that's why we need support.

Red Cross management evidently saw the need to recruit Aboriginal staff to work with Aboriginal clients, and this may also have been required by funding bodies as a demonstration of cultural competence. Yet the organisation's awareness seemed not to penetrate to a deeper understanding of the diversity and complexity of communities, the cultural needs of staff, nor the complex interaction of family and community pressure that Aboriginal staff personally dealt with on a daily basis.

... well, when we went for induction, they induct us about everything but there's nothing about inducting non-Aborigines into the Aboriginal way of doing things ... because we have to work in both worlds, you know? We have to work with our tribe, our family, and the cultural structures, what we have. We've got to flip over and try and work in the non-Indigenous thing...and that's where trying to make those things meet is where we sometimes have a problem, and it's stress for us! It's work stress!

4.5 Conclusion

As well as their motivations for seeking a job with Red Cross, this chapter has explored the experiences of Aboriginal workers as employees of Australian Red Cross and has identified the multiple cultural interfaces that Aboriginal workers must negotiate when working for a large, mainstream organisation – including managers, distant functional departments, non-Aboriginal colleagues and others in the organisation – as well as representing Red Cross at the interface with their communities. Experiences of subtle or overt racism were common, as were work stresses that arose from tensions at these

interfaces and lack of cultural understanding. It was implicitly understood that Aboriginal staff were expected to straddle both Aboriginal and mainstream cultures and be effective in both, despite their fundamental differences, but from the Aboriginal staff perspective, there appeared to be no similar expectation that the organisation itself needed cultural awareness and competency in order to properly support its staff, or indeed how complex developing such competency might be. Red Cross had developed policies that articulated its aims for a supportive and culturally aware workplace, but policies are mediated through individuals whose knowledge and capacity vary considerably. In some instances, Aboriginal staff in different locations had diametrically opposing views of the cultural competence of the same senior manager.

The next chapter explores the interface between Red Cross and its Aboriginal workforce in order to understand the challenges the organisation faced in building an Aboriginal presence in Red Cross and its own capacity to accommodate and support these employees, and to effectively lead and support the intercultural engagement with Aboriginal clients and communities.

Chapter 5. Red Cross and the cultural interface: the view from the organisation

I think while [Red Cross] has the vision and has articulated the need, what it hasn't done is actually analysed its capacity to do that ... it's almost like the organisation is blinded by itself ... so it hasn't looked at itself in the mirror. It doesn't have the capacity and I think that's a fundamental flaw.

A significant increase of both its Aboriginal staff and volunteer base was identified as a 'key outcome' (outcome 9) of the Red Cross Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy (Australian Red Cross, 2009b, pp 6, 21). This goal was established as a high priority for Red Cross both because "it is well documented and understood that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the most disadvantaged group in Australian society and as such we must act responsibly to help overcome this", and because "Red Cross recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must play a key role in addressing the needs of their own communities" (Australian Red Cross, 2009a, p.3).

As discussed in Chapter 4, Red Cross advanced rapidly from having fewer than 10 Aboriginal employees in 2006-07 (less than 0.5% of its total workforce) to more than 80 by the end of 2009 (approximately 3.5%), and more than 100 during the period of fieldwork for this research project in 2010-2011. At a level approaching 4% of the total workforce at that time, this advanced Red Cross towards the goal of achieving its Aboriginal employment level of 6% (a goal significantly higher than the proportion of Aboriginal people in the general population). An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Sub-strategy,⁹⁸ approved by the National Board in 2009, articulated Red Cross's aims and approach to securing and keeping this workforce.

⁹⁸ Hereafter, 'the Employment and Retention Sub-strategy'.

Red Cross's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, and its Employment and Retention Sub-strategy, called for a high level of intercultural capacity and included a number of recommendations to build this through widespread cross-cultural training, integration of Aboriginal staff throughout the organisation, and support and mentoring for Aboriginal staff. The Employment and Retention Sub-strategy notes that "With only relatively recent involvement in Aboriginal development work, Red Cross has the opportunity to develop best practice in relation to this work" (Australian Red Cross, 2009a, p.3). This confidence reflected a sense that as Red Cross had not been involved in past practices such as the removal of children from their families it did not carry the 'baggage' of other NFPs. Because of its past *lack* of involvement, however, Red Cross also lacked relationships with Aboriginal communities and organisations and a history of experience developed over time spent working with communities and employing Aboriginal staff.

This chapter discusses the interface between Red Cross and its Aboriginal workforce to consider the challenges involved in the rapid expansion of this cohort and Red Cross's capacity to lead and manage this new engagement. The cultural interface from this perspective might be likened to a one-way mirror. For Aboriginal staff, the cultural interface with Red Cross was an immediate and daily experience that had to be constantly negotiated. 'White' or dominant culture in its many facets was known and visible (if not always understood). From the organisational perspective, and for many senior managers as individuals, the interface and the cultural experience on the other side of the mirror was often invisible. For them it was distant – as geographically it often was – and seldom explored or directly experienced, diffuse rather than distinct. As a result it was difficult for the organisation to understand how it was perceived by Aboriginal people, and to see itself as it was, rather than as it represented itself, as an 'employer of choice' delivering 'best practice'.

Whiteside et al. argue that

In the context of Indigenous workforce development, structural empowerment includes giving voice to people whose voices are often not heard, more equitable distribution of power and resources and concrete improvements in working conditions ... In practice, this involves transparent and participatory decision-making processes within the organisation and a willingness of management to hear the opinions of workers, accept criticism, debate issues and, where necessary, change practices. This change needs to be two way. (2006, p.430)

One of the few times the organisation might be said to have actively attempted a direct interface (and interaction) with Aboriginal staff was at the first national Forum held in late 2009. This chapter begins by exploring the response of Aboriginal staff to this event, and in the light of this response considers the way Red Cross responded to the challenges of recruiting, managing, and retaining Aboriginal staff. The chapter then considers intercultural awareness and competence across the Red Cross leadership group and its perceptions of the multiple cultural interfaces emerging at a time of major organisational change.

5.1 First National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Forum

Red Cross held the first national Forum for its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in Brisbane in December 2009.⁹⁹ The Forum was an intensive two-day workshop that brought Aboriginal staff from all over Australia to give them an opportunity

...to learn more about Red Cross, about who we are and where we're going, to build networks with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and to learn more about the successes and challenges in our work. (Australian Red Cross, 2009c)

The Forum was a high profile event in Red Cross and was attended by several of the organisation's most senior national managers, including the CEO, Robert Tickner, the Director of Services and International Operations, Michael Raper, and the Director of People and Learning (now Human Resources), amongst others.

The program included, on the first day: discussion of the role of the NFP sector in addressing disadvantage and vulnerability, an introduction to Red Cross's history and the IFRC, Red Cross's strategic direction in Australia, and a session on 'culture, values and behaviours' (workplace culture). On the second day participants took part in one of the concurrent workshops on workplace culture and Red Cross's organisational capacity to work with Aboriginal communities. The final session introduced the Macquarie University – Australian Red Cross research partnership (including this research project).

⁹⁹ A second national Forum of Red Cross Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff was held in Brisbane in November 2012.

For most Aboriginal staff the Forum provided the first opportunity to express their views to Red Cross and collectively raise issues that concerned them. Despite the diversity of staff and the geographic distance between their work locations, several common themes emerged in the staff feedback about the forum.¹⁰⁰ For many the most valuable aspect of the Forum was the opportunity to meet, network and share ideas with other Aboriginal staff:

Far exceeded my expectations, most valuable outcome was meeting colleagues across all states ... Great to share our ideas ... Should happen on yearly basis as well as in our sections/divisions ... Great to see so many Aboriginal staff on board ... Expected more workshops, needed more opportunity to network.

The responses of Aboriginal staff, both positive and negative, suggested that as a group they felt a unique or special identity within Red Cross that was not part of its mainstream. Overall, the feedback suggested a strong sense of ‘us and them’ (i.e. ‘us’ being Aboriginal staff) and a sense of separateness as a group of employees within Red Cross. The great majority rated the forum experience highly, but there were criticisms about the way the Forum was conducted. Some less positive comments included:

Not structured around needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, but rather around National office agenda.

No real opportunity to explore issues that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are dealing with or to develop shared vision/values.

Speak and communicate to/with us, not at us.

Thought I didn’t get as much out of it that I had anticipated whereas ARC got info from us.

Red Cross still has a fair way to go dealing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities ... I am confident we will get there.

Many discussion points, when able to be discussed, were brushed over.

Feedback from the workshops indicated a widely-held sense of employment insecurity and frustration with organisational ignorance and lack of cultural understanding. The issues identified by workshop participants as “priorities requiring action” included employment security, a need for permanent positions (rather than short-term contracts),

¹⁰⁰ “Staff forum 2009 – Feedback survey results” provided by Australian Red Cross.

training, mentoring and a career path. Aboriginal staff also wanted acknowledgement, respect, awareness and support for their work in the form of mandatory cross-cultural training for all non-Aboriginal staff,¹⁰¹ provision of information to all staff about the new policy direction, specialist Aboriginal staff in Human Resources and an elected Aboriginal representative or support group. They also sought recognition and provision for their need to continue to engage with their own communities, such as contract provisions that would allow them to participate in community events and workshops and to attend NAIDOC Day celebrations.¹⁰²

The discussion of Red Cross's organisational capacity to engage with Aboriginal people and communities provoked discussion about the organisation's lack of cultural understanding of the particular pressures on Aboriginal staff. As an Aboriginal research participant reflected later,

... for an example, we went to the Brisbane workshop and all of those workforce issues were coming out and I don't think it really got answered there, what people were saying. For example, one young feller ... he got up and said when he goes out to the community there's all this other cultural stuff that he has to keep in mind and he didn't think Red Cross acknowledged that or recognised that in his job. And I think that the feedback that was provided by both Robert and Olga was, "Well, maybe we need to look at a monetary allowance for that, for those specific cultural skills that you display in your job," and I think for me, the message was, well, no, it's not always about the money. It's about Red Cross accepting their role as an employer and their cultural competency as an organisation in acknowledging what people have to go through, what especially Aboriginal staff have to go through every day; or if they go out to community and they're faced with all these cultural issues.

The less positive feedback from the forum reflected frustration, a sense of being used rather than heard and expected to 'fit' rather than produce change, and an awareness that the organisation had little previous experience of engaging with Aboriginal people or employing an Aboriginal workforce. Reflecting on the Forum in later interviews, some research participants were disappointed that although senior managers attended the Forum they did not take part in the workshops or attend the feedback sessions to hear

¹⁰¹ In response to feedback from the Forum, this issue was taken up by senior management and cross-cultural training for managers (only) was held in 2011 and 2012 (see section 5.3.2.). The Employment and Retention Sub-strategy recommends organisation-wide cross-cultural training for all staff, but in early 2014 this had not yet been implemented. An organisational cross-cultural curriculum was in development and training was expected to commence that year (P. Romios, personal communication, 6 January 2014).

¹⁰² National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC); NAIDOC week celebrations are held throughout Australia annually, usually in July. The first Aboriginal Day of Observance was held in 1937 (see <http://www.naidoc.org.au/>).

what staff had to say and so there had not been two-way communication between Aboriginal staff and senior organisation representatives.

You know, you don't want your managers coming in and making a speech and then you're left to do it, or senior management doing that. You know, the last forum we had, I think that's what happened. The senior management, they came in and had a speech. It was lovely. It was wonderful and then they left.

The Forum was at times very lively and sometimes overtaken by what some saw as local grievances and complaints, while others felt it was 'not the time or place' to raise local issues. One participant reflected later at interview that the organisation gave mixed messages, of which the Forum was an example: on one hand apparently offering to empower, support, and genuinely listen and respond to its Aboriginal staff, but in practice having difficulty hearing, understanding and responding to the message.

I think one of the questions at the Aboriginal Forum in Brisbane was ... we are being empowered as Aboriginal people through the training, so we start getting empowered, [but] when we start challenging then 'up there' on Aboriginal workforce issues, that gets a bit ... "Hey, stop! You can't do that!" and I remember having a conversation with Robert Tickner [the CEO] and saying "Whilst training is good, but what you're also doing is empowering us to stand up and start making some decisions and that can bring a grievance in our workplace because people are standing up and trying to fight the cause for Aboriginal – for the work." And I think it was evident in one of our breakout groups in Brisbane where others were saying that – we get so far and we get trained and then we'll go to challenge, [and] you just get knocked back on your backside again, and I don't know whether that's because Red Cross just don't know how to relate to those challenges, because when you get a group of 100 Aboriginal people in a room you can imagine it's going to be powerful.

If there was resentment, frustration, confusion and lack of confidence in the cultural capacity of the organisation on the Aboriginal side of the cultural interface, how did Red Cross see the interface with its Aboriginal staff during this period and what foundations were in place to accommodate and support its Aboriginal staff and their engagement with Aboriginal people and communities?

5.2 Building an Aboriginal workforce

It was widely acknowledged at all levels in Red Cross that the organisation was 'coming off a low base' of experience and practice in employing Aboriginal staff and had had some difficulty both in recruiting (especially in non-program areas) and retaining Aboriginal employees. The Employment and Retention Sub-strategy (see Table 5.1, Key Outcomes) acknowledges a need for and aims to "build a culture within Red Cross that supports

Table 5.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Sub-Strategy 2009-2015: Summary of Key Outcomes

Outcome 1: Recruitment and selection	That Red Cross' staff is representative of the community it serves, where the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is at least six per cent (that is, double the current numbers) of the total workforce, represents the full range of positions and classifications across the organisation and that staff skills and capacity are well matched with the roles and responsibilities so as to optimise performance and satisfaction.
Outcome 2: Induction and orientation	That new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers are appropriately supported to understand and navigate Red Cross organisational structure and operating environment so as to optimise their performance and satisfaction.
Outcome 3: Learning and development	That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers have access to quality, professional and culturally appropriate learning and development opportunities so as to maximise their employment experience at Red Cross and ensure that their skills and capacity are continually nurtured and encouraged.
Outcome 4: Retention	That the turnover rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is considered average and staff are positively engaged with the organisation.
Outcome 5: Workplace culture	That Red Cross' workplace environment is culturally sensitive, welcoming, non-threatening and rewarding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
Outcome 6: Cultural awareness	That Red Cross staff and volunteers have the capacity and organisational support to work effectively and appropriately with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Outcome 7: Community engagement	That Red Cross' engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities is based on genuine partnership, involving shared responsibility and mutual understanding and benefits to all parties.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers" (Australian Red Cross, 2009a, p.2) and further, that "to effect meaningful cultural change, Red Cross must employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff across the full spectrum of the organisation's structure" (Australian Red Cross, 2009a, p.6), in particular in support functions "including finance; IT; and fundraising, marketing and communications" (Australian Red Cross, 2009a, p.3). When the strategy was finalised in mid-2009, Aboriginal staff were employed almost exclusively in programs and services (see Chapter 4, section 4.1.1) and this was still the case in 2013. The lack of Aboriginal staff in mainstream and functional support areas reflected a major challenge that Red Cross had not been able to overcome,

although the Employment and Retention Sub-strategy recognises broad Aboriginal employment as critical to achieving a shift in organisational culture.

Culturally inappropriate recruitment practices were a source of frustration for many participants and many suggestions were offered as to how it could be improved:

How you do good recruitment? Then interviews, you know, you might need to run your interviews totally differently to how you would for other staff – you know, the ‘shame’ factor.¹⁰³ Having an Aboriginal person on the panel, maybe spending a bit of time just having a cup of tea and a chat and then getting on to the questions, and in more traditional settings you might actually have three people from the community there along with the person that you’re going to interview, so it’s thinking about stuff like that.

The Employment and Retention Sub-strategy already included several of the suggestions made by research participants (such as appropriate position descriptions, networking, including senior local Aboriginal leaders on selection panels) as recommended practice (Australian Red Cross, 2009a, p.12). During the research, it was evident from the participants’ accounts that these techniques were being applied more often, especially in regions where the organisation was actively seeking to employ Aboriginal people in specific program and service positions. As well as changes in organisational practice, it was also evident that more recent recruits had often decided to apply because of their own networks and knowledge of other Aboriginal staff already working for Red Cross. In some regional and remote locations, it was reported that Red Cross had notably succeeded in employing Aboriginal staff where other NGOs had been less successful. However, there were also many complaints and criticisms that state and territory HR departments were reluctant to use these strategies, even when actively recruiting Aboriginal staff (see for example, Case Study 5.1: Recruiting a Volunteer).

¹⁰³ As Kruske et al. (2006) explain, ‘shame’ is a complex and sensitive concept in Aboriginal cultures in Australia. It “encompasses feelings of guilt and can occur when an individual is singled out, or is involved in actions not sanctioned by the group, or in those that conflict with their cultural obligations”. There is no simple equivalent to this discomfort in non-Indigenous cultures in Australia. Harkins’ (1990) helpful exploration of the meaning of ‘shame’ quotes examples of Aboriginal students, for example: “Big shame is when people get embarrassed and feel uptight, e.g. when they are called up on stage, when they get picked out of a crowd.”; “I think big shame is when we are near important people, white people and people we don’t know ...” and notes that reluctance to speak is mentioned frequently in descriptions of feeling ‘shame’.

Case Study 5.1: Recruiting a volunteer

.. the Employment and Retention Strategy ... there's been a lot of resistance to that and I don't think people feel like they have to – it's Board-endorsed this strategy now, but it's not in practice yet, I think, not everywhere ... Like, when I tried to recruit a volunteer to support my role in research and administration ... I first of all went to HR and said 'This is what I'd like to do.' They said, 'Oh, you have to give the job to somebody who's already on the database.' I said, 'Well these are the skill sets I need and I really want to make sure this advertisement gets to an Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander audience. Do you think that's the case with the database?' and she said, 'Well no, I don't think that is the case with the database, but you have to go....' It was just a bit of a kerfuffle between them and me ... and it was just clear that there was a real reluctance to doing things differently. There were people waiting on the volunteer list – so that's great if there's somebody who's got a public health interest or they've worked in Aboriginal communities before or they've done this sort of research. 'Do you think there's somebody on the database?' 'No, but you still have to give the opportunity to somebody who's on the database.' Well, this is partly about supporting my incredible workload [laughs], I need somebody who is appropriate for the role ... Like, there's all these different places that Olga has alerted me to that I could fly this flyer in. So I made the flyer ... and then I sent it back to them and said 'Can you distribute this?' 'No, can't distribute that for you. That's not the way we do it. It's got to go through the database,' Aaghh! ... So after almost a year I still haven't been able to get the support from HR in order to do that. I said to this woman on the phone, 'It's in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy – the Recruitment and Retention Strategy – that you will try to reach an Aboriginal audience for this. It's just not going to work if you do it using your database and using the website. People don't think of Red Cross as working in this area. This is why it's really important. You know, I want to do this properly as an example.' And she said, 'You can't just choose an Aboriginal person for that role,' and I said, 'Well, I'm not choosing an Aboriginal person for that role.' ... I was trying to be really supportive. I said, 'I'm new to this as well, but I think we've overlooked the for a we need.' Anyway, yep, just no love back from them [laughs] so it's kind of fallen over. I have to do it myself and I just haven't got to it yet. Yeah, that's a good case study I guess.

Several participants reported reluctance or opposition in some state/territory head offices to change recruitment culture and felt this was reflected in the low levels of Aboriginal employment in those states and more widely in general administrative or functional support positions. A senior manager gave the example of a colleague who was strongly motivated to recruit Aboriginal staff into a mainstream work area after participating in cultural awareness training:

She said, 'I'm going to get out there, I'm going to make sure we target Indigenous staff for all our positions,' which was like 'Wow!' You know, it's like a light bulb! And I was, 'Oh, good on you, fantastic!' and then she hit a brick wall with HR in [that state]. Said, 'I've tried to do it and they were 'ew, ew' [sneering],' so we lost her. We had a convert, she hit a brick wall and we lost her. It was just too hard.

In some cases it was reported that HR staff were unaware of the existence of the Employment and Retention Sub-strategy, but in another state one HR manager had gone to considerable effort, seeking the support of an external Aboriginal mentor, to try to recruit Aboriginal staff.

So I've started to learn a bit along the way and I use [the mentor]. For example, we haven't had a single Aboriginal person employed in Red Cross in [this state] and so we developed an Indigenous strategy here for more programs but also for the HR side of it and [we] made a goal to recruit three Aboriginal people in this office by the end of June this year. We got to one. Now here's the problem ... I've decided that I will, by hook or by crook, recruit an Aboriginal person ... How do I find a person, is my question. I spent, I'd say, three weeks calling. I started with DEWR¹⁰⁴ and I called oh, who knows how many phone calls, saying "This is what I want to do: I want to get someone on a traineeship. It's an entry level role. It would be hopefully for someone who wants a career in [this field] ... I want the person to be an Aboriginal person," and I have only this week finally gone to the right stream that I think will get me what I need.

Such anecdotal evidence points to the extent of the significant challenges which Red Cross faced in implementing the official strategy, yet there was also a sense that there was limited recognition of just what sort of organisational change was needed to actually implement the approved policy. The conundrum was that HR lacked knowledge and expertise to recruit Aboriginal staff, in part because there were no Aboriginal staff in HR, and because there were no Aboriginal staff in HR, Red Cross lacked expertise to recruit Aboriginal people. This 'catch-22' was a source of frustration for many.

In the Human Resources team around the country, we used to have ... not one Indigenous person in that cohort of 75 odd people and we, I know that People and Learning [HR],¹⁰⁵ the majority of our executives here in [head office] really struggle with that. We really struggle with a sense that we are going in this area of work for Red Cross, what can we do as an HR team to make sure our team are well prepared to do that, prepared for it? ... I think we really need some dedicated HR resources [recruited] from our Indigenous cohort.

The Employment and Retention Sub-strategy states that in addition to the critical role of HR to support recruitment and retention, the success of the strategy relies on a shared responsibility of all staff and volunteers at all levels, but even more importantly on the development of relationships.

... the single most important factor in successful recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers is our capacity to build and maintain

¹⁰⁴ Commonwealth Department of Employment and Work Place Relations (DEWR).

¹⁰⁵ 'People and Learning' was renamed Human Resources (HR) during the research period.

meaningful and respectful relationships with Aboriginal communities and organisations. (Australian Red Cross, 2009a, p.7)

However in management and at organisation-to-organisation level, there were few such relationships with Aboriginal organisations, and they were unlikely to develop in head office locations where there were few or no Aboriginal employees, and few individuals had personal knowledge or experience of Aboriginal communities or networks.

Well I think a genuine challenge is there is an absolute ignorance of understanding. There's no real understanding of the culture of Aboriginal communities and I'd be one of the first ones to put up my hand and say, "I'm [in my 50s], I've lived all my life in this country. I don't think I have ever had a friend who was Aboriginal, because I have never really met anyone." And that is the truth of it. I'm embarrassed to say that in a way, although it wasn't anything of my choosing, it's just where I happened to grow up and whatever, and I'd say I'm open to that and very aware of that and would do something about it. So a barrier to the organisation being really on side with the strategy would be I'm not the only one. I'd say there would be very, very few people here who have a genuine understanding of Aboriginal people and their communities.

In another state, the Executive Director saw the difficulties of Aboriginal recruitment as a “vicious cycle” in which it was almost impossible to recruit and retain Aboriginal staff in general positions where they would be isolated and which paradoxically could only be broken by recruiting a critical mass of Aboriginal employees into an Aboriginal-specific program.

If you've only got one or two Aboriginal staff, not enough to really support each other, not enough to create a culture of Aboriginal friendliness or support in an organisation and they get frustrated with the fact that most people just don't think about their Aboriginality and they leave. I would love to have two dozen, three dozen Aboriginal staff creating the opportunities ... I mean we certainly advertise our positions in the Koori Mail and the National Indigenous Times. I send out jobs that I think might be interesting to Aboriginal people through an informal network that the Director-General of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs here operates and will ask him to email it around but they've not worked because again, it's this chicken and egg. We don't have sufficient relationships with Aboriginal organisations. We don't have Aboriginal people on board who are saying to their peers, "Come on, this is a great place to work," and until we can somehow break that cycle, I believe the only way we can break that cycle is to get a substantial Aboriginal specific project up where we're actually saying we are only recruiting Aboriginal staff for this program.

Although this senior manager recognised that the lack of critical relationships with Aboriginal organisations (strongly urged in the Employment and Retention Sub-strategy) was a factor, this comment suggested a poor general understanding of effective Indigenous recruitment and the experiences of Aboriginal staff. For example, in the absence of community networks and relationships, circulating job information through a

government department was unlikely to attract applicants with different skills to community service roles. This study found that Aboriginal staff were less likely to leave because others “don’t think about their Aboriginality”, than because too much attention was likely to be given to it and because of the pressures of everyday racism in a mainstream workplace. Another participant gave this anecdote concerning the same Executive Director:

I’ve also heard an Executive Director say, “Put your hand up if you know an Aboriginal person. I don’t even know how I would talk to somebody.” And it was kind of nice that he was sort of saying, “I’m out of my comfort zone here,” but I really don’t see it any different to working cross-culturally with – you know, I don’t have any Afghani friends, but I still feel like I could have a conversation with someone.

5.2.1 Retention of Aboriginal staff

Retention of Aboriginal staff was important to Red Cross’s goal of building its organisational capacity to pursue its national priorities in Indigenous affairs, and maintaining continuity of staff was acknowledged as critical in building the long-term relationships and partnerships needed to sustain long-term commitments to specific communities. Although the employment sub-strategy envisaged quarterly reporting and an annual review of progress, Red Cross did not have systems that would enable it to routinely review statistical information on Aboriginal staff, current staff numbers or staff turnover and the reasons staff gave for leaving. The information about staff numbers provided in the Employment and Retention Sub-strategy in mid-2009 was collated manually and the next ‘spot check’ on staff numbers in September 2011, was also largely compiled in this way.¹⁰⁶

A number of the research participants commented that Red Cross had a high staff turnover, both in general and amongst Aboriginal staff,¹⁰⁷ and this view seemed to be confirmed by the rate of departure of the participants themselves. At least 35% (and

¹⁰⁶ A cultural diversity census was launched in February 2012 (Australian Red Cross, 2012f) but Red Cross did not have accurate statistics on Indigenous staff until the second National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Forum, held in December 2012 (N. Jenkins, Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Engagement, personal communication, 15 January 2014).

¹⁰⁷ Staff turnover figures were not available, but one senior manager stated that staff turnover in Red Cross was approximately 35%, and another that this level was believed to be about 4% above the national average for the sector.

possibly more) of the participants in this research had left Red Cross within two years,¹⁰⁸ and more than half of these were Aboriginal staff. Further confirmation that turnover of Aboriginal staff was high was suggested by the relatively low number of long-term Aboriginal staff at the second national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Forum (2012), where only approximately 15 indicated they had also attended the first forum in 2009.

The reasons participants gave for the departure of Aboriginal staff included (in no particular order):

- Funding for the position ran out
- Contract not renewed
- Person moved to another location or job
- Burnout / stress / frustration / dissatisfaction / conflict
- Person did not have the right skill set for the job or the role changed
- Family or personal reasons
- Resigned or was asked to resign for other reasons.

Underlying these reasons, there appeared to be significant issues as to whether recruitment had been effective in the first place (participants referred to poor selection, lack of clarity about the role or skills needed, not recruiting the right person with the right skill set and ‘fit’ for the job/community), lack of support to stressed and geographically or emotionally isolated staff, and lack of intercultural management experience. A senior manager observed:

I think we've got a long way to go. I think we are certainly heading in the right direction but my experience here reflects my experience in other State Government organisations where we often, I think, set up Aboriginal staff to fail and that is because firstly our recruitment processes are often inappropriate, so we don't necessarily attract the right people in the first place because we put significant barriers in the way to them even applying for a job, we then don't clearly define what the job role is, we then don't provide them with sufficient training and then we don't provide them with appropriate levels of support and then when the wheels go off we blame them for failing without looking at all the sort of internal or structural issues that would have contributed to that.

¹⁰⁸ While it was not possible to track each individual participant, this estimate is based on information provided either by the participants themselves, by managers with whom the researcher has remained in contact or by the relevant Red Cross office when an attempt was made to contact the participant.

Another senior manager thought that, in general, “people leave their manager; they join an organisation but the primary reason why people leave is that their immediate manager is not working well with them”. For Aboriginal staff, the relationship with their immediate manager and the extent to which their manager understood and supported, or conversely, mistrusted and micro-managed them, was clearly a major factor in their comfort at work and whether they were likely to stay. Difficult experiences with managers and lack of cultural understanding were much discussed amongst Aboriginal staff at the national Forum (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.3). The Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy (HATSIS) thought poor management was a major contributor to high Aboriginal staff turnover.

... the high turnover of staff, particularly Aboriginal staff, I think is really quite worrying and I think we need to actually find a much better way of following people up with exit interviews and that may better be done by say an independent or external agency to do that, because my feeling is that quite a lot of the tension and the turnover has to do with poor management practices by supervisors and immediate managers and that there's a real clash between Aboriginal staff and Aboriginal ways of doing things and Aboriginal knowledge, if you like, and non-Indigenous managers who have unfortunately I think a tendency to want to micromanage or to not trust the judgement and the advice that's provided by Aboriginal staff. So whilst we are recruiting and employing people because of their knowledge, their relationships and all of their sort of particular expertise, it's not being adequately recognised, respected and acted on, so then people go “Well, why the hell am I here?”

A significant factor in poor retention was in fact employment insecurity, as was confirmed by an internal review in Red Cross in 2013. During the previous year, 66 Aboriginal employees had left Red Cross and some of the involuntary staff turnover was due to the relatively high proportion of Aboriginal staff in casual and ‘maximum term’ contract positions (Australian Red Cross, 2014, p.6). In 2013, 44% of Aboriginal staff were employed on maximum term contracts, in comparison with 18% of the staff as a whole (Australian Red Cross, 2014, p.5). A recommendation arising from the review was that all Aboriginal staff positions be individually reviewed and, where appropriate, transitioned to ongoing positions.

5.2.2 Managing across cultures

The experiences and reflections of participants suggest that there have been significant challenges for managers, usually non-Aboriginal, who have management responsibility for Aboriginal staff. Many had not previously had experience either of working with or managing Aboriginal staff and/or had not previously worked with Aboriginal people or

communities in their region. Of the non-Aboriginal research participants who had direct line management responsibility for Aboriginal staff, some acknowledged that they were “on a steep learning curve” and felt ‘out of their depth’. In some locations there was a notable dissonance between the accounts and observations of managers and their staff which did not always ‘tally up’ – i.e. the views of managers about ‘how things were going’ or which issues were of concern were sometimes quite different from those of the staff. The concerns of management ranged from questions about whether certain skills of Aboriginal staff should be more highly valued (e.g. cultural skills, community knowledge and networks, language) and whether others might be less critical (report-writing, punctuality), to how to manage extended absences in cases of family crisis or bereavement.

A senior manager observed that some of his colleagues lacked understanding of Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal ways of working and were inclined to mistrust their Aboriginal staff:

So when they then sort of work to their strengths, then that might be seen as going off on a tangent to ‘doing what they want to do’ and then all the overlaying cultural and family responsibilities that come into it that impact on “their performance” and “What they are actually achieving?” and the ongoing – for want of a better word – racist comments, so, “What are they doing? Why are they spending time on the street talking to people?” It’s that sort of lack of understanding – of networking and relationship building and incidental opportunities and communication and that the job is actually 24/7.

In some locations, issues concerning time and work culture posed complex cross-cultural management problems that sometimes were not managed well. For example while some non-Aboriginal managers were inclined to ‘micro-manage’ Aboriginal workers, others had difficulty managing issues such as poor attendance, giving rise to the impression amongst other staff that there were different (lower) expectations and preferential treatment of others because they were Aboriginal.

... it may be about getting some simple training, for not top level managers, for everyone that is dealing with people, internally and externally. To say to people, “No, it’s not OK to take off from work in the afternoon and not tell me why, and just disappear for half the week or decide that you’re only going to work half the week ... We’ve had that happen a few times and it’s not the majority, but it will increase with the increase of staff members and we’ve had non-Aboriginal staff [who] sit along[side] these people. People coming down and saying [what they see happening]. “Well, why don’t you say anything?” “Well, I’m not going to say anything. They’re going to say I’m racist.” And especially if a non-Aboriginal person gets disciplined for like, “Where were you for that hour or half an hour?” and “We’re going to micro-micro manage you and performance review you,” and that won’t happen for the others.

In some locations there was a perception that there was pressure from the National office to hire Aboriginal people, dictated by the new national strategic direction, and that because of it there were lower professional expectations of Aboriginal staff, more flexibility and special privileges (such as travel interstate to attend the national Forum, in contrast to many long-serving staff who had never been offered a paid work trip). Some perceptions may have resulted from misunderstanding of the new, community-oriented roles of Aboriginal staff, but are also likely to reflect 'modern' racist attitudes and 'false beliefs' that perceive Aboriginal people as failing to live up to the norms of the dominant society, yet being the beneficiaries of special benefits (Pedersen et al., 2005; Pedersen et al., 2006; Augoustinos et al., 2005).

A manager claimed in their interview that the personal manner of another, senior manager towards Aboriginal staff was so obviously preferential (yet condescending) that at least one Aboriginal staff member had chosen not to identify their background because they did not want colleagues to think they were employed because of their Aboriginality rather than their skills. This manager thought the new interest in employing Aboriginal people was patronising and potentially harmful for Aboriginal staff, and did not make Red Cross an 'Aboriginal friendly' workplace:

No, I don't think so because I think it's very much about we just have to hire. I don't think it makes it Aboriginal friendly just by hiring people who are Aboriginal. That's not making any change, other than the positions, because if you're putting somebody in a position where you're setting them up to fail, how is that building up anyone's capacity? And, the support networks are not in place, yet. The mentoring is not in place yet. I'm saying make sure you hire people that are close to or to the level that they're being employed for and have a process in place from when they start, rather than allow it, or waiting, for them to fall over because that's just awful for anyone ... I mean that just brings people down. So, yeah, I don't think that we are Aboriginal friendly. I think we're trying to at some levels, yeah.

Time management, workloads and especially the need to submit timely reports to meet Red Cross's and/or the funding body's requirements were raised by many and from different perspectives. In some program areas, staff felt that Aboriginal colleagues had been 'set up to fail' and then asked to leave because they had difficulty meeting the requirements of a mainstream organisation, despite other valuable skills such as community knowledge. In one such case, it was reported that a line manager would not consider a proposal to transfer a culturally skilled worker into a community liaison role, where they could have provided needed support to a non-Aboriginal team, until they 'succeeded' in meeting the reporting requirements in their present job, with the result

that the Aboriginal staff member left. A senior manager in another state also raised the reporting issue:

You know, the reporting side of things often comes out. You know, “They never send their reports but when I rang them and talked to them, they are doing some incredible stuff, but they don’t send their reports on time, but they are getting paid more than me because they are in a remote community but I’m their boss so, you know, they should just bloody do it.” So there’s all that sort of underlying – I heard somebody describe it as sort of micro aggression that sort of operates all the time, constantly, for Aboriginal people. [Non-Aboriginal senior manager]

Managers’ views varied considerably about whether there should be (or could be) strictly identical standards of performance for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff, or whether there should be greater flexibility in response to the circumstances of Aboriginal staff and the realities of the ‘24/7’ nature of the job.

Yeah, look I’m not quite sure where I sit with it. I certainly have a bit of sympathy for the view of if somebody’s being paid to do the job, they should do the job but I think at the end of the day I come down to a bit of a more pragmatic approach. Let’s just do what we need to do and get what we need to do and appreciate that – let’s work with people’s strengths and if that’s not their strength then let’s support them in that, help them to increase that capacity, or get to a situation where look, they are working really hard in this other area that we could never do, let’s give them a bit of a break. And it’s a bit of a trade-off, of that’s your need, your whitefella organisational need to report, and it’s important, but ... your staff member[s] priority is making sure that people aren’t killing each other and they are feeding their kids and they are trying to work across different family conflicts on a daily, hourly, minute by minute basis ... they are the stresses they are having to cope with, so at the end of the day are they going to think, are they going to think, “shit, I need to fill out a two page report”? Is that going to be thought of as being important? Maybe not. That’s the way I’ve operated as a manager of Aboriginal staff. It’s not about excusing, it’s about understanding and it is different.

Although sympathetic, this manager implicitly identified the organisation’s and the staff member’s priorities as different. While recognising it was a job “that we could never do” the issues were nevertheless viewed from an organisational perspective. The challenges imposed by external accountability obscured the perspective that the work was being done at all because of Red Cross’s higher priority of achieving change in Aboriginal communities, rather than to meet the bureaucratic reporting requirements of either the organisation or its funders.

These issues are difficult to pin down, because the ways in which participants reflected on their experiences were often hedged around personal sensitivities. Many people within Red Cross talked about the importance – and delicacy – of having the ‘difficult conversations’, but matching the concerns expressed in interviews undertaken for the

research reported here to employment, complaint and incident data collected and reported by Red Cross as part of their internal operations was simply not possible. Suffice it to say that the qualitative data identified a range of issues in recruitment, operational support and retention that suggested a set of multi-dimensional and challenging issues, which I have tried to sketch in a way that is faithful to participants' commentaries.

5.2.3 Accommodating and supporting Aboriginal staff

The Employment and Retention Sub-strategy outlines Red Cross's mission to build an organisational culture that supports and helps to retain Aboriginal staff and volunteers, including building systems for mentoring and networking, which is specifically mentioned as one of the three key 'missions' of the strategy. Organisational support for Aboriginal staff depended largely on the knowledge and capacity of individual managers, and occasionally on the involvement of more senior staff, the use of external consultants and even the intervention of state Executive Directors. At the time the field work for this thesis was conducted, no formal structures internal to Red Cross had been established to provide support to Aboriginal workers. As Red Cross staff, Aboriginal employees had access to the Employee Assistance Program, an external professional counselling service, but this was a 'generic' service that was not seen by participants as providing culturally-specific counselling services. Aboriginal participants who had used the service had not always found it helpful or culturally appropriate. The mentoring system envisaged in the strategy was not in place (nor did there appear to be such a system more broadly within Red Cross), nor was there a system to support networking amongst Aboriginal staff, although some informal networks and friendships developed as a result of the national Forum and between individuals who met through attending training courses together. In early 2012, a senior manager proposed a strategy to Red Cross's Community Development Practice Working Group for reverse mentoring of non-Aboriginal staff engaged in community-based work: a 'buddy system' for two-way learning that is considered best practice in Central Australia where it is called '*malparrara way*' (Scougall, 2008; Farmer & Fasoli, 2011), potentially a highly effective means of increasing intercultural capacity. There was no formal process for incorporating this approach into Red Cross's community development practice, however, and no budget has been provided for it to date.

In Queensland, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit, headed by an Aboriginal group manager, provided informal personal support (such as advice and counselling) to

Aboriginal staff to a greater degree than in other states and territories. Its role was mainly to provide strategic policy and program advice in that state, but the unit had also initiated other activities such as cross-cultural training for non-Aboriginal staff and 'leadership' workshops aimed to strengthen and support Aboriginal staff. Several participants in Queensland spoke appreciatively of these workshops and had found them to be healing and empowering experiences. The unit also provided a mechanism to provide an Aboriginal response to issues of concern, such as the complaints about the treatment of Aboriginal staff during an emergency deployment (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.4). The debriefing was seen by Aboriginal staff in Queensland as an important validation that these experiences were taken seriously by Red Cross and the opportunity to propose constructive solutions was valued.¹⁰⁹

Support for Aboriginal staff in mainstream areas

Nearly all of the Aboriginal research participants worked in Aboriginal programs or services and only a very small number worked in 'mainstream' or general positions. The experiences of the few participants who had worked in general positions suggested that a major problem affecting retention of Aboriginal staff in these areas was their isolation from other Aboriginal staff and lack of organisational and management support. Managers with neither experience of nor preparation for intercultural management did not understand the difficulties faced by, or the needs of Aboriginal staff, especially those who did not have the support of Aboriginal colleagues, and lacked the skills to manage racially or culturally-related problems when they arose. While Red Cross vigorously pursued the expansion of Aboriginal staff numbers the implications of that expansion and the issues that needed to be addressed, such as preparation and mentoring of non-Aboriginal managers to assist them in cross-cultural management, were not addressed.

A senior manager reflected on her role in attempting to support a young Aboriginal trainee in a mainstream service area:

I had a particular incident with an Indigenous trainee that we put on in our [area], because we didn't have people outside of service delivery, so we specifically went out to hire Indigenous trainees. Oh God, it was shocking ... it was shocking for her, because the other staff in the team didn't understand the issues that this young

¹⁰⁹ Despite this, similar experiences during subsequent emergency deployments led to further complaints that were raised at the second national Forum in late 2012.

Indigenous woman had to deal with. The manager there wasn't supportive of her because [they] didn't see her as someone who performed and just wanted someone who did the bloody job. So I was trying to manage [the manager] and I'm trying to keep this girl. We were dealing with a training provider. This training provider was ... he wanted her sacked because they were basically funding it through. They didn't understand the fact that she couldn't really get a grasp of it, whatever. It was awful ... I was flat out trying to keep this woman in her job – or support her to stay in her job. She was by herself and didn't have anyone's support, and she would have gone a lot quicker, and at the end of the day, I had to ask myself, "Did I actually do this poor girl any bloody good?" because I dragged her through hell!

Managers in mainstream areas may not understand the isolation felt by Aboriginal staff, or the need for and value of opportunities to participate in cultural activities, training and other events such as the Forum that support their professional development and provide emotional support and validation. A young woman who worked in a general position felt she needed an extraordinary amount of what she described as "patience and persistence" to survive in her job until an opportunity came to work with Aboriginal people under an Aboriginal manager. During that time she'd experienced the 'everyday racism' of colleagues who did not acknowledge her (and the failure of management to deal with the issue) (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.4), formally complained about a manager who had harassed her, was refused permission to attend NAIDOC Week activities and refused release for Red Cross emergency deployment for which she had been trained. She also had difficulty gaining permission to attend the national Forum and Aboriginal leadership workshops, both of which were activities sponsored and organised by Red Cross for Aboriginal staff.

Like I said, I had to fight. You know, it's like fighting to participate, not just to go away for Emergency Services, but to go to a leadership conference. ... my boss and my managers, see it as not work related. "It's really got nothing to do with work whatsoever. How can you take time off again to go away for these things?" You know? It was put forward from [the Group Manager]. She sent the email out to everyone [all Aboriginal staff] to go to something like this and I put my hand up. I thought it would be fantastic – and it was. I've learnt a whole lot from that. The experience was just unbelievable. The women that I met, and some of the strongest women! Some of the tamest, shyest women, you know, at the end of the conferences, five days – two lots of five days – were like, they were sitting in the back of the room and then at the end of it, they want to be up the front with the microphone. It was just amazing to see. It's just changed my life.

Aboriginal staff in Red Cross programs and services

Most Aboriginal staff in program areas usually had the support of Aboriginal colleagues and in many cases worked in a location where the majority of the staff were Aboriginal. These staff were generally encouraged to participate in Aboriginal-specific training and

were more likely to receive support to attend local cultural activities (although some were expected to attend work related community events in their own time). However, program staff who were directly engaged with Aboriginal clients and communities needed organisational support and understanding of their cultural responsibilities, the cultural pressures they faced and the practical demands on them. They needed organisational recognition from managers “accepting their role as an employer and their cultural competency as an organisation in acknowledging what people have to go through”, which was in fact expected of Red Cross in its formal strategies.

As discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.3), the geographic distance and isolation of many Aboriginal program staff meant they were dealing with distant head office staff who had little understanding of their everyday lives or the cultural and physical pressures of their work. A major challenge for Red Cross was both to understand what organisational support was needed and to find ways to build this competency. The difficulties of doing so were compounded by distance and lack of time and resources. A senior manager who acted for six months in the role of general manager and had responsibility for regional offices and the very remote regions they served, was unable to visit any of these places during that period.

I didn't have the opportunity to get out to those places, purely because of time, multiple challenges around extreme heat and proper resources for travel ... I think the challenges will be at all levels and the support that these people get will be really vital. So their capacity has to be of a high level so that they can work in fairly isolated areas ... [W]e use satellite phones out in the [remote area] and had those extreme heat periods – and sometimes the satellite phones weren't even working and you just didn't know half the time where your staff were – not that that's a bad thing, but you didn't know whether they were okay. Satellites came back up; email crashes. They use all their own personal resources a lot of the time so how do you remunerate that? How do you support them in the immense amount of travel and their time away from home if you're bringing them into the city all the time? And then on the other side of it, they don't want to be seen to be like government workers, flying in and out and not being serious community people ... Yeah, so there's all those resource issues, capacity issues, being able to recruit enough people to do the work, professional development will be a part of those challenges, and depth of understanding for the rest of the organisation about what it's going to cost to actually live the commitment that we've promised.

Without previous remote area experience it was difficult to build organisational knowledge and competence to support staff in these circumstances – for example, to develop an adequate health and safety policy for workers who drive 12-14 hours to reach the remote communities where they work. Several Aboriginal staff complained that for extended periods (months at a time) they were expected to do this in their own time, that

is, to drive on Saturday and rest in the community on Sunday so they would be ready for work on Monday morning.

In one state, head office staff visited remote communities with the Aboriginal staff who worked in the area, both to deliver First Aid training and so that HR could gain direct experience of the working and travelling conditions. However this placed additional burdens and responsibility on Aboriginal staff. During the long journey they had to prepare them for the poor living conditions in remote communities and provide cross-cultural training so their non-Aboriginal colleagues would be aware of cultural protocols and would know how to conduct themselves. As these visitors had not been to Aboriginal communities before – some had never left the capital city – culture shock was a common reaction.

Shocked. -- Some saddened, some cried. I suppose, especially when you see that, and to see first-hand how some of our people are still living out on those communities.

Did they make comments or say things to you?

Yeah, some did, yeah – so you just had to try to work out that you didn't want to be too hard on 'em, just sort of give the answers as brief as you can. You know, there was always comments about "Oh, the place is so dirty" and "There's so much rubbish around" and "Why can't they just pick it up?" Or "too many dogs around" ... I feel I probably could understand where they were coming from and that's why I think prior to going out there we wanted to set those boundaries about photos, about some of the places aren't going to be a clean environment that we're going. We will be going to a hall that doesn't have windows [or] even have chairs, but we'll just make do with what we've got ... I think that's good for us, to take them people out there because it gave them an understanding of some of the issues that we've got to face when we're out there.

In summary, in framing its commitment to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Red Cross had embarked on an ambitious project of employment of Aboriginal staff, but found that it was not adequately prepared for this change and its implications for managers, existing staff, and the new Aboriginal employees – rather, it had employed these staff with the expectation that they would supply the cultural expertise needed. As discussed in the next section on organisational intercultural capacity, this approach of “importing rather than building” such intercultural skills (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B) is common in organisations that need to augment intercultural capacity quickly and Indigenous employment targets are often seen as a performance indicator of organisational capacity. In related research conducted in 2010 as part of the Macquarie University–Red Cross research partnership, a survey using the *Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)* to assess the level of intercultural

competence and sensitivity of the Red Cross leadership team found that the leadership group significantly overestimated its capacity to deal with cultural difference – in other words, it not only lacked the level of intercultural competence needed to lead the major changes that had been undertaken, it also had limited capacity to recognise the need to develop this competence (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B).

5.3 Red Cross intercultural capacity

Red Cross's policy and strategy documents call for and indicate an expectation of a high level of intercultural and organisational capacity to accommodate an Aboriginal workforce and work with Aboriginal communities, yet most of the Aboriginal research participants in 2010-11 had a sense of the organisation as a very 'white', mainstream place that was culturally unaware and had little comprehension of the cultural world of its Aboriginal staff, clients and the communities it wants to engage. The capacity to see and respond to other worldviews, and to recognise the difference between one's own perception and that of others who are culturally different, is the essence of the development of intercultural capacity, and is measured by the IDI not as a set of changes in attitude and behaviour, but rather of changes in worldview across a developmental continuum that progressively generate new, more sophisticated understandings of intercultural encounters (Hammer, 2009; Hammer, 2011; Hammer et al., 2003).

A senior manager described herself as living in "two worlds" – the non-Aboriginal world of the head office where she was based, and the Aboriginal world in which she worked when travelling and working with her staff:

When they're having discussions here in headquarters they're not talking to Aboriginal people, they're talking amongst themselves. We've got to change the face of the organisation, we've got to change the mix of the organisation, we've got to change what the organisation looks like and sounds like and talks like and feels like in order to be able to be an organisation that can be responsive. We just don't have the staffing, we don't have the representation, we don't have the voice. What's there to listen to when there's nobody there?

A senior Aboriginal manager based in a state/territory head office was shocked by her early experience of the poor understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures that was "deeply set inside the professional part of the organisation" and even more prominent amongst board members and volunteers.

And to be confronted also by the – ah – really very limited cultural awareness and competencies inside the organisation – very, very limited awareness, to the point where, in the first six months that I was here, or even less, I'd sat in a meeting with what you would regard as reasonably senior members of the organisation – so people who are employed here – and was referred to as a 'half-caste'. And I just ... you know, I was so stunned. I was absolutely stunned.

Although much had changed in the three years since that incident, it was still a weekly, even daily occurrence to hear what she described as “horrific” comments and she believed change was slowest where there were fewest Aboriginal “voices”, in head offices and non-program areas.

Overall, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants felt that ‘getting it right’ – effectively recruiting, accommodating and supporting Aboriginal staff and working with Aboriginal clients and communities – was not being achieved, and Red Cross had “a long way to go”. Notwithstanding appreciation and respect for some managers and some improved practices to support well-respected policy positions, that had been developed since the first Aboriginal appointments, the intercultural capacity of the organisation was seen by many of the research participants as still limited and dependent on the capacity, knowledge and understanding of relatively few individuals whose own capacity was far from fully developed:

I've found Red Cross to be very supportive of the cultural aspect, the cultural stuff, but that's only because there's really good people in our [state head office] ... because there's a few there that I think have had the experience working with Aboriginal communities before in the past, and kind of transfer that over into their current job roles – but, BUT, I just don't think Red Cross has fully understood the cultural awareness, the cultural understanding part of Aboriginal culture, and I think a lot needs to be done in awareness programs – that actually demonstrate what the culture is about and how you relate that to your job role. I think we need to get that right before we move on to anything else that we need to do within Red Cross. [Aboriginal staff member, remote location]

As the results of the IDI survey suggested would be the case (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B), Red Cross relied heavily on its Aboriginal staff as its primary source of cultural expertise, but these staff were not well-integrated into the organisation as a whole. Their cultural knowledge was concentrated in relatively junior, peripheral positions that were isolated from the major Red Cross centres and decision-makers. During the research period, a small number of Aboriginal staff held positions as program manager/coordinator or regional manager, but at senior levels, a very small group of only three Aboriginal managers was heavily relied upon as almost the sole source of guidance, information and expertise for the organisation as a whole. These were the Head of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy (HATSIS), a new national position that commenced with the appointment of Olga Havnen in January 2008, and two senior positions in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit in Queensland (see section 5.2.3). No other state or territory had a similar senior strategic advisory position, and in other states, Aboriginal staff in regional locations were often called upon to provide informal advice to state and local managers.

The HATSIS position was the only Aboriginal member of the National Management Team¹¹⁰ and carried sole responsibility for all aspects of the organisation's national strategic direction in its Aboriginal engagement, as well as more detailed oversight of some national programs, coaching and mentoring of senior managers, and a *de facto* role as the 'go to' person for all matters concerning Aboriginal programs throughout the organisation.

[W]e don't have any real leadership of Indigenous issues in Red Cross ... I think we look to that role that Olga holds for leadership and guidance and all things, whether it's, you know, what protocols we should use in terms of meetings to the most detailed and complex issues to do with it, but one person cannot possibly do that ...

... you can go to Olga all the time - everyone goes to Olga because she's a one man band, but we really need to spread that capability throughout the organisation and particularly where that interface between our working environment and our people clash or occur.

Olga's breadth of knowledge was described by participants as 'encyclopaedic'¹¹¹ and as attested by many research participants, her advice was sought directly on a huge range of

¹¹⁰ This has been renamed the National Leadership Team (NLT). As a result of restructuring in 2013, the HATSIS position now reports to a member of the NLT and there is no direct Aboriginal representation. The NLT is composed of approximately 18 senior managers: the CEO, the Chief Financial Officer, the eight Executive Directors of the states and territories, and the national directors and heads of key functional areas, including Services & International Operations, Human Resources, Strategy, Planning & Research, Marketing, Fundraising & Communications, and Commercial Operations.

¹¹¹ During her previous career, Olga Havnen had worked in a number of high level management, policy and advocacy roles, as well as in community-based work, and had developed an exceptionally broad network of working relationships and professional contacts. Her professional roles had included: Coordinator, Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the NT; Deputy Director, Northern Land Council; Principal Policy Adviser, Dept. of the Chief Minister (NT); Indigenous Program Manager, The Fred Hollows Foundation; Coordinator, National Indigenous Working Group on Native Title; Senior Policy Officer, Central Land Council; and Executive Officer, Human Rights Branch, Australian Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade. She also served on several national boards, including: ACOSS; Oxfam; Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR); and the Diplomacy Training Program, University of New South Wales.

matters, as illustrated by just a few of many similar comments made by other senior managers (see below). Managers and staff at all levels were in frequent contact with her for guidance, cultural expertise and problem solving that was critical to the development of Aboriginal engagement in their area of responsibility, and for her support and encouragement.

I know that if there's ever any queries, concerns, tensions, there is an ease to be able to get on the phone to Olga and say, "Can you provide advice on this? What's this about?" ... So there is a go-to there, at that level, nationally if there are any issues within this space.

Olga's been a huge player in that. So she's my mentor in this space, so we probably bother her too much but when there's, you know, anything that we – I think, "What do I do?" I ring Olga ... just to bounce ideas off, "What do you think?" "Come along to a government meeting with me." You know, whatever it is, so she I think has been a big factor in helping us to bed it down and for it to feel less fragile.

How she does it is beyond me. She's exceptional ... Massively, absolutely massively! And again, in the leadership point of view it's been spoken out many, many times that the move forward quickly from thinking to massive doing, the amount of weight on one person's shoulders. We will lose that basket that we've put a lot of eggs into and it may well happen and we won't learn from that mistake as an organisation necessarily.

Like Leeanne Enoch, the head of the Queensland unit, Olga Havnen also provided support to Aboriginal staff who were having difficulties in their workplace and was highly regarded by Aboriginal staff as well as by her senior colleagues. Thus, in the early implementation phase of the new policy framework, the most senior Aboriginal leaders in the Red Cross team played exceptionally broad roles covering major strategic initiatives, organisational change management, compliance monitoring, and micro-scale management and support across diverse portfolios – an extraordinary burden in which they were poorly supported in terms of staff, resources and engagement by key organisational elements.

Despite Red Cross's extraordinary reliance on just one or two individuals to guide its strategic direction and implementation of Indigenous strategies, paradoxically, the IDI research found that the leadership group had a much higher estimation of its intercultural capacity than was actually the case. The following sub-sections discuss the IDI research findings and their implications in more detail, before considering attempts to address this shortfall in Red Cross through cultural awareness training.

5.3.1 Intercultural capacity in the Red Cross leadership team – the IDI research

The IDI research (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B) conducted with the Red Cross leadership group in 2010 included participants drawn from the National Board, the National Management Team and other Red Cross senior managers. The great majority of the leadership group were of white Australian background and had grown up in Australia. The IDI research identified a significant gap between the leadership group's perceptions of its intercultural capacity and its actual developmental orientation, and so the group substantially overestimated its level of intercultural competence. There was also a wide range of orientations, so that both monocultural and intercultural mindsets operated within the team.

Howitt et al. argue that these findings have important implications for Red Cross. As discussed above, one was the likelihood that the organisation would 'import' needed cultural capacity and see the recruitment of Aboriginal staff as an important performance indicator of organisational change, expecting these staff to adjust and fit into the organisation's dominant culture norms, rather than recognising the need for broader organisational cultural change. This was also evident in the extraordinary reliance on one individual to provide the intercultural capacity, almost single-handedly, for the entire leadership team. Some in the leadership group were aware of the over-reliance and the risks of expecting so much of one individual:

And I see that as one of the risks ... you know terrific for example to have Olga in the organisation – the disadvantage is that "Oh, it's an Aboriginal issue, we'll see what Olga thinks, we'll see what Olga thinks, we'll see what Olga thinks." Well, that's great, but it just can't just be a single person, dependent on Olga can it? And that's not in Olga's interest or the organisation's interests. So I think that is definitely a risk for us.

Concerns about the pressure on individuals and the risks of this reliance expressed by participants during the field work for this thesis were justified by events. Despite the breadth of the role, during the research period the HATSIS position had little practical support (such as administrative assistance). Two additional national positions were created in 2011: National Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs (ATSIP) (Services); and Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Engagement (Human Resources). These senior positions, especially the HATSIS role, proved difficult to fill. After Olga Havnen's resignation in 2011 (before the other national

positions were filled), her position remained vacant for approximately 15 months. When it was filled, the new incumbent resigned after three months and the substantive position remained vacant for a further 11 months. Similarly, the first person appointed to the position of National Manager, ATSIP, resigned after seven months.

A further difficulty facing the leadership team was that with such diverse intercultural orientations, the IDI research indicated the likely difficulty of reaching a clear consensus on an agreed course of action in response to the challenges of implementing Red Cross's strategic commitment to working with Aboriginal peoples. Not everyone shared Olga Havnen's vision or understood the approach she advocated and there were tensions, misunderstandings and disagreements about implementing Indigenous strategy at state and territory level. Reflecting on her time with Red Cross as former HATSIS, Havnen recognised in retrospect that although the leadership group was using the "same language", as individuals they did not have a shared understanding of the terms used or mean the same things. Indeed, major conflicts within the leadership team about implementation of strategy were a significant contributor to Havnen's decision to resign.

A corollary of the diversity of intercultural orientations assessed by the IDI amongst the leadership group is that essentially the development of intercultural capacity is a question of the growth and change of individuals through their own experience and responses to intercultural encounters and alternative worldviews. While many participants spoke of a Red Cross 'journey' in this space (discussed further below), they saw it largely in organisational terms. Only a few non-Aboriginal participants saw 'the journey' as a transformation that also needed to take place on a personal level through experience and personal interaction at the cultural interface. A senior manager reflected that while the senior leadership understood the issues in principle, few at the leadership level understood the challenges of this journey or their own position of white privilege.

I would argue not that there's a lack in this organisation of senior understanding of the issues in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders ... the history, the impact, the life expectation difference, the health difference, the education, a lot of them know the impact of government policies, of failed this and failed that – so I think they've got that sort of knowledge. What I don't think they have is just that practical knowledge. You know like a lot of us who've worked over time with Aboriginal people, with Aboriginal communities, in or alongside Aboriginal organisations – it's not something you enter into lightly and it's a huge learning journey and you have to be prepared to fall on your face and pick yourself up and keep going again, and you have to be prepared to be incredibly flexible and change your mind and find another way to do things ... and I don't know that we don't have this clear but it is a genuine question for me. Do we have what you'd probably call the heart and the guts for the work? ... for the level of challenge and dedication

and commitment that this work requires? I don't know ... And no sense of privilege! See, I think you know that kind of understanding that was very painful for many of us ... white, middle class, well educated – that understanding of what privilege actually means ... to actually still see how privilege works in your own life. You know I am gob-smacked that there are so many people here who are my peers in all those sorts of ways, who haven't been on that journey.

5.3.2 Cultural awareness training in Red Cross

Amongst Aboriginal research participants in this study there was a widespread view that organisation-wide, Red Cross lacked cultural knowledge and awareness and that *all* non-Aboriginal staff should receive cross-cultural awareness training that would equip them to relate to and work with Aboriginal people, internally and externally. Some states, such as South Australia and Queensland, had previously undertaken some of this kind of training. In Queensland, all group managers received cross-cultural training in the early period of expanding the Aboriginal engagement and during 2008-09 compulsory cross-cultural training was to be provided to all employees, although this had not been delivered in all locations.¹¹² In the Northern Territory, despite having a large cohort of Aboriginal staff and substantial funding for a number of programs, many of them based in remote communities but serviced from the head office in Darwin, no cross-cultural training had been conducted at all (although this was an objective of the Territory-based strategy developed in 2007). When the field research was conducted in mid-2010 formal cross-cultural training had not been delivered at any of the research sites for some time¹¹³ and no further local or state initiatives were planned as the National office was in the process of developing a national scheme.¹¹⁴

The view that organisation-wide cross-cultural training was needed was strongly expressed at the first national Forum in 2009 and in response, the CEO, Robert Tickner, and Director of Services and International Operations, Michael Raper, made a commitment there that Red Cross would undertake the training. In the event, the training

¹¹² A regional manager in Northern Queensland reported in May 2010 that the training had not been offered in the two years she had worked for Red Cross and had only been offered in the capital, Brisbane, not the regions where the majority of Aboriginal programs were offered

¹¹³ Some informal local sessions had been conducted in one or two Red Cross locations, and at one discrete community in Queensland, all Red Cross staff were required to attend a 'culture camp' conducted by community members before working with that community.

¹¹⁴ In early 2014, the organisational cross-cultural curriculum was still in development and training was expected to commence during that year.

was not 'organisation-wide' but was targeted to non-Aboriginal managers: members of the National Management Team (including state/territory Executive Directors), HR managers responsible for recruitment, and non-Aboriginal managers and team leaders who managed Aboriginal staff or worked in Aboriginal programs. The national rollout of the training began in November 2010 and concluded in July 2011. It was conducted in nine two-day workshops in seven capital cities, attended by approximately 190 managers.

The training package was developed by an urban-based Aboriginal consultancy firm that specialised in working with the business sector to improve cultural competency and was adapted to Red Cross needs with assistance from Red Cross senior staff. One of the senior staff involved said the training aimed to be "fairly generic one size fits all" – a general introduction to set a national benchmark in cultural awareness for non-Aboriginal senior staff ("so that we know everyone at least is at that level"). The main aims were, broadly,

to lift our recruitment, to have people better engaged with communities and plan and implement their programs better, and to look after and understand their staff better, I guess were the three aims.

The first day provided general information about Aboriginal cultures and the historic impact of colonisation and government policies; the second day focussed on Red Cross policies, procedures, staff numbers, recruitment and community engagement strategies. The training was supplemented by resource materials such as DVDs and books, and a handbook that provided state-based information about Aboriginal traditional landownership and languages, and contacts for local organisations. After the first sessions in Sydney (NSW) and Melbourne (Vic) in late 2010, some Aboriginal staff were invited to attend the training workshops held in their state/territory to provide "local input" about language and cultural practice in their regions. Some travelled a considerable distance to attend the city-based workshops, often meeting senior managers in their state or territory for the first time. One of these staff was very surprised at the lack of experience amongst managers:

... one of the questions I remember that really struck home to me, was: "How much experience have you had working in Aboriginal communities?" and the table that I was with, the four other people that were there, one had only had an experience working as a fishing guide near homelands, and the others just didn't have anything at all, so that really surprised me a lot.

Another concern was the use that might be made (by the training organisation) of the cultural knowledge that this participant and other Aboriginal staff who had grown up in traditional cultural settings had provided.

They were actually blown out by the ways of working up here, with sorry business and ceremonies and things like that. They didn't have anything in their courses about dealing with that, and a concern that I had was ... what they do with that information? Whether they use it – that's fine if Red Cross uses it, but this is another company that's delivering to Red Cross, and the feedback – because the facilitator was just so happy with the information and I remember comments that he was making, "I can't wait to present this at the next workshop!" So, whether he was meaning it for Red Cross, or outside ...

The national cultural awareness training took place after most of the interviews for this research were completed, so it is not possible to assess whether participants perceived any change resulting from the training, but that would be a worthwhile research question for the future. The feedback given by those who participated in the workshops was generally very positive and participants in this research who attended the training thought it was well received by the non-Aboriginal staff who took part. However, some research participants (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) expressed reservations.

... they were just soaking up any information, so they didn't know (slight laugh) what was good and what wasn't, I guess. The feedback was they were thankful for the information they got, and they were very positive, and for us, I guess, that live it and live with our language and culture every day, we thought that there could have been more substance to that workshop.

A non-Aboriginal manager who had acted for several months as a first-time manager in an Aboriginal program had gained some personal experience by the time she attended the training, and reflected that while it would have been helpful at the outset, she would have been unable to see flaws that were now evident to her.

I think that I would have been happy for anything in some ways because, I guess similar to other staff, like you are in some ways desperate for some knowledge because you know that you either do or you may have Aboriginal staff that report to you or that you work with, or you are working with those communities, so any kind of skills or information you can get is really helpful and I think maybe it's part of not knowing the context necessarily to not be able to see some of the holes in it.

The major concerns were that the training was too 'generic' and did not explore the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, and that it 'brushed over' difficult aspects of Australian history which still widely impact Aboriginal people and communities.

It was just a generic one and we all know that every community's different with their culture, and of course, language. I mean, we're diverse. We're not the same culture and language all over the country ... and when there were people asking confronting questions, or sensitive questions, they just – "Oh, it's OK," you know? They just didn't want to deal with the hard stuff, and I think in order to move on and work good way together in the future, we also need to acknowledge and recognise what's happened in the past ... I mean, there's still a lot of grief and healing that needs to happen in our communities, you know, for various reasons, and Stolen Gen¹¹⁵ is one of the reasons. You know, that's impacted on so many families ... It was all just wishy-washy to me. Just flipped over, just kind of brushed over everything ... just, you know, "Yeah, don't want to deal with that hard thing," and I thought, come on! We have to deal with that! It's a part of our life, you know?

From the perspective of Aboriginal staff, coming to an understanding of the impact of past policies such as those which resulted in the Stolen Generations was not purely theoretic or historic, nor a matter that affects only clients or client communities. A number of research participants' parents or grandparents had been removed from their families, and some had themselves been 'taken away' and brought up in institutions. These and other aspects of Australia's colonising history have had a direct and continuing impact on their own lives and on all Aboriginal peoples (Howitt et al., 2012). Some non-Aboriginal staff shared this concern about 'brushing over history':

No, it hasn't changed anything. It was all about letting people off the hook basically. There was lots of "oh it happened, but you don't need to feel bad about it, it's not your fault", "you shouldn't feel badly about it", "nobody's blaming you." ... And I said to him at the end ... "I actually have to tell you I don't agree with you about that. I don't think that's very helpful ... We need to say "We feel responsible, we'd like to do something about it," and that sense of responsibility to tell us to do something different.

One of the senior staff who had been involved in developing the training was aware of the concerns of Aboriginal staff, and acknowledged that the training was only intended to inform and raise the general level of awareness in the organisation.

Yeah, I think some Aboriginal staff felt it was too basic, it was too generic, and they wanted it to be at a higher level looking at cultural competency so really looking at and confronting your own individual views and behaviours, but we don't think the organisation is at that level – get to the cultural awareness stage first ...

Feedback forms were collected at each of the workshops, but the training was not formally evaluated.

¹¹⁵ The Stolen Generations: i.e. the removal of mixed-race Aboriginal children from their families which operated until the 1970s (HREOC, 1997).

So did we achieve what we wanted to? Haven't tested it so I'm really going off gut feeling ... I think as a general awareness raising exercise it was really valuable. There is a much better understanding of and enthusiasm for NAIDOC Week across the organisation, which I think is a really good indicator of increased cultural awareness, that people 'get' NAIDOC Week and that it's the pre-eminent week in the Indigenous calendar and people go to events ... and you see NAIDOC posters up everywhere this year ... and I think if there's a much greater awareness of NAIDOC Week then there's a much greater awareness of stuff across the board but then, you know, in more concrete terms, I've been really disappointed, particularly with HR. You know, on the second day ... we focussed on Red Cross policies and procedures ... and one of the foundation documents we talk about is the Employment and Retention Sub-strategy that has the 6% target in it and a few guiding principles about how we are going to go about building our Indigenous workforce, and one of the state-based HR managers who was at the training, some months afterwards sent me an email going, "Oh, someone's asked me about the Employment and Retention Sub-strategy. I've never heard of this document. Do you know where to find it?" And it was like "oh – [groan] Fuck me – Mate!" And yeah, this is a HR person who this should have been really directly speaking to. They were given a copy of it in the papers they were given, and four months later he's emailing me going, "What's this Employment Retention Sub-strategy?"

This manager's assessment that the organisation was really only at the 'cultural awareness' level and not ready for more sophisticated training was borne out by the account of a manager in one of the states/territories that had previously conducted cultural awareness training, where some staff had to walk out of the training "because it was too confronting". Increased awareness and participation in events such as NAIDOC Week, while a starting point, is somewhat reminiscent of the FaHCSIA recommendations (for example, to hold a film night), or of the superficial appreciation of the 'ethnic' food and music aspects of multiculturalism while failing to come to terms with deeper issues of divisiveness and intolerance (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010) and fell well short of the level of awareness and intercultural capacity targeted by Red Cross.

5.4 Red Cross interfaces

In contrast to the overwhelming view of Aboriginal participants, few of the non-Aboriginal senior managers who took part in the research or were interviewed for the IDI research identified cross-cultural training as a high priority for themselves or for the organisation in general, although many of the senior leadership group were well aware of and concerned about their own and the organisation's lack of experience, expertise and cultural knowledge. This paradox – that developing this expertise is someone else's problem, or that an Aboriginal 'expert' can be relied upon to fill the gap – is at the core of the challenge of organisational change for Australian NFPs moving into new relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: it construes 'the problem' as an

Aboriginal problem, not as one which must be tackled by addressing the assumptions of its dominant culture. Rather, the focus of concern was more often about the pace at which the organisation was proceeding without adequate information, resources, and ‘time to think’, and the lack of attention given to long-term planning (e.g. workforce planning) and implementation.

Only two or three senior managers named the attitudes and behaviours of some colleagues as everyday racism (or racism at all), but many thought that the ‘old Red Cross’ – that is, the state boards, the national board, and the membership – were rife with conservative, old fashioned views and racist attitudes, or at least hostility to Red Cross’s new priority of working with Aboriginal people.

I attended a members’ Zone meeting in [regional town]... and I was talking about programs and [a new program for Aboriginal people] coming to town and our focus on Aboriginal communities and one of the members there said to me “So why don’t Aboriginal people volunteer and become members and help out?” ... You know, it’s the “We are sitting here supporting Red Cross and raising the money but spending it on the blackfellas and they are not getting involved” and I thought if an Aboriginal woman walked into that room, I can’t imagine anybody walking up to her and saying, “Welcome, come and sit next to me”.

In the context of recent, major changes to the structure and governance of Red Cross which have reduced the power of state and territory boards and removed their financial powers (as recently as 2010) and the control of local groups over funds and activities, potential resentment about new Red Cross directions were a more immediate concern: they “are Red Cross” and members still had powerful influence, especially in rural/regional areas.

In some of the places where I visited it’s like going into a redneck town and it’s a very difficult issue but I think we do need more effort in bringing the Red Cross wider families particularly of members and older members along. They are not on this bus.

The advisory board is representative of the membership and they’re generally older people ... I think membership is problematic for this organisation because the membership hasn’t turned around with the rest of the organisation. The volunteers we can choose and assign volunteers to a role that is on strategy, but the members are very much a law unto themselves and that’s a concern.

There was some pre-occupation with ‘getting people on the bus’. Some of the senior leadership group felt that the shift in direction in Red Cross had left members and volunteers of Red Cross behind and they were seen either as ‘dead weight’, not supportive

of and incapable of constructively assisting Red Cross's new directions, or as an untapped resource that had been grossly underestimated and under-utilised, and had been offended and hurt by the changes that had taken place more broadly in the organisation (McDonald & Warburton, 2003; Warburton, 2009). While there had been some efforts to generate support for the Indigenous engagement (for example, Olga Havnen and some Aboriginal program staff had addressed several zone meetings at the request of senior managers) this had occurred on an *ad hoc* basis as a result of the efforts of individuals, rather than as an organisation-wide priority targeted to effect a cultural change.

5.4.1 What cultural interface?

Much of the direct interface between Red Cross as an organisation and Aboriginal staff took place between program managers/coordinators and their staff, and in the remote interaction between senior managers, head office administration or HR staff, with distant Aboriginal program workers. Many senior staff had limited contact with Aboriginal employees who were often a relatively minor part of their broader area of responsibility (or not in their area of responsibility at all) or were seen to be the responsibility of others who had 'expertise'. Perhaps understandably, there appeared to be greater awareness of other internal Red Cross interfaces and the tensions between members, state/territory and national boards, volunteers and staff, and little or no consciousness of the cultural interface between Red Cross and its Aboriginal staff.

Although Aboriginal staff might be asked to speak at members' meetings or contribute to cross cultural training, the idea of opening a dialogue, of 'two way' learning (Suchet-Pearson & Howitt, 2006; Yunupingu & Muller, 2009; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009; Howitt et al., 2013), exchanging information and drawing on the wealth of knowledge and resilience within the Aboriginal staff as a group did not seem to have been considered or to be possible. The national Forum seemed to be a sincere attempt to support and 'listen' to Aboriginal staff, but did not shift the balance of power, nor was there any indication that there was any perception in the senior leadership of the need to do so. This was reflected in the observation of Aboriginal staff who found that when they attempted to challenge "up there", "you just get knocked back on your backside again".

Rose identifies this experience of the system and labels it “deep colonizing”:

A critical feature of the system is that the ‘other’ never gets to talk back on its own terms. The communication is all one way, and the pole of power refuses to receive the feedback that would cause it to change itself, or to open itself to dialogue. Power lies in the ability not to hear what is being said, not to experience the consequences of one’s actions, but rather to go one’s own self-centric and insulated way. (Rose, 1999)

However, there were individuals, including some in senior and powerful roles, who actively sought a dialogical exchange and who regarded listening with humility as a critical part of their learning:

[F]or me, I had to learn so much – in my growth, knowledge, experience and leadership, this area of work has taught me the most in my time with Red Cross, and that’s from our own staff, our own Aboriginal staff including Olga, and you know, from Robert, but also from our partners on the ground ... I just think, given that, you know, we’ve got the First Australians, we’ve got no engagement, no knowledge – you know, not even on the radar, I just felt that that was completely unacceptable and it’s something that we have to redress and we have to do it correctly against all of the guidance and support that Olga’s given us. We’ve got to hear it and we’ve got to do it ... and I reckon if we can do this stuff right we could have an impact and that’s where I get my drive from and this area of work is – I’m really proud of it but I want the whole organisation to feel proud of it and to embrace it and I can’t see that yet across the country.

Given the preponderance of dominant culture background of the great majority of senior staff, however, opportunities, people and experiences to engage with and learn from were limited if they had not brought such experience with them from a previous professional life. As the senior manager who “lived in two worlds” observed, in head offices “they’re talking amongst themselves”. The leadership group was heavily reliant on the very few Aboriginal staff at senior levels for advice, guidance and information and so these interactions were with individuals who by the very nature of their roles were very skilled intercultural actors who were experienced in working with large organisations and could move easily in both worlds. They could ‘fill in the gaps’ across the interface, communicate with both sides, translate cultural worlds – in other words they did all the intercultural work.

I am Olga’s number one fan. Because she understands the practicality and she listens to the people, and she gets out and about. And her leadership is based on her knowledge, her vision ... and I don’t know if any of the EDs could have a vision like Olga’s, because it’s not their community. There are some aspects it’s like a completely foreign, different world ... And I actually think if Olga were to be that frustrated that she walked away, we would be in serious trouble. It would be a while before that gap could be filled.

5.4.2 The 'journey'

The phrase “we’ve got a long way to go” cropped up frequently in research interviews: for non-Aboriginal staff it was usually “we”, but for Aboriginal staff it was more often expressed as “*they*’ve got a long way to go”, or “Red Cross has a long way to go”. The idea was that Red Cross was on a ‘journey’ and the starting point could be identified quite clearly – there was a time, quite recently, when Red Cross did not work with Aboriginal people or to address Aboriginal disadvantage, and now it was. The comment was often made in terms of how effectively Red Cross might have managed so far to undertake actions that would enable or expand its capacity to do this work, often in the context of identifying one, or many, shortcomings. The journey was about learning how to build capacity and competence, learn about Aboriginal cultures, employ Aboriginal staff, establish relationships and ultimately have some kind of impact on Aboriginal disadvantage. Some saw the journey as a set of achievements or progress goals, others as a transformation of Red Cross culture into a more dynamic, diverse and modern organisation.

The nature of the journey was largely seen as a set of skills or a knowledge bank to be acquired, rather than a process that required fundamental shifts in the way the organisation functioned and perceived itself.

I think the challenge is actually about having an internal good look at itself, the organisation. I think while it has the vision and has articulated the need, what it hasn't done is actually analysed its capacity to do that ... it's almost like the organisation is blinded by itself – it's a little bit of hubris in that you've got the emblem and all this long history: it naively assumes it can just jump in and can focus outward and change the world. It can in some areas of emergency and disaster and other things that are its absolute core for the last 150 years; you can't in areas of such massive scope as Indigenous disadvantage. It doesn't realise that yet, still. It still doesn't. It's blinded by itself, so it hasn't looked at itself in the mirror. It doesn't have the capacity and I think that's a fundamental flaw. It can be rectified if a proper self-analysis is done and I think Olga's achieved massively given the internal barriers and challenges, which is really all about Red Cross itself [laughs]. These things are rectifiable, but it means a different type of leadership to get that done.

5.5 Conclusion

The high level of intercultural capacity anticipated in Red Cross's strategic and policy documents was not matched at this time by organisational capacity to recruit and retain Aboriginal staff, to integrate Aboriginal staff throughout the organisation, or to effectively

support, mentor or manage them. The organisation was not well prepared for expansion into its Indigenous engagement and relied heavily on Indigenous staff for their cultural expertise in delivering programs and services, and guiding its strategic direction in this area. It was slow to recognise the need for development of broader organisational intercultural capacity or to understand the kind of changes that were needed. Nor did it recognise that development of this kind of organisational intercultural capacity implied ‘two way’ change and structural empowerment of its Indigenous staff – “giving voice to people whose voices are often not heard” – and a willingness on the part of management “to hear the opinions of workers, accept criticism, debate issues and, where necessary, change practices” (Whiteside et al., 2006, p.430). Senior managers found it was difficult to have the “brave conversations” that could open a discourse and organisational reflexivity on these issues, and the diversity of intercultural orientations within the leadership group meant there was not a shared understanding of the overarching aims of the strategy and how to implement it.

The next chapter will consider more closely how Red Cross approached the implementation of its vision and strategy, and the tensions that developed as the gap between policy and organisational capacity caused it to diverge from its strategic intention to adopt a community development approach to Indigenous engagement. Red Cross’s traditional organisational strength in emergencies, and confidence in its capacity to act quickly in crisis were applied to this engagement and proved to be powerful influences on the way it approached the work and the critical interfaces between itself and the Aboriginal people and communities it wanted to help.

Chapter 6. Implementing policy: community engagement and community development

At the time the field work for this project was undertaken in 2010-11, many of the participants held the job title 'Community Development Officer', yet the great majority were employed in service delivery positions that involved little or no community development work. Although Red Cross's policy and strategic documents, finalised during 2007 to 2009, strongly emphasised the intention of adopting community development approaches and long-term community engagement and partnership, the model of most of Red Cross's work with Aboriginal people when the fieldwork was undertaken remained focussed in contracted service delivery.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Australian Red Cross's engagement with Indigenous Australians had expanded rapidly in some states/territories in a relatively short time frame, yet the nature of the engagement with Aboriginal people and communities varied considerably from state to state (or territory). Nationally, the programs varied enormously. They ranged from breakfast clubs, nutrition and family budgeting, to services for the homeless, for ex-prisoners, mental health support, family support (e.g. families under review by state authorities for child neglect), and youth programs, amongst others. Some were programs that were initiated and funded from within Red Cross or by other philanthropic donors, but most were contracted government-funded programs. Despite the emphasis on the development approach and community-driven partnerships articulated in Red Cross's *Indigenous Core Policy Principles* (Australian Red Cross, 2007b) (Appendix C), the organisation found itself three years later with a raft of contracted, often unconnected programs, a predominant service delivery model and an enormous challenge to try to shift the focus of its engagements with Indigenous Australia to community development and partnership relationships with Indigenous community organisations.

This chapter, then, investigates the ways in which Red Cross as an organisation had approached the cultural interfaces it was creating with Aboriginal communities and how its history and culture, combined with a lack of networks and relationships with Indigenous Australia or experience in community development, influenced its approach.

6.1 Strategy and implementation

The rapid expansion of Red Cross's Aboriginal engagement and drive to begin work as quickly as possible may have been due in part to a degree of regret and embarrassment that as a major national institution, Red Cross had previously failed to address the needs of Aboriginal people in its nearly 100 year history. This was felt to be an important driver of change by many in the senior leadership group, and was acknowledged publicly by the CEO on several occasions (Tickner, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009b, 2009a, 2010).

Despite its lack of organisational experience in working with Aboriginal issues and peoples, this interaction in the new priority area of Aboriginal disadvantage was often pursued with a sense of urgency, action and rapid advancement that was unavoidably influenced by Red Cross's history, culture and traditional ways of working as a 'doing' organisation in response to emergencies. The tendency in many cases was to 'help', framed in terms of providing services, that was consistent with its organisational culture and traditions, but inconsistent with Red Cross's new policy intention of capacity development based on existing community strengths and 'two way' learning. This section reviews the perspectives of senior managers on this approach, the influence of organisational culture, and how concurrent major internal changes impacted on the implementation of national strategy as Red Cross shifted from multiple state/territory societies to 'One Red Cross'.

6.1.1 National leadership

Amongst senior managers who took part in the IDI research, there were mixed views about the speed of the expansion and drive to 'make a difference' to Aboriginal disadvantage. The CEO, Robert Tickner, a former national Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (Tickner, 2001), was regarded as a knowledgeable, passionate and inspirational leader whose commitment was credited as the major driving force that had given the

organisation impetus and momentum to make large steps forward in a short space of time. A senior National office manager commented:

Look, I guess a lot of this work wouldn't actually be happening in Red Cross if it hadn't been for Robert as an individual, as the CEO. There's an incredible history and passion and commitment to Aboriginal affairs, so certainly he has been absolutely instrumental and I think it's quite unique ... to have that sort of leadership probably, in such a critical position.

While the support and advocacy of the most senior managers were inspirational for those who were in tune with the new direction, some in the leadership group judged that there was not total 'buy in' at the organisation's senior levels. There was also a widespread view that many in the national and state/territory boards and amongst the membership did not support the new strategic direction. There was real concern about the pace of change and some had doubts about the wisdom and effectiveness of the way Red Cross was approaching the task, and many who whole-heartedly supported the new policy direction nevertheless had reservations about how the organisation was approaching it in view of its lack of knowledge and expertise.

... it's such a doing organisation. We just jump in and run, run, run, run, run ... I think we need to really get the competencies and the knowledge right up very consistently to equal the passion ... the timing that we move forward from fantastic ideas and great intent into things happening on the ground needs to be realistic and I don't think our leadership always is. I think we really need to be realistic about the time it takes to work out what is your desired role, what are your competencies, where are your strengths and where do you contribute within a relatively new area of work for an organisation, and again we jump to the doing.

There were concerns that the organisation was rushing ahead without investing time in planning, reflection and debate, and without building adequate internal capacity and specialist skills at management level.

I think traditionally HR hasn't had a seat at the table in the planning phase for these things. I mean, there is no one in the organisation saying "here is our workforce plan" ... to bring our people into the next phase of this organisation. We don't have a global workforce plan and that is a worry.

I come from a really diverse challenging work background and my level of competency is not as high as it should be. So as a litmus test, it's really important for us to recognise how much you need to invest and how important it is ... from a professional point of view I think in some ways I'm a good test of how far you can get with general experience. You need to invest in specialist skills really thoroughly and the organisation needs to do it really urgently.

There was also a view that Red Cross had a “poverty mentality” and was either reluctant to make the necessary investment or had not understood the need for it. Several senior managers commented that the culture of the organisation did not allow room for debate, to challenge or ask questions – to have the “brave conversations” which might have negative repercussions or be interpreted as racism or lack of support for this priority area.

I do think there is good pockets of the organisation that can have the brave conversations. That doesn't go all the way to the top and I don't think it necessarily translates to language because in most cases when I hear really pretty forceful feedback going up the line, it's when the time to stop and think and plan and muck something out is not happening and that it needs to be resourced to happen and they're two things that we don't have. We don't perceive that we have the resources to invest, which for me is really short term visioning and we don't seem to consider that thinking reflective to be a part of the process. It seems to be a – I don't know, a wishy washy academic luxury or something.

A senior National office manager discussed their concern that there was some pressure on state/territory Executive Directors to secure resources for this priority area, and there was a sense of urgency, even of competition, between some states and territories to be seen to be leading the way in securing government contracts. Doing so provided the immediate resource base to employ Aboriginal staff and at the same time met the need to be ‘doing’. The strong emphasis on government-funded service contracts as a means of resourcing expansion into new areas reflected broader developments in the mainstream NFP sector, and in the case of Red Cross, may also have reflected its close association as an ‘auxiliary to government’ in emergency services provision, as well as the professional backgrounds of some senior executives who had close links with government.

6.1.2 Organisational culture

All NFP organisations are influenced by their mission, history and organisational culture when they embark on new areas of work. Red Cross's entry into Aboriginal programs was a very significant change from its past absence from the field, but Red Cross was also relatively new to contracting for service delivery. The changes in Red Cross reflected the shifts that were taking place more broadly in the NFP sector in the increasing professionalisation demanded of NFPs to provide services on behalf of government and reduced reliance on volunteers. Such changes were evident in Red Cross as its management and National Board began to pursue new sources of funding and organisational priorities that did not reflect the traditional interests and concerns of its membership and volunteer base.

Although the *Indigenous Policy Core Principles* envisaged reliance on and involvement of volunteers, Red Cross did not have such a base of volunteer support in Aboriginal communities. Red Cross's local history in Australia was deeply embedded in dominant culture and settler Australian history and relied heavily on the work of members and volunteers in their local communities. These linked Red Cross to local histories of service and volunteering, but in a society deeply marked by racial segregation in rural towns (Biddle, 2009) these foundations had acted to reinforce exclusion of Aboriginal people, and these attitudes resurfaced within the organisation. Red Cross's members were generally seen as unsupportive of the new priority of addressing Indigenous disadvantage (as were some long-serving staff). Thus, although the policy intentions of community-based partnerships and strengthening communities would appear to be a good 'fit' with Red Cross's 100 year history of mobilising local community engagement, this support base was seen to be part of the reason for Red Cross's failure to address Aboriginal needs in the past. Moreover, attempting to mobilise this group in support of new Indigenous activities did not seem to have been attempted – instead it was a case of retro-fitting the membership to the new policy and attempting to persuade them of its value after the fact.

One element of organisational culture that Red Cross did bring to the new Aboriginal engagement, however, was its culture as a 'doing', 'helping' organisation,¹¹⁶ capable of mobilising personnel and resources quickly and effectively to meet an urgent need. Red Cross's approach to reinventing itself as an organisation that addresses Aboriginal disadvantage was strongly influenced by its culture of emergency relief and a deep-seated sense of its capacity as an organisation.

Red Cross has a history in Australia of being there, seeing a need and going in and meeting that need ... "We're strong! We're here! We're Red Cross ... to the rescue".

This view of itself and its history established the mode of the early engagement because that was what Red Cross knew best, but it was a mindset that was difficult to shift, as a senior National office manager reflected in 2010:

We're very comfortable in that space of emergency, crisis response. That's what people know and understand best. That's how the organisation can mobilise itself and all of the volunteers and everybody else we need, in a heartbeat, but shifting that

¹¹⁶ Early policy documents such as the summary of 'Our Ways of Working' published on the Australian Red Cross website in 2009, talked about 'what we do to help' (see sub-heading, Table 6.1 in Section 6.1.3).

kind of crisis thinking into something that is much more complex and even more challenging than emergency response – it's kind of like we can't seem to make the shift. We either do the crisis response, or we just do good old service delivery.

The early approach taken in some states/territories suggested a high degree of self-confidence in Red Cross's capacity which may well have been reinforced by securing significant government funding to expand into new programs and locations.¹¹⁷ Much of this early activity commenced from 2007 or even earlier, at a time when the state and territory societies operated autonomously under the direction and decision-making power of their own boards, and well before the development of the national Red Cross *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy* in 2009. Nevertheless, some approaches were vastly different from that outlined in the national policy principles established in 2007, suggesting that either these were not understood, or were interpreted in the light of dominant culture values that assumed that an appropriate role for Red Cross was to deliver what Red Cross thought Aboriginal people needed (or what government contracts determined) rather than to develop responses founded on relationships with the people and communities they were intended to help.

The states/territories that pushed forward rapidly into an Aboriginal engagement often acted with a sense of urgency, rushing into programs and impatient to be *doing* more, rather than taking time to engage and develop relationships first, and respond to community identified needs which were the foundations of the Indigenous policy principles. Some participants felt uncomfortable with this pressure and haste to 'achieve' in a cultural context in which Red Cross had little experience or proven expertise:

... we don't actually think that we are achieving things unless there's output and sometimes I think in particularly cultural areas of work you really just need to sit still and watch and listen a bit and I haven't sat still since I started this job, to stop and listen and try and feel anything rather than just learn it ... I think it's something that's quite common of a lot of not for profits. You run on the smell of an oily rag a bit and you are doers and helpers traditionally, like the welfare model. It's a little bit of a mind-set. For me there's a lot of cultural things in the organisation that first need to shift and really until they are genuinely shifted, I'm not sure that processes, tools, templates, systems, funding, anything else actually gets us a whole lot further.

An example of hasty expansion fuelled by ready availability of funding for contracted services was evident in the Northern Territory (NT). In 2007, the National Board

¹¹⁷ Further analysis of the influence of the availability of funding and resources on program decisions is provided in Chapter 8.

committed approximately \$800,000 per year from internal Red Cross resources to commence Good Start Breakfast Clubs [GSBCs]¹¹⁸ in remote communities, but the implementation of the Commonwealth Government's Northern Territory Emergency Response (the NTER or 'the Intervention') later that year afforded an extraordinary opportunity for further rapid expansion into other activities because of the financial resources it channelled into the NT, including contracts for numerous programs for remote Aboriginal communities that were targeted by the Intervention. From a very few engagements with Aboriginal communities in the NT in 2007, by the end of 2009, Red Cross claimed to be working in 140 discrete communities and town camps.

Perhaps inevitably, the nature of the engagement with most of these communities was superficial. Much of the activity was built around short-term 'fly-in, fly-out' programs (such as short-term training programs) rather than a sustained full-time community engagement. The number of engagements, and communities engaged with, had expanded exponentially, but program staff operated in separate silos and there was little coherence between programs. Of the range of activities that Red Cross had undertaken, potentially complementary programs¹¹⁹ were rarely delivered in the same communities.

While the terms of the government contracts that funded most of these activities may have dictated the locations where they would be delivered, it seems Red Cross did not seek (or was unable to formulate) arrangements that were more logical, cost-effective and strategically integrated to secure benefit by being delivered as complementary programs. The emphasis appeared to be on quantity (i.e. number of communities) rather than the quality and depth of the engagement. The approach in the NT was in marked contrast to that taken in South Australia, for example, where the expansion of community engagement was founded on relationship development and building the engagement through programs that complemented each other and supported or enhanced local initiatives.

[T]he places where I'm confident we're doing some of the best work would be probably in Western Australia and South Australia ... the people who've had

¹¹⁸ Red Cross has delivered school-based breakfast programs in Australia since 1991 and is the largest single provider nationally (Australian Red Cross, 2011a).

¹¹⁹ For example, Red Cross breakfast clubs and government funded nutrition programs and family budgeting training could potentially have been implemented so as to engage the same groups of participants rather than a 'scatter gun' approach.

responsibility for leading the engagement and the relationship building – and here I'm talking about non-Aboriginal managers, advisors ... have really known enough as to how to go about that work ... really making sure that they weren't cutting across anybody's patch ... making sure that what we were doing wasn't inconsistent. [The Aboriginal Health Council] very openly said to me, "No, no, we really like Red Cross. We like the way that they've come in here. We've had a horde of public servants, every government agency, every bloody NGO, to a man just about. They're all trawling all over the land." He said, "That Red Cross are the only ones that we have any respect for" ... And we haven't tried to get in there and cover the ground. It's just been very quiet. Just have the presence, build it slowly, build the relationships first. And that to me, confirms, or reaffirms, if we do this stuff properly, and people know that we're there for the long haul, then we've got enormous potential to work really solidly with people and with communities.

Following the appointment of the Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy and the restructuring of Australian Red Cross from autonomous state/territory societies to 'One Red Cross', largely complete by the end of 2010, efforts to apply national policies were more consistent. For example, many early engagements had started with the introduction of breakfast clubs in Aboriginal communities as a form of ongoing emergency food relief, but as a result of a national review of its food security activities in 2010-11, Red Cross recognised that these activities lacked underlying program logic and did not address structural and systemic causes of food insecurity (Australian Red Cross, 2011a). Thus a shift from food relief to a more considered, comprehensive approach to food security developed: a national Red Cross Policy on Food Security was developed and was approved by the National Board in 2013. Similarly, during this period Red Cross began to question its predominant model of providing services to Aboriginal people and identified a need to shift to building relationships and community development approaches to its work with Aboriginal people and communities.

6.1.3 The transition to 'One Red Cross': implementing national policy

The diverse approaches adopted by the states and territories reflected broader tensions between National office and state and territory senior staff, however, which were heightened by the national restructuring, and which presented particular difficulties for Red Cross in implementing a coherent national strategy in its key priority area of Aboriginal disadvantage and its national 'ways of working' (see Table 6.1 below). Some states/territories had developed their own strategic plans for Aboriginal engagement before the national strategy was finalised. By 2009, the Red Cross National office was

Table 6.1 Australian Red Cross ‘ways of working’

The new direction for Red Cross is underpinned by the following ways of working	
<p>How we work is as important as what we do to help. Our new direction will be underpinned at all times by our commitment to:</p>	
1. Applying our Fundamental Principles	We are guided at all times by the seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross - Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality.
2. Working as auxiliary to government	Although always independent, we work alongside government in meeting humanitarian needs both within Australia and internationally, affording us a unique position in the humanitarian sector and unique responsibilities.
3. Negotiating a role with communities	We work with communities on the basis of reciprocal partnership, combining our resources and their local knowledge and involvement to create solutions that improve the lives of disadvantaged people for the long term.
4. Building on strengths	Recognising the inherent strengths of all people we will deliver training and develop skills to build on these. We help people to take control of their own lives and environments by building on their existing strengths.
5. Prevention through early intervention	We will focus on early engagement to break the cycle of disadvantage, while continuing to support and respond to crises where necessary.
6. Working in partnership	We will work with community groups, business, governments and other not-for-profit organisations to identify and respond to needs in communities. To provide the best outcome we will facilitate instead of delivering services where our partners can do it better.
7. Avoiding duplication	We will attempt to provide services where we can deliver the best outcome. We work closely in partnership with other agencies working towards the same goal to maximise the benefits for disadvantaged individuals and groups.
8. Joining up our responses	We will establish linkages locally and engage with other agencies already working in the community to deliver the best outcomes possible.
9. Acting on evidence	We will ensure our work is based on solid evidence by building our own research capability and by drawing on a wealth of experience, locally and internationally to produce work which is well planned, measured and evaluated.
10. Advocating for change	We will use the information and evidence from our work to highlight the issues faced by the most disadvantaged and marginalised people and communities. We will engage with governments to bring about positive change and talk to the public through campaigns where necessary.
11. Mobilising volunteers	The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is renowned for mobilising volunteers - especially in times of disaster. We know that volunteering helps create cohesive and resilient communities. We will work to increase the level of volunteering in disadvantaged communities to both help strengthen them and to deliver services.
12. Embracing diversity	We strive to understand and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, of ethnically and culturally diverse communities, to people with disabilities and to the different needs of men and women. We will build a more diverse workforce to ensure we are best placed to do this.

Source: Australian Red Cross, A renewed commitment to tackling disadvantage, November 2008

therefore attempting to introduce and apply the national policy when widely different approaches were already established in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia. With programs contracted and staff employed, it was a case of retro-fitting the work that had already commenced to the new policy and trying to introduce new techniques and a greater emphasis on community development approaches around the existing work.

The approaches that had been adopted in the states and territories often did not marry well and sometimes contradicted the concepts, philosophy and 'ways of working' that had been developed by the National office and approved by the National Board. The 'ways of working' applied to all of the Red Cross Key Priority Areas, but as is discussed in the following sections, in the case of its work with Aboriginal Australians, much of the early engagement had not adopted the approach and processes it outlined, such as negotiating its role with communities, early intervention programs, developing partnerships, avoiding duplication and 'joined up responses' with other agencies. The net result was that despite high levels of activity, numerous programs and large expenditure in some locations, by mid-2010, some states/territories had established practices and programs that diverged widely from the aims of the national strategy, to the point that a senior National office manager referred to them as "basket cases".

Although other influences such as state/territory government policies, geographic and demographic, and cultural differences played a part, the degree of autonomy the states and territories retained until as late as 2010 was an important factor in their very different approaches. A senior manager described some tensions between 'National' and 'state' as still very influential in 2011:

A lot of it is the state and National interaction and relationship. So the governing structure of Red Cross until only a couple of years ago was very much dominated by state, it was very state-based. So effectively we had eight Red Cross organisations. Now that flies in the face of our fundamental principles of there only being one Red Cross in a country and ... effectively we now have a national board that is the governance structure. The state boards are now just advisory boards but some of them still operate as if they have control of what's happening in that state or territory and some senior managers, many of whom have been with the organisation for a number of years, still operate quite autonomously and independently even though they are part of a national leadership structure.

National office staff who had responsibility for developing and implementing national policy were met with varying responses from the states and territories, ranging from

collegiate cooperation to stubborn resistance. Some resentment and reluctance to accept what was regarded as ‘National intervention’ was clear from interviews with some managers at state/territory level, and frustration and a sense of impotence was evident in the views of some managers at National level. Some state/territory staff resented policy being imposed from ‘above’ or considered that National office staff did not ‘understand how things work here’.

So there can often seem to be a bit of a ‘them and us’, blaming National office for your bureaucracy and processes or [for] saying “no”. It’s easy to blame National office when there is no money to do something or when, “you know, we want to just expand in this area.” “Well no you can’t because it doesn’t align with our ways of working”... So there is often a conflict between what is the public and stated policy direction, and then how that’s implemented at a state and territory level can look quite different, and the risk management issues with that have shown up over the last couple of years where we completely fucked up some programs that were externally funded and our processes, we just didn’t know what was going on well enough until it was too late and we’ve had to do a fair bit of work to remediate some of those relationships. We have a matrix management system which can work all right but it’s often dependent on relationships and you know people have their own individual personalities and not everybody is selfless or can put their ego aside. A lot of people are about empire building and making themselves look good or their State or their area, often at the detriment of the greater good.

Conversely, some of the states that had commenced their engagement before the development of the national strategy were pleased to have the support of a national structure to strengthen what they had already begun to put in place.

And it’s great now that we do have a national structure to support this rather than it happening within state and territory arrangements. It gives a nice foundation around a policy context. We’ve got those protocols with working with Aboriginal communities, what to do, what not to do. We have a national manager in that area to provide that strategic high-level advice, and we now have all of the sub-strategy documentation to support that. So it’s great. We have all that in place now. It would have been nice to have it a long time ago, but we have it now. So it’s a great thing.

Matrix management

The matrix management system referred to above, aimed to delineate National and state/territory responsibilities but was reliant on personal and collegiate relationships and did not give senior National staff the authority to direct state/territory staff. Tensions were evident both in strategy and policy development, and in implementation and delivery of programs. Some National programs were developed to model the community development approach intended by the national strategy, but while overseen by National managers these were implemented in states/territories by managers responsible for the

program only in their state, resulting in programs running differently in different locations. The concepts and principles of community development were often poorly understood by state/territory managers who tended to manage the programs and staff in the same way they managed their service programs.

I think if I was a manager and I'm running all these different services programs, it would just be really easy to keep running this one like a service as well and not give it the space to breathe and develop and so I think that's meant that there's tension between managers and their community development officers which I think we've helped create ... by supporting community development officers to think differently about how they do this. Yeah, and it's complicated by the fact that this is a national project and there's a little bit of National-state resistance anyway. That makes it harder too. I don't think that's malicious. I think it gets compounded when it's a project that people don't understand well, so I think people don't not do things because they don't want to and they're just being difficult. Well, maybe that's the case in one or two places, but I think it's more that people just don't feel comfortable with it and I think that's why it hasn't happened well, because in 18 months, we've really had very little progress in the program.

Although they had responsibility for the success of their programs and reporting back to funders, these National program managers could not intervene in state implementation. If there were problems, National managers had to report upwards through their National office managers, ultimately to the CEO, who would then intervene with the state/territory Executive Director, “who then comes down on her, or his, team like a ton of bricks. It's not really conducive to happy relationships between me and the team.” Further, National managers could not influence recruitment to ensure that the needed skills were brought into the program (as Red Cross did not have capacity to train its staff in community development techniques) or supervise reporting:

I've had a rap on the knuckles from my boss, recently ... “Oh, you're getting too involved in state implementation stuff. It's not sustainable,” and he's right, it's not sustainable to be involved in that level of stuff and things like recruitment you can't be involved in, but as you can see in this program, one of the key problems is the type of people, the type of skills we're recruiting, when we don't have the capacity to train people ourselves. So it's really critical that recruitment's quite right, but I've found it really hard to find the boundaries in my role between how much I'm supposed to be involved in state stuff and how much not ... But because the program's got so much microscope on it and it's got such a high level of reporting requirements back to [the donor], it's really hard to work out how I can get the detail from states when people need to be mentored to develop these systems ... because we haven't got a good culture of reporting already, so you have to spend time looking at people's processes and how you're going to develop them better in order to do that. So yeah, the structure hasn't been very helpful for me and my role in it has been pretty unclear.

Similarly, the Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy (HATSIS) had no control over implementation of the national strategy in states/territories and could only

provide advice. Some state/territory senior managers sought and accepted her advice while others appear to have rejected or ignored it. The marked difference in approach between some states and territories may reflect the extent to which they understood and were willing to follow the approaches suggested by the Head of Strategy. A National office program manager observed:

There's a broad acceptance at a higher strategic level to work with Aboriginal communities, but it's not clear that the processes are in place throughout the organisation for this to be a success. It's not clear that they're actually taking the advice of Aboriginal people about how programs should proceed, and of particular concern to me is the lack of support around the strategic Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, where there's an expectation for her to operate as an individual in the organisation in an advisory capacity rather than in an implementation capacity, and I understand her to be called in on lots of repairs that need to take place in relationships between Aboriginal communities and Red Cross staff, whereas her advice may not be being sought, or implemented if it is given, about how these programs should take place from the start. But the lack of resourcing, I believe, is telling in terms of the real commitment of Red Cross.

While some power to veto and influence the development of new programs, or withhold approval to tender for government programs that did not fit with the overarching strategy were introduced over time, many programs contracted and initiated before (and even after¹²⁰) the finalisation of the national strategy and corresponding state/territory strategies were a poor fit with the aims of the national policy. For example, the focus of national strategy was on early intervention programs (e.g. pre- and post-natal nutrition programs to prevent diet-related illness later in life) (Australian Red Cross, 2008b) yet in some states/territories many of the contracted programs targeted crisis intervention, the other end of the spectrum. The HATSIS attributed this to the entrepreneurial approach of some Executive Directors.

[The ED] goes out there and gets the business, gets the money, gets things going, but it's not actually in the space we wanted to be in. For example, you know, you can go and get shitloads of money for intensive case management, crisis kind of work, but not really understanding that's not the space we want to be in. We want to be in the early intervention and prevention end.

¹²⁰ In July 2010, a National office manager stated that approximately 60% of programs developed in the states and territories did not go through the national approval process.

6.2 The cultural interface with communities

This section considers cultural interfaces between Red Cross as an organisation and Aboriginal communities, demonstrating very different approaches to community engagement and consultation and the prospects for and barriers to forming partnerships with Indigenous community organisations. Finally, it considers the challenges of the shift to community development practice which was commencing at the time of the field research in 2010-2011.

6.2.1 Community engagement and consultation

Red Cross's initial approaches to community engagement and consultation varied widely, not only between states/territories but between different locations and even different programs operating in the same state, territory or region. The differences in leadership style and in interpretation and implementation of policy were an important factor, but other influences were geographical factors (such as remoteness), the nature and source of funding for the activity, and the knowledge and capacity of individual Red Cross staff. The approaches varied according to the skills and experience of senior managers and their staff, and what was understood by 'consultation' and its purpose.

The remote area trip described by a participant in case study 6.1 below illustrates attitudes that were quite common in some locations (although not typical for the organisation as a whole). It refers to a visit by senior National managers to locations where Red Cross was working that, in the view of the narrator, was in effect conducted as a tourism exercise. The account reflects the range of intercultural capacity co-existing within teams and amongst the senior management group. While the narrator was distressed by the disrespect shown to the Aboriginal residents of the community and the sole Aboriginal person in the vehicle, the story demonstrates the difficulty of confronting (and even processing) incidences of everyday racism and the behaviour of non-Indigenous colleagues. As Essed observes in her account of everyday racism (Essed, 1991), typically, others present were uncomfortable but unable to confront the racist comments and behaviour.

Case study 6.1: A community visit for senior managers

The first trip I did ... we went in to have a gawk at people. It was awful. It was so awful ... afterwards [Senior National Manager] sat down with [my colleague] and I. We were brand new staff, and I was shaking because I was so nervous and I'm still new to all this work, and he said, "You can tell me whatever you think about the trip tonight ... just give me your first impressions" ... and I said, "Do you know, I think I would have lost my job if I'd run a program like that in the last organisation I worked for. I think I would have been fired for that." And then he went to [my colleague] ... he said, "I've fired people for doing that." ... There were these racist comments made in the car ... we just flew in, we basically just drove in and joined somebody on their meals on wheels thing and they said "Oh, do you want to come in and have a look?" at this person's home ... and I said, "I can't. I can't get out of the car, I'm sorry. I just feel really uncomfortable." It was just an instinctual thing, I hadn't really processed it.

We just drove around this community ... had a look and went back again. I just felt – I felt like a tourist looking at people ... and I didn't have the confidence to stand up to this person who was making these really generalised comments about all Aboriginal people. We had an Aboriginal person sitting in the car, with that. I felt sick to my stomach about that as well, but just was kind of in shock as well, that this was how we did things ... I just think there are international standards ... that try to respect cultural differences, and I don't think we've got those in place here. They're not standard practice, so it doesn't protect us against the tendencies of the organisation, which is to work in the way we've always worked, which is really dictatorial ... yeah, I think we mirror greater society so the same sort of barriers that exist and that are causing the continued oppression of Aboriginal people exist here too ... Things like the Practice Manual is a new thing and I think it will take a little while to get traction.

This account contrasts with approaches that sometimes occurred in other states/territories, such as the examples given in Chapter 5, where non-Aboriginal staff were introduced to communities by Aboriginal staff and coached about cultural protocols before the visit, or another location where all staff, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, attended a culture camp run by community members before visiting or working with that community. It should also be noted that there were occasionally instances where Aboriginal staff made cultural blunders because of their own inexperience of communities that were not their own. In one case, because of his own lack of knowledge, a non-Aboriginal manager sent inexperienced junior staff to initiate engagement for their program in a distant town well out of their own region. Their failure to make a respectful approach and open discussions with the acknowledged senior Aboriginal community leader before starting consultations made it impossible for Red Cross to proceed with the

contracted program in that location for a considerable time because of the resulting damage to Red Cross's reputation.

Much of Red Cross's work with Aboriginal communities is mediated in externally funded service delivery activities that are framed in terms of externally determined program requirements rather than either Red Cross strategies or broader community needs and priorities. The nature of this work does not necessarily promote community engagement or allow time for it, let alone the long lead-up time needed to become known to communities and develop relationships – rather, the focus is on clients and case management. Although funding for prior community consultation can sometimes be 'built in' to contracts, it is usually limited to issues directly related to the proposed program and is likely to be what Hunt describes as "ritual 'consultation' with a perception of little feedback or follow-up" (Hunt, 2010). Even the Communities for Children program funded by FaHCSIA, which is founded on community consultation to identify action priorities, allowed insufficient time for effective consultation with Indigenous communities (Muir et al., 2010; Muir et al., 2009, p.xiii; Flaxman et al., 2009, p.v) (see Chapter 3, section 3.1.3). Funded programs do not resource the time and cost needed to develop partnership relationships and making this investment is left to NFPs, which may not have the capacity or understand the need for this investment.

The engagement with Aboriginal communities appeared to be most effective – as gauged by research participants from feedback they had received from individuals and organisations, or through community participation and ongoing collaboration – in regions where it commenced slowly and concentrated on few locations, building up relationships and gradually adding to a suite of small-scale inter-related programs in collaboration and with advice from local Aboriginal community organisations. In these locations:

- Red Cross had developed a knowledge base of community structure, cultural and language groups, families and key organisations
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff had the skills and experience to engage widely with key individuals and community organisations
- time was invested in developing networks, relationships and trust
- managers and senior managers (up to and including the Executive Director) were involved in the development of relationships and resolution of issues
- there was capacity to recognise, respond to and recover from mistakes.

A senior manager described the process and experience of this approach, one in which there was ‘two-way learning’ between managers and staff, and Red Cross and community:

*I thought if I took it very slowly, softly-softly ... took our time and really didn't just race out there and set up a whole lot of stuff ... maybe we start a breakfast program in [remote region] but we do it very carefully and we get sign off and we consult ... you know, the process leading up to getting the approval from the community to do that, we learnt a lot from ... then that gave us the presence then to learn from that ... but also taking a lot of counsel from that ... It's a bit like an onion – like there's so many different layers ... It was very careful sort of nurturing – for me too, because I was kind of learning from [Aboriginal staff] and then that slowly introduced me to their network and through them we got some other trusted Aboriginal people in the community who've stuck by us for five years and they're friends now. They are friends, so they will ring me ... my trusted people ring me and say, “This is **not** working. You need to come up and we need to sort this” ... When we have meetings up there, they'd bring their families and now other elders around and ... it kind of just grew, but it was slow, really, really slow and it's taken us probably five years from that very small beginning to where we are now.*

In some regions, however, expansion into new programs and locations took place with little or no consultation with communities or relevant organisations, or with ‘consultation’ that was cursory or inappropriate. For example, in one state/territory a participant stated that although Red Cross had a partnership MOU with a local Aboriginal community organisation, it competed for and won a contract to provide activities that had previously been delivered in that community by the local organisation, without advising the ‘partner’ organisation of its intention to tender. In another case, when offered substantial funding to undertake a major program in a number of remote communities, Red Cross negotiated funding for a period of consultation, but conducted this in short ‘fly-in, fly-out’ visits where meetings were held mainly with non-Aboriginal community residents (e.g. government agency representatives, teachers, council employees, health clinic staff) with little or no input directly from Aboriginal community members. A National office manager described a consultation visit (related to a different program) to a remote Aboriginal community:

Really, it spoke volumes about how we run trips, how we think through what Red Cross's role is, what level of engagement that we actually have, because things didn't go that well during the trip. It was pretty clear to me that we only had engagement with all the white stakeholders in town, even though we have great Aboriginal staff working with us – like just the CEOs of organisations, the school teachers. Really, we'd only engage with one stakeholder that was easy to engage with ... but we actually have a responsibility to talk to everybody I think and develop our niche. I thought we'd made promises we can't keep. It was pretty difficult.

Some decisions to commence programs lacked prior community consultation as to the appropriateness of the program or the community's need or desire for it.

They said, "We're going to open 20 breakfast clubs." There'd been no engagement with community. There'd been no discussion. "We're going to open 20 breakfast clubs." That was a Red Cross agenda, and I said to my boss at the time ... I said, "How can you do that? How can you say that "This is the solution for you" when you've never even met the people? Maybe they want to do something like a garden? Maybe everyone eats breakfast but maybe, maybe it's to do with kids or babies? Who knows what the community needs are in terms of nutrition?"

I saw some interesting things during my time, just kind of charging in on a white horse, you know, to 'save' everybody and ... that's quite difficult to watch when you have respect for people that it's happening to ... I've seen Red Cross just go in without even asking a community whether they wanted anything to do with them, and suddenly they're running a mental health program there and the community's going, "What are you talking about? We don't even have a mental health problem."

Programs were introduced to some communities that, in the view of the staff who worked in them, were simply imposed without consultation and without the prior agreement of the community.

... unless you've got the community on board and brought them into the discussion from the word go, it becomes a program that's foisted on them and if you really haven't got their interest and input from the start they haven't sort of got any buy-in into it and you're trying to have an outside program driven from outside without the energy and the resources and the – just the input of the local community ... Don't ever take on a program – unless you've done the hard yards with the community consultation, over a long period of time, building a relationship and seeing if they actually want the program. Don't just put it in for the sake of 'there's X amount of dollars over three years, seems to be a good program, why don't we just take this on board and run this program?'

In some regions, Red Cross sought out relevant local community organisations and participated in community meetings before commencing new programs or tendering for service contracts, but in the view of an Aboriginal manager, what was lacking was 'room' for Aboriginal people in the decision-making and willingness to share power or shift the power balance in the relationship:

... making space to allow Aboriginal people into, specifically, a decision-making space and a participation space ... Red Cross letting go of the reins and involving Aboriginal people more in program design. Now, there is a consultative process and there is an opportunity for input, but it's not one that accommodates Aboriginal people. It focusses on a central idea that's developed by Red Cross that passes risk analysis and then they allow Aboriginal people to have input. That's not what I'm talking about. The issue of accommodation is to either collaborate, between the organisation and the Aboriginal community on the central idea of the project, or allow Aboriginal people to propose a central idea for a project or program and then support that initiative. And in that way, Red Cross is very similar to a lot of other institutions, particularly government institutions that have

*had a long history of involvement in Aboriginal issues, where the central idea is always proposed by an external agency and represents really an external agenda for Aboriginal people in that community ... They're not prepared to entertain that or to look at a different approach, and in that sense they're not listening to what Aboriginal people are saying to them, because it **is** being said to them, or it was at the time that I was working there.*

Inability to listen, to 'hear' and respond to Aboriginal voices outside the organisation corresponded with the difficulties Red Cross had faced in listening and responding to its Aboriginal staff, discussed in the previous chapter:

I had informed conversations with Aboriginal people who had participated in discussions with Red Cross who expressed their disappointment that there wasn't adequate listening applied to the interaction between Aboriginal communities and Red Cross. I tried to raise it with [the Executive Director] ... He said "Do you have any advice for me before you go? Do you have any input?" and I said, "There needs to be more listening." And he said to me, "Oh, we do lots of that, that's already covered." He was dismissive.

6.2.2 Partnerships

The increasing involvement of the NFP sector as contracted service providers in Aboriginal programs has attracted both concern and interest from the Indigenous community sector. While on one hand, the mainstreaming policy has potential to enhance effective delivery of services and improve Indigenous access to needed services, on the other it threatens the viability of local Indigenous organisations and may ultimately prove counter-productive if mainstream NFPs see only an opportunity to expand but fail to develop cooperative relationships with Aboriginal organisations that can strengthen both.

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), a national Indigenous peak body, sees potential for partnerships between mainstream service providers and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations as a means of enhancing capacity development of local organisations, making mainstream services more accessible to Aboriginal clients, promoting the development of shared capacity to meet community needs, and building the intercultural capacity of mainstream organisations (SNAICC, 2012).¹²¹ In a recent example of the potential of such partnerships, a group of Indigenous

¹²¹ The SNAICC publication, *Opening Doors through Partnerships*, April 2012, outlines key principles for the development of effective, respectful partnerships with Indigenous organisations, including: commitment to developing long-term relationships; respect for Indigenous cultural knowledge and history; commitment to Indigenous self-determination and to improve long-term outcomes; shared responsibility and accountability; valuing 'process'; redressing unequal or

community organisations in Queensland, unable to secure resources in their own right, made a strategic decision to harness the “brand power” of Australian Red Cross to establish an Indigenous Employment Portal which had placed 250 Indigenous people in jobs in the Brisbane area over a period of 18 months (Bond & Brady, 2013).

However, much depends on the willingness and capacity of mainstream organisations to engage in such partnerships. A recent report by the NT Coordinator-General for Remote Services¹²² was highly critical of the proliferation of mainstream NFPs as preferred providers in the NT because they lacked “prior relationships, cultural competence, sector expertise and ... a permanent presence in Aboriginal communities” (ONTCCGRS, 2012, p.55). The report noted that there was no contractual requirement for mainstream NFPs to enter into formal partnerships or to develop the capacity of Aboriginal organisations, and recommended the development of a partnership toolkit, a mandatory capacity development plan and a national accreditation scheme similar to AusAID’s accreditation of international NGOs.¹²³

Red Cross’s promotional literature on its work with Aboriginal Australians emphasises its intention to work in ‘genuine partnership’ with Aboriginal people and communities. While consultative relationships (and MOUs) were quite common, during the field research formal partnership relationships with Aboriginal community organisations were rarely mentioned by participants and did not seem to have been attempted often.¹²⁴ Yet, Red Cross’s *Ways of Working* (2010d, Guideline 6) states that in “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and in other communities experiencing long standing disadvantage, partnerships are an essential prerequisite for progress” (Australian Red Cross, 2010d, p.17).

discriminatory structures and relationships; being open to “working differently” and recognising that mainstream approaches are frequently not the most appropriate or effective (SNAICC, 2012, pp 18-19). This publication can be accessed at http://www.snaicc.asn.au/_uploads/rsfil/02804.pdf.

¹²² Olga Havnen, the former Australian Red Cross HATSIS, took up this position in 2011 following her resignation from Australian Red Cross.

¹²³ In February 2013, a summit of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (APO NT) and non-government organisations in the Northern Territory developed *Principles for a partnership-centred approach for NGOs working with Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Northern Territory* (APO NT, 2013) (see <http://www.apont.org.au>).

¹²⁴ An exception was Red Cross’s role as facilitating partner for the FaHCSIA-funded program, Communities for Children, which required it to form partnerships and contract services from local organisations. A criticism of this program at the time the research was undertaken was that the majority of brokered organisations were non-Aboriginal.

Ways of Working encourages the development of partnerships with community organisations and complements Outcome 6 of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy which targets capacity building of Indigenous organisations (Australian Red Cross, 2009b, p.17). A senior National office manager speculated that resistance towards forming partnerships may have been due to Red Cross's unique status as 'auxiliary to government' (and thus a sense of 'separateness' from other NFPs), and because of concerns that partnerships might compromise the Fundamental Principles of Independence and Neutrality (*Ways of Working* Guideline 6 specifically addresses this question).

In 2013, Red Cross conducted an internal audit of Indigenous community partnerships (Australian Red Cross, 2013b) and found that there were far fewer partnerships than locations where it provided programs that had significant Aboriginal participation. There was not a shared organisational understanding about what constituted 'partnership': what were often described as 'partnerships' were really engagement strategies and relationship creation, and only a minority of such relationships were supported by contractual arrangements. Most were engagements linked to (and formed at the same time) as delivery of services, and many were founded on informal personal relationships between staff that were unlikely to be sustained if those individuals left. These findings suggested that developing organisation-wide understanding of what is meant by partnership, and developing organisational capacity, training staff and transitioning informal relationships to more formal partnerships present significant challenges for NFPs. In addition, partnerships with Indigenous organisations need to be of benefit to those organisations and communities (as in the example given above), rather than the somewhat exploitative approach proposed by a mainstream NFP in the *Winanga-Li* case study presented in Chapter 2.

6.2.3 Shift to community development

I think again what we've done is we've said "now we're going to do a community development approach," therefore we are ... we started doing before we learnt, so we don't have an approach to community development that's consistent across the organisation, let alone one that is tailored in particular ways for individual Aboriginal communities. So we've made the decision, we've made the statement, we've sort of named what this ideal world looks like that we're aiming for, but we haven't then stopped and done all the other bits behind it and apparently now, as of the launch of something, that's therefore what you are doing ... We don't go anywhere else with it. We just name it and consider that we're doing it.

The field research during 2010-2011 coincided with efforts within Red Cross to consolidate and implement national policy and shift the emphasis of all of its work towards the adoption of community development approaches and principles – “empowering communities to create their own solutions” (Australian Red Cross, 2010d, p.21). In November, 2010, Red Cross published *Ways of Working – practitioner guidelines* (Australian Red Cross, 2010d),¹²⁵ a 40 page booklet that expanded the original key points (shown in section 6.1.3 above in Table 6.1) and gave guidance about what Red Cross’s ‘ways of working’ meant and how they could be applied in practice. Red Cross also aimed to improve the quality of programs through the appointment of a National Manager, Service Development and Improvement (2009) and to strengthen community development practice through the appointment of a National Coordinator, Community Development (2011).¹²⁶

The *Ways of Working* practice guidelines defined community development as an ‘approach’ to change, development and empowerment:

Where a community ‘owns’ and ‘actively participates’ in and ‘drives’ any community development activity, outcomes are more likely to be sustainable. When people identify and undertake action in response to things they care about, the goal of sustainability has already crossed its first hurdle. (Australian Red Cross, 2010d, p.21)

Red Cross aimed to implement this approach by either undertaking specific community development projects or by

integrating community development principles and approaches into all relevant existing work with communities, including increasing local ownership of existing programs and building the capacity of community members to support future activities (Australian Red Cross, 2010d, p.22).

The HATSIS envisaged Red Cross’s long-term aims as working towards the approach that had evolved in international development practice. She envisaged developing an accredited community development training course, run by the Red Cross College, which all staff with responsibility for Aboriginal programs or staff would be required to

¹²⁵ A summary of ‘Ways of Working’ is available at <http://www.redcross.org.au/ways-of-working.aspx>

¹²⁶ This position was originally created as ‘National Coordinator, Locational Disadvantage’ but quickly changed to focus more on how Red Cross worked with communities, rather than on where it worked.

complete. Applied to the domestic sphere and working with Aboriginal Australians, she saw it as a decolonising process based on building upon existing community strengths and resilience, rather than on servicing ‘needs’ and ‘deficits’, and shifting the power balance between Aboriginal communities and mainstream Australia:

*I think the thing here that's common is ... the power dynamic, power in terms of decision-making and access and availability of the resources et cetera, so that parallel between the international and domestic situation I think is very much there and I think this is why development approaches are really fascinating because it's about how you recognise that shift in those relationships. How do you create genuine partnerships when you are working with people that don't have the know-how, the knowledge, who have high levels of need ... You know, if you have that donor beneficiary relationship which is completely unequal and there's no effort to change that relationship and that power balance then you're never going to have development. So to my way of thinking there are some really core fundamentals I guess, that would seem to suggest that if you can monitor, review, identify where those shifts and changes have happened in that relationship you'll know whether or not you are on the right track. ... I mean, it's a big journey for a lot of people – for people as individuals, for Aboriginal people that work for Red Cross. It's a big shift in thinking and understanding by non-Aboriginal people that work within Red Cross, but it's also going to be a big shift in thinking and understanding by people at the community level. I mean people at that local community level I think intuitively and instinctively know they **want** a development approach. They may not talk about it in that language, but they bloody understand really clearly where the power imbalances are and have been and continue to be. So, you know, I think communities are probably far more geared up and ready for this stuff in lots of ways than Red Cross is.*

In making the shift to community development, it was not envisaged that Red Cross would immediately cease to deliver services or existing programs, but rather would integrate development principles and approaches into its existing work. The low key breakfast clubs and nutrition programs were seen as a potential ‘soft’ entry point that would make space to develop relationships and provide opportunities to lay the groundwork of community mapping and stakeholder analysis, but for which ultimately responsibility would be transferred to the community. A kind of community development practice had been put in place around these entry point programs in some locations, but these were few, often geographically isolated from other Red Cross activity, and dependent on the skills and experience of individuals who had the support of managers who understood and supported the approach.

It was evident in many of the research interviews that the concepts and techniques of a community development approach were unfamiliar to many participants and there was little organisational understanding of what a community development approach might look like, how to begin such an engagement with Aboriginal communities, and what tools, skills and experience were needed. As a result there was little organisational support. For

example, training in community development techniques was not offered widely and few managers had capacity or experience to mentor their staff in developing the skills. In one location, ‘community development’ staff and their managers saw no value or purpose in developing community profiles or maintaining the community mapping for which the HATSIS had provided a template, and had given the task to an administrative assistant. Red Cross lacked organisational understanding and a culture of conducting community analysis and needs identification, or of developing program logic, monitoring and evaluating programs.

Many staff (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) were uncomfortable with the shift to community development practice. They found the concepts vague and felt it was not clear what was expected of them or how to go about it – but equally, many found the potential of community development exciting, if challenging.

... to be honest with you, we're probably feeling a little bit lost. Like, we have an idea of what we're supposed to be doing, but we don't have a particular framework that we're working under and we're gaining some skills and training in community development approaches – like a week or so ago we were doing some asset mapping ... so I think that's definitely where we're moving towards, but right now I think that we're building that capacity within our team so that we can – and also looking to shape it [laughs] for what we're doing ... It feels – uncomfortable [laughs] ... we've kind of been given quite a lot of space to work but we don't really have a clear – to be honest, we're feeling a bit lost.

When contacted two years later, this participant said that she felt a great deal more comfortable in the community development work she was doing with remote communities.

There were also different understandings of what terms such as ‘development’, ‘community development’, ‘capacity’ and ‘capacity building’ meant.

... we've been a service provision organisation, not a community development organisation, which means we've got a suite of programs and we basically say “So, what do you want?” and we think it's community development when somebody tells us what they want out of our suite of programs rather than taking the time to develop a relationship, work out from that relationship how we might fit together, work out that the relationship will help develop maybe into a partnership that means that we can be able to support a certain part of their vision, the partner's vision. I don't think we do the needs assessment particularly well ...

The HATSIS reflected that although the *language* of development was used widely, not everyone had the same understanding of what it meant:

At its core I think it's – it was trying to move away from simply service delivery, case management, that kind of approach to something that's more genuinely about a development approach and I think where we're struggling at the moment is that not everybody necessarily understands the difference between the two and that there is not necessarily a good understanding amongst people, either at senior management level or at a project officer level, about what we mean by development work, so I think there are some real gaps. So whilst we've got in principle commitments to these things and people can 'talk the talk' and you will often hear around the place that, yes, we talk about a community development approach, that we talk about working in partnerships, we talk about all of the things that underpin good development practice, I actually don't see a whole lot of evidence of it actually happening well. I think there are some exceptions, I think in some places there are really good examples of where that work's been done very thoughtfully and very carefully and with all of those principles in mind, but it's not widely shared.

The rapid expansion of new services did not bring much of this expertise into the organisation, but rather attracted employees with experience in providing the required services. The HATSIS had expected that there would be a higher level of organisational development experience in Red Cross, and that Aboriginal staff in particular would bring innate community development knowledge and skills into the organisation:

I think people struggle with that ... even for Aboriginal people who have come to work for Red Cross, my feeling is that many of them have either worked for Aboriginal organisations where you get up, get yourself to work and then the service opens their doors ... and the mob come in to you. By and large most of them will never have had to have gone out and talked to people, to organise meetings or events as a means of engaging people, so I think teaching and giving people some real skills about the practical things that you can do, that helps that kind of engagement. I think the other thing that we've got to do is do a lot more training, a lot more education for people. A lot of people simply can tell you, yes you need to consult, there needs to be local ownership, but they don't know how to foster that, and that, to be honest, has been a real surprise and a real struggle for me because I expect people to know it intuitively, but clearly they don't.

The HATSIS attempted to address the lack of organisational expertise in community development and Aboriginal community work by creating models of a different kind of engagement, seeking funding for development-oriented, early intervention programs that would operate as National programs, and recruiting staff with international development expertise to manage and work in them. Their development expertise was drawn into the wider workforce to some extent through workshops, training exercises and opportunities to demonstrate techniques such as community 'asset mapping',¹²⁷ but these were one off

¹²⁷ Asset mapping, or "documenting the tangible and intangible resources of a community" (Kerka, 2003), draws on appreciative inquiry to make an inventory of a community's assets and capacity, and internal and external resources as part of a broader process of participatory, community-driven development or "asset-based community development" (ABCD) based on community strengths rather than deficits (Hunt, 2005b; Mathie, 2003, 2005).

events, and were not taken up as ongoing training, mentoring or organisational development activities.

As a National program manager pointed out, the training needs of the dispersed staff in her own program were beyond the capacity of one person, and Red Cross had made unrealistic assumptions about its organisational capacity in undertaking the program.

[I]t requires a whole new skill set of work, a whole new skill set for employees that isn't in place ... We haven't recruited for that skill set. We don't have the structures to support people to work in that way ... this is some of the reasons why the program hasn't worked ... There have been, I think, gross assumptions about the capacity of the organisation to be able to roll that [out] and the structure doesn't support it yet, and great assumptions about my capacity in my role, not because of my background or lack of knowledge – although I think certainly it's been the steepest learning curve ever, the last months – but to be able to provide that capacity building across all of the 40 communities that the program is involved in and to run training programs and those kind of things. I mean I've done the very best I can, but it has to be resourced better for that kind of massive change. I'm not capable of doing that as one [person] and it shouldn't actually sit with my role either.

The appointment of staff with international development experience to these National office programs provoked some criticism by at least one Aboriginal manager at state/territory level that most were non-Aboriginal and lacked Aboriginal cultural knowledge and experience. However, amongst the research participants in general it was rare to find individuals who had the right mix of qualifications, such as past experience of working with Aboriginal communities *and* relevant qualifications or experience of working in community development approaches, and those who did have such skills were often not well matched with jobs that utilised them. A senior manager commented:

So a community development approach had been on the radar for a few years but there wasn't any sort of leadership in that area and even though we probably have two or three or four hundred people who probably have a Masters of Community Development in the organisation they are not necessarily working with communities or working in that space. So the typical Red Cross, we have very highly qualified and highly experienced people but they are not necessarily working in positions that directly relate to that background ...

Several research participants questioned why Red Cross had not drawn on its international development expertise to contribute to the work with Aboriginal people in Australia. The national strategy considered the feasibility of adapting the Red Cross International Sustainable Organisational Development strategy (for working with other Red Cross national societies) to its work with Indigenous organisations but in practice there was little overlap or interaction between Australian Red Cross's international work

and its domestic activities. Although Australian Red Cross is an accredited AUSAID international development agency,¹²⁸ the standards applying to international work were not applied in Australia and the lack of policies and practices in the domestic sphere (which applied not only to Red Cross but to other NFPs) came as a surprise to new staff with international development experience.

6.3 Conclusion

The nature of the engagement with Aboriginal people and communities varied considerably from state to state (or territory) and was influenced by the availability of funding in different locations, internal organisational politics, distinctively different state/territory cultures (even as Red Cross shifted to one national organisation), and the leadership style, and level of knowledge and experience of state/territory Executive Directors and other key staff. While community-driven approaches were embedded in the *Indigenous Core Policy Principles* from the outset, there were different degrees of intercultural orientation within the leadership group, and different understandings of what the ‘development’ approach of the national strategy intended.

It seems likely that there were multiple, interconnected reasons why Red Cross did not apply its international development expertise to its work with Aboriginal people in Australia, or commence engagements with communities in a community development model. As demonstrated in this chapter, domestically, Red Cross did not have an established culture of community-based development practice and had limited organisational understanding of the potential implications of international development practice for its work with Indigenous Australians. Initially, Red Cross largely responded to the challenge of working with Indigenous people in an ‘emergency relief’ mode that reflected its domestic organisational culture as well as the mainstream attitudes that had overtaken policy and public opinion, which saw Aboriginal disadvantage in terms of the failure of Aboriginal people and communities and therefore as a set of problems and deficits to be ‘fixed’ (‘practical reconciliation’).

¹²⁸ The AusAID website notes: “The accreditation process provides AusAID and the Australian public with confidence that where the Australian Government provides grants to Australian NGOs to implement their own aid and development programs, it is funding professional, well-managed, community-based organisations capable of delivering good development outcomes.” <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/pages/accreditation.aspx>

More broadly, like other NFPs, Red Cross was largely working in an operating environment dominated by the availability of funding and resources through government contracts which dictated the services and methodology of approach and which are predicated on meeting the needs of individuals, rather than developing broader capacity. This approach was emerging as the norm for NFPs engaging with Indigenous Australians and the underlying aims and assumptions, paternalism and systemic racism that are inherent in state policies were rarely questioned by organisations that were drawn into roles that reinforced the dominant culture.

The impact of funding and resource availability on program decisions is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. One very significant attempt by Red Cross to challenge the policy and funding paradigm lay in its initiation of a new National program based on community development principles. Through community-based education, 'RespectED' aimed to support the development of local community capacity to address issues of violence and sexual abuse – the touchstone issues which had triggered the Northern Territory Intervention. Within Red Cross, RespectED was to model a community development approach, but more broadly it aimed to demonstrate the benefit of investing in violence prevention (as against the high cost of dealing with the consequences of community violence) and to demonstrate that communities could be empowered and had capacity to address these issues themselves rather than by the intervention of outsiders. The next chapter provides a detailed case study of the RespectED program and the challenging period of the program's early development.

Chapter 7. Case study: RespectED

I wrote up an inma¹²⁹ dance for NGOs, and I actually talked to some of the old fellas about it, and they said, “Oh, you tell us that story enough, we’d probably be able to dance it!” And the NGOs in the dance was two steps forward, three steps backwards, turn in circles as often as you can, and for God’s sake don’t stand on anybody’s toes! Then I did a Red Cross one, trying to say from the perspective of what we did, and ours was one step forward, very, very slowly, dig your toes in and try to hang on real tight!

One of the new National office programs that was intended to model a community development approach of empowerment and capacity building in Aboriginal communities was RespectED, a program developed in Canada by Canadian Red Cross (CRC). In Australia, RespectED aimed to support Indigenous communities to address family and community violence and sexual abuse through a targeted prevention education program and by facilitating local committees to develop safety strategies and advocate for improved services. A fundamental difference between this and many other Red Cross programs was that Red Cross initiated and sought funding to implement a program that aimed to empower Aboriginal communities to take control of a complex and difficult issue, in contrast to the more usual approach of tendering for advertised government contracts to deliver specific services.

As discussed in Chapter 1, it was agreed that RespectED would provide an exemplar of the interface between Red Cross and Aboriginal communities, and as Red Cross anticipated that its educational elements would be operational in several communities within a few months of commencing the program, it was hoped that feedback from community-based research would inform ongoing development of the program. As the project unfolded, however, rather than research in communities, RespectED’s early development was

¹²⁹ *Inma* – the word for traditional ceremony (dance and song) in several Central Australian Aboriginal languages.

tracked through participant observation at training and team workshops, telephone conferences, staff work plans, project reports and participant interviews.

Many factors affected the early development of RespectED. The commencement of the program was a complex process in itself. Rather than the timely, planned 'rollout' of an education package as originally envisaged, it was a messiness of complex and inter-related operational challenges to secure funding, establish the program, select trial sites, recruit and manage remote staff, develop team skills and adapt the Canadian resource materials, while at the same time negotiating with stakeholders and consulting and working with communities.

RespectED faced unique challenges as a start-up program in uncertainty of funding, lack of continuity in the senior program positions, and in 'translating' the Canadian program and its educational resources into a different cultural and political context. Its community development approach was not well understood within Red Cross, and the distances between the four 'learning sites' and their remoteness from program management added to the isolation of the remote Aboriginal staff working in the program. The difficulties Red Cross had generally faced in recruiting and retaining Aboriginal staff and supporting them in a challenging work environment were particularly marked in this program. This chapter provides a brief account of the establishment of the program, the challenges of adaptation and the role of community-based staff in enhancing local community development. The final section identifies the operational and organisational factors that significantly influenced its development and progress.

7.1 Background

RespectED in Canada (CRC, 2006) is one of Canadian Red Cross's eight national programs (CRC, 2012a), and has operated since 1984.¹³⁰ RespectED has evolved over more than 25 years and is now offered as a suite of educational modules that address aspects of interpersonal and community violence and abuse, and different age groups (see Table 7.1 and a brief summary of the Canadian program in Appendix D). The core elements of the

¹³⁰ Originally the National Abuse Prevention Service, the program was renamed 'RespectED' in 2001.

program were developed for non-Indigenous communities, but in the late 1990s, *Walking the Prevention Circle* (WTPC), a three day workshop designed and delivered by Aboriginal educators, was added to the suite, and by 2009 had been delivered to some 200 First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities in Canada (CRC, 2006).

Table 7.1 Summary of Canadian Red Cross RespectED modules

Name of program	Target Group (years)	Type of program
1) Comprehensive Risk Management / Implementing Violence Prevention		
Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments (*Cycles of Safety)	Adults	Organisational; safety and risk management
Walking the Prevention Circle	Aboriginal communities	Abuse, neglect and interpersonal violence, healing and prevention
Prevention in Motion	Adults	Adults, organisations and communities, to create safer environments
2) Preventing Violence Against Children and Youth		
c.a.r.e./Be Safe!	Children (5 to 9)	Personal safety program, prevention sexual abuse
It's Not Your Fault	Youth (12 to 18)	Types of abuse/neglect, where to go for help
Respect In Sport	Adults (coaches, leaders, parents)	Prevention of abuse in sport
3) Promoting Healthy Youth Relationships		
What's Love Got to do With it?	Youth (12 to 18)	Healthy peer relationships
Not Just Puppy Love	Youth	Violence, sexual assault, emotional & physical abuse in peer relationships
Training Youth Peer Facilitators and adults	Youth & adults	Certification training
4) Preventing Bullying and Harassment		
Beyond the Hurt	Youth (12 to 18)	Bullying, peer harassment
Youth Facilitator Training	Youth	Bullying, peer harassment
Beyond the Hurt: Adult Workshop	Adults	Bullying, peer harassment

*Shaded programs selected for adaptation in Australia (*name of module in Australia 2012)*

Sources: Canadian Red Cross (2006) and Australian Red Cross (2010a)

In Canada, the education modules are offered on a fee for service basis by CRC ‘Master Trainers’ or trained volunteer ‘Prevention Educators’ who have received accredited CRC training to deliver some modules (CRC, 2012b). Training of volunteer educators is a key element of the Canadian capacity-building model. The training is “designed to empower professionals who work with children and youth” and is available to individuals who have been sponsored by a ‘RespectED Training Partner’ organisation (CRC, 2012b). By 2010, Canadian Red Cross had provided accredited training to more than 5,700 volunteer Prevention Educators and delivered education modules to more than 2.5 million children and young people, and nearly 1 million adults (see Appendix D). Research into prevention education and evaluation of some of the modules were positive indications of the program’s effectiveness (Wickremesekera, 2010; IMRB, 2010; Singh, 2011; CRC, 2012c; 2012d).

In Australian Red Cross, the Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy (HATSIS) saw potential in the capacity-building model of the Canadian program and advocated its introduction as a targeted Aboriginal program in Australia. In Australia, RespectED was envisaged as a community development program from the outset: it directly addressed Red Cross’s strategic aims of early intervention, community ownership, development and capacity building. As the HATSIS explained:

I think the fact that it had been developed in Canada, had been well established for such a long period of time, had a track record of doing this work in First Nations communities there, which seemed to indicate fairly high levels of success in terms of community acceptance and improved outcomes in terms of reducing violence and abuse. The central thing that really won me over was the fact that it was designed as a capacity building model, that is, building the skills and the abilities of local people to be the educators and to establish those community safety teams where it put Aboriginal people in the lead role to drive those community level changes. It was the totality of that package. I think the other thing about it was just knowing that the rates of violence and abuse in [Australian] Indigenous communities hasn’t changed¹³¹... There’s got to be something there as a circuit breaker and ... what I really liked about this stuff was that it was around education and prevention as opposed to being in that crisis end so this was about being right upstream. That’s the attractiveness of it. I guess there was some sort of degree of unease in the organisation about why would we get into violence prevention work but I think it’s got quite a degree of consistency and a good fit because it’s about resilience, it’s about capacity building, it’s about building community safety, community strengths.

¹³¹ Between 2002 and 2008, the proportion of Indigenous people who had been a victim of physical or threatened violence in the previous 12 months had not significantly changed, and the rate of hospitalisations for assault had remained constant between 2004-05 and 2008-09. In 2008-09, Indigenous females were hospitalized for family violence assault at 31.4 times the rate of other females, and Indigenous males at 24.9 times the rate of other males (SCRGSP, 2011pp 4.123-4.124). Indigenous imprisonment rates increased steadily during the period 2000-2009 (ABS, 2010), with assault the most serious offence for both males and females (SSCRRIC, 2010, p.9).

In Australia, issues of violence and sexual abuse in Indigenous communities were highly politicised at this time. A series of state/territory inquiries (Robertson, 1999; Gordon et al., 2002; Yarram, 2003; Ella-Duncan et al., 2006; Mullighan, 2008), and the resulting reports of sexual abuse of Aboriginal children, in particular the *Little Children are Sacred* report in the NT (Wild & Anderson, 2007), had culminated in the Commonwealth Government's Northern Territory 'Intervention' (NTER) in 2007 (Brough, 2007).

The surrounding publicity had demonised Aboriginal communities and adults (Brown & Brown, 2007; ATSIJJC, 2008, p.233; AIDA, 2010; Arabena, 2011; Lovell, 2012; ONTCGRS, 2012, p.126). Critics of the NTER regarded it as a punitive, politicised and racially discriminatory response that affected all Aboriginal adults in the designated communities, imposing external 'solutions' and controls that disempowered communities and local leadership (Altman, 2007; Altman & Hinkson, 2007; Brown & Brown, 2007; Yu et al., 2008; Watson, 2009; AIDA, 2010).

In contrast to the coercive and punitive approach of the NTER (Altman & Hinkson, 2007) which focussed on crisis responses, RespectED aimed to address issues of family/community violence and sexual abuse through prevention: by empowering Indigenous communities, building knowledge of the issues through education, and supporting the development of local community capacity. This approach was consistent with the recommendations of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report (Wild & Anderson, 2007; ATSIJJC, 2008) and the advice of researchers who had expertise in the field (for example: Tsey & Every, 2000; Taylor et al., 2004; Atkinson, 2007; Tsey et al., 2007; Cripps, 2008; Tsey et al., 2009; Tsey et al., 2010).

7.2 Bringing RespectED to Australia

Substantial work was done in 2009 to gauge Aboriginal community interest in the RespectED program and whether Red Cross's proposed role was supported, and to secure 'buy-in' and support both within Red Cross and from potential external funders. This section describes Australian Red Cross efforts to secure buy-in and lay the groundwork for the program, the early development of the proposed model in Australia and initial training of Australian Red Cross staff by Canadian Master Trainers, and the operational challenges that began to emerge in the first six months of operation.

7.2.1 Preparing the ground, securing ‘buy-in’

High-level discussions between Olga Havnen, HATSIS, in Australia, and Judi Fairholm, CRC National Manager RespectED, took place in early 2009. Shelley Cardinal, the senior Aboriginal Consultant in the Canadian program visited Australia in April-May 2009 to present information sessions for predominantly Aboriginal audiences in major centres. Strong community interest was expressed at these meetings. In June 2009, a delegation of five Aboriginal Australian Red Cross staff, including the HATSIS, made a fact-finding visit to Canada that included participation in a three-day *Walking the Prevention Circle* workshop. They reported back to Australian Red Cross senior managers at a two-day national workshop in August 2009, where it was decided to proceed with the program.

By late 2009, Red Cross had secured seed funding from a private donor, Barclays. In January 2010, start-up funding of A\$287,000 was granted by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) to trial the program at two learning sites in one state/territory and funding for a further two sites in another state/territory was under negotiation. In February, a National Program Manager was appointed, and high level Aboriginal interest and support was confirmed at a ‘roundtable’ meeting of key Aboriginal advocates, leaders and academics with expertise in the field, at which Judi Fairholm personally presented information about the Canadian program. The participants in the ‘roundtable’ became the core of a National Advisory Group for the program.¹³² Further community consultation meetings held at some of the prospective learning sites were met with strong community interest and enthusiasm and Red Cross received support as an independent, neutral organisation that would be an appropriate provider.

The program was gathering momentum. In March, the Minister announced an additional grant of \$150,000 for two additional sites (Macklin, 2010). Two Curriculum Development

¹³² The members of the RespectED National Advisory Group were: Peter Buckskin, University of South Australia (SA); Lisa Coulson, SNAICC Executive Member (Tas); Marcia Ella-Duncan, Advisor to NSW government (NSW); Mick Gooda, Social Justice Commissioner (Australian Human Rights Commission); Jacqui Katona, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (Vic); Charlie King, No More Campaign (NT); Cr Bev Manton, Chairperson, New South Wales Land Council (NSW); Marie Murfett, Department of Justice (Vic); Patricia Miller, CEO, Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid (NT); Professor Boni Robertson, Griffith University (QLD), Klynton Wanganeen, Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement, Department of Premier and Cabinet (SA).

Officers¹³³ were appointed to adapt the education modules, and recruitment of site-based Prevention Educator teams (one male and one female) commenced at two learning sites. In March/April 2010, Red Cross submitted a \$15 million program proposal to FaHCSIA for expansion and rollout of RespectED over a five year period (Australian Red Cross, 2010a). This envisaged that the program could be offered at 60 sites and that 26 community-based Prevention Educator teams (a total of 52 Prevention Educators) would be employed and trained by year five. The processes and expected outcomes of the program are shown in Figure 7.1, the program logic overview that was developed for this proposal.

7.2.2 Development of the program approach

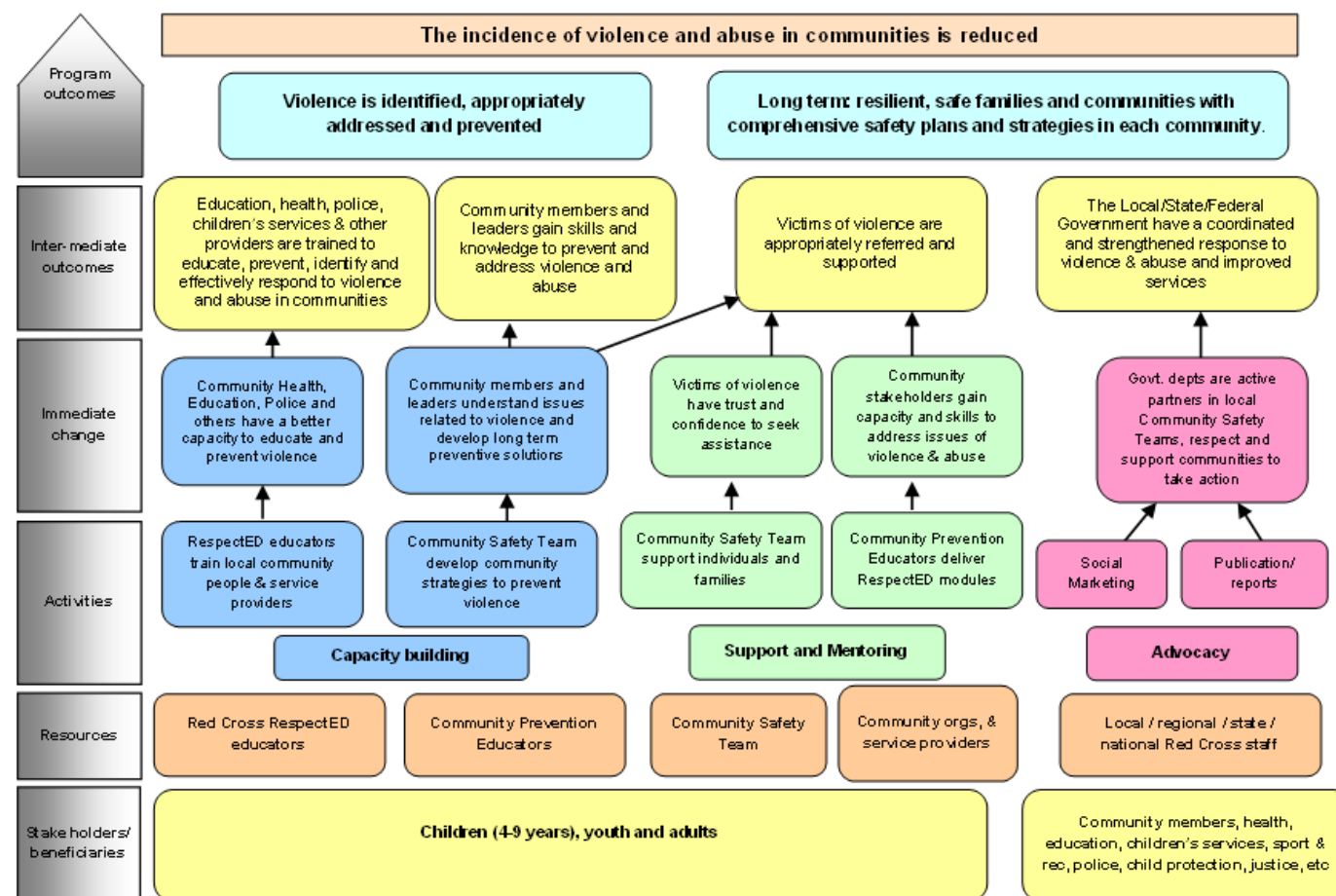
The three modules selected for initial adaptation in Australia were:

- *Walking the Prevention Circle* (WTPC) (three day workshop),
- *Ten Steps* (an approach to developing organisation- or community-wide safety strategies) and
- *Be Safe!* (a child safety program, for adults and young children)

Although the Canadian program centred solely around delivery of the education modules, Australian Red Cross regarded a community development approach as “the most effective way to develop community ownership of the issues and work towards long term sustainable behavioural and attitudinal change” (Australian Red Cross, 2010c). The ‘Community Safety Team’ (CST) shown in the program logic diagram (Figure 7.1) originated in the Canadian program; in Australia the need for an additional, intermediate Aboriginal group to mobilise Aboriginal community support and ownership of the program was recognised and a ‘Local Advisory Group’ (LAG) was added to the program design.

¹³³ These positions were later renamed ‘Training and Resources Development Officers’.

Figure 7.1 RespectED program logic overview



Source: Australian Red Cross (2010a)

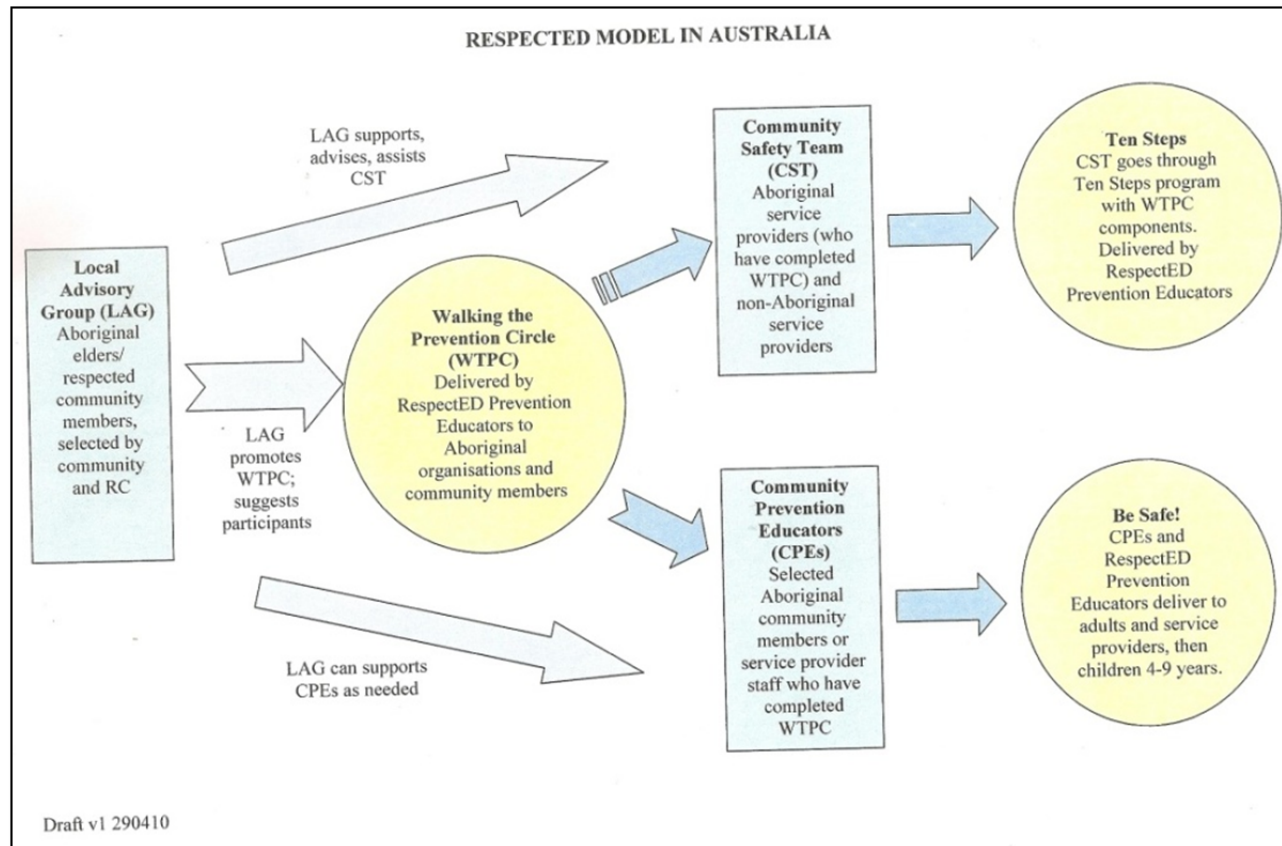
There was debate within the Australian Red Cross team about whether to ‘start small’ with the short two-hour module for young children, *Be Safe!*¹³⁴ and then expand to other modules, or commence with WTPC, a challenging three day workshop that addressed the broader issues in the historical and political context of colonisation. The approach decided upon (shown in Figure 7.2) was that Aboriginal community members and organisations would complete WTPC first and then engage with a broader group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders to form a ‘Community Safety Team’ to follow the *Ten Steps* program, while broader community awareness of child safety would be promoted through delivery of *Be Safe!*. The ‘ten steps’ process is illustrated in Figure 7.3. The role of locally-based Red Cross Prevention Educators was to facilitate the creation of a LAG, deliver the education modules and train local volunteer educators (Community Prevention Educators).

7.2.3 Training by Canadian Master Trainers

The funding proposal submitted to FaHCSIA in March 2010 indicated that adaptation of the three modules was expected to be a straightforward task of a few months that would involve replacing Canadian-specific information with local content; the training plan proposed that Prevention Educators would be trained up through on-line education and intensive block training (Australian Red Cross, 2010a), based on the Canadian training model. However, even in the planning stages, the approach of the program in Australia began to diverge from the Canadian approach because of its emphasis on the role of Red Cross staff in supporting the development of community capacity. This was to have practical consequences that became more evident when Canadian Master Trainers visited Australia in June 2010 to deliver an intensive two-week residential training program to Australian Red Cross staff in the three selected modules.

¹³⁴ By 2010, this module had been delivered to 12 countries in Asia and Africa (Australian Red Cross, 2010a) and successfully adapted and undertaken as a local program by Red Cross in Sri Lanka and India (Wickremesekera, 2010; IMRB, 2010). It has since been introduced in Pakistan and Guyana (Singh, 2011; CRC (Canadian Red Cross), 2012c).

Figure 7.2 RespectED program model in Australia



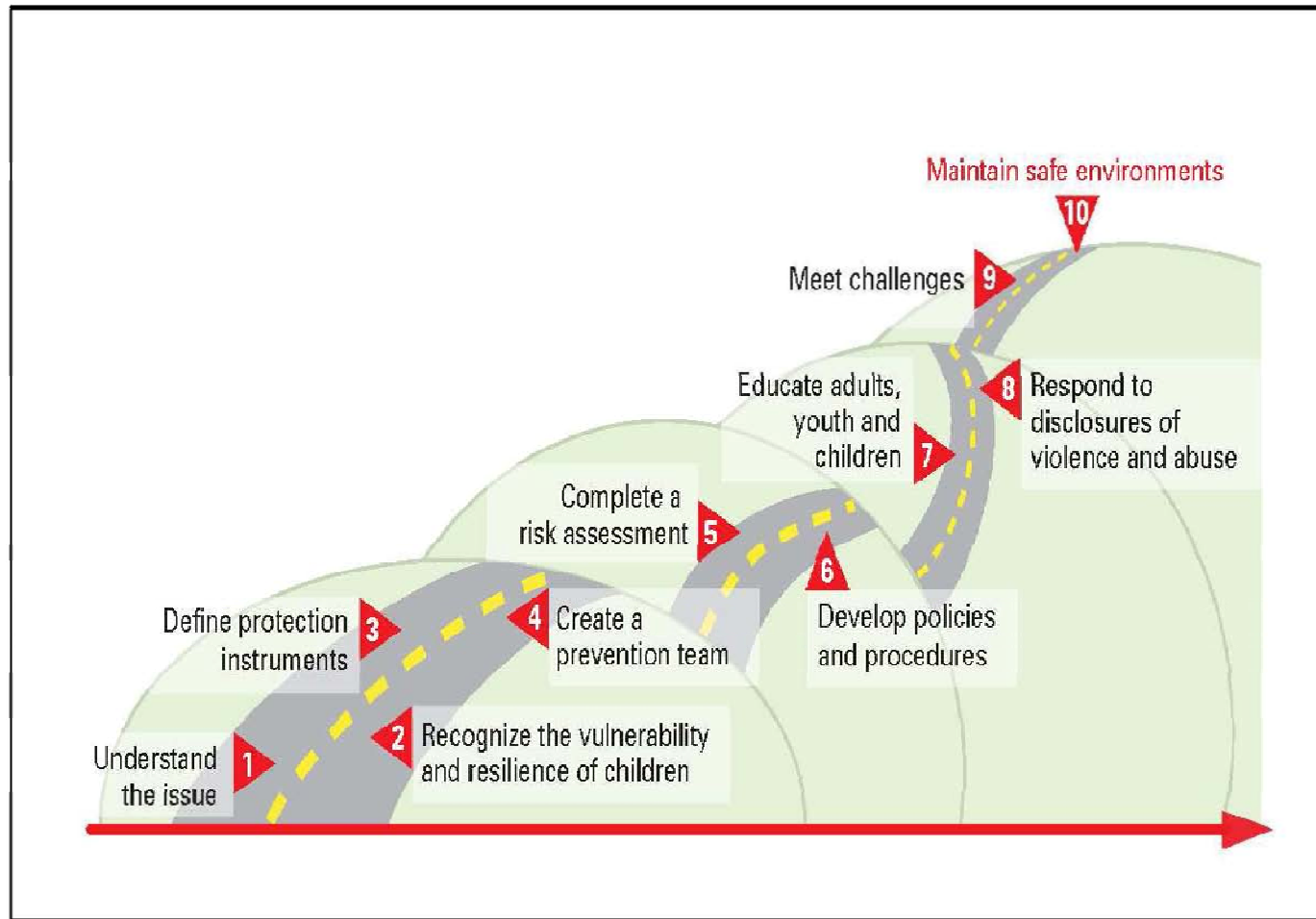
The RespectED model in Australia envisaged the establishment of Aboriginal Local Advisory Groups to drive the program.

WTPC would be delivered as the first module as a foundation for establishing a local Community Safety Team (comprised of representatives of local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers) and selecting and training local Community Prevention Educators.

The Community Safety Team would then work through the *Ten Steps* program (shown in Figure 7.3), and local Community Prevention Educators and Red Cross Prevention Educators would begin delivering the *Be Safe!* module to community members, service providers and children.

Source: Australian Red Cross

Figure 7.3 *Ten Steps 'Road map to safe environments'*



The *Ten Steps* module in Canada is designed to assist organisations to establish safe environments for young people. The module is broken into 10 'steps' which are depicted as milestones on a road map: understanding the issues, establishing a 'prevention team' to drive the process, conducting risk assessment, developing policies, education, responding to disclosures and ultimately maintaining the safe environment. In Australia this module was to be adapted for community use.

Source: Canadian Red Cross
Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments for Children and Youth

Sixteen Aboriginal staff (from Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia) took part: four were designated Prevention Educators who had been recruited at two of the learning sites and the others were Red Cross staff who had applied to attend. The training was offered more widely in the expectation that the program would soon be rolled out to other locations and to create a broader base of staff who understood the program concepts. In Australia, the HATSIS saw the training as an introduction to the program only, that would be followed by further in-depth training and mentoring. In their prior discussions with the Australian program team, however, the Canadian trainers understood they were to train staff to be ready to deliver the education modules, and expected to do so. It appeared that to some extent, expectations about how the training would be approached and what it would deliver were at cross purposes. This may have been due to misunderstandings or miscommunication, lack of opportunity to ‘compare notes’ on how the program would operate in Australia compared with its operation in Canada,¹³⁵ or it may simply have been assumed by the Canadian trainers that as Australian Red Cross was to ‘import’ the Canadian program, the content and delivery would be much the same as in Canada.

The training was based on Canadian education modules and facilitators’ training, a ‘train the trainer’ model. Although *Be Safe!* had been delivered and adapted in other countries in different cultural contexts, this was the first time that the more challenging modules, *WTPC* and *Ten Steps*, had been offered outside Canada, and these required a more comprehensive program. The workshops introduced *elements* of two modules, *WTPC* and *Ten Steps* (*Be Safe!* was not presented), but by the end of the training, the participants had not personally experienced these modules as they were normally delivered and would clearly need substantial further training in the language and terms used and in the content. The Australian program team learnt during the training that in Canada, training in these modules was usually only available to people who were already very familiar with the RespectED program and its concepts.

They mentor their staff for a long time. People don’t become a Prevention Educator until they’ve done three years of working on RespectED [modules] in various capacities, and they are assessed as they work.

¹³⁵ The senior Australian RespectED staff had been appointed after the initial Australian Red Cross visit to Canada and had not had the opportunity to observe the program in action or be personally briefed by CRC RespectED staff.

The intensive training drew attention to critical differences between the way the program operated in Canada and the community development approach to be taken in Australia. In Canada, RespectED was an ‘education only’ program that did not involve long-term engagement with communities.

We kept running into blocks with [the Master Trainers] from Canadian Red Cross when they were here, in terms of different approaches, and basically, we realised that it's because Canadian Red Cross view RespectED in very limited terms. It's prevention education, and the way that they work with a community or with an organisation is they get a request from that organisation or community, and then they go in and do the training. They're not part of a community development process through education, and in fact, if they feel that that community or organisation's not ready, they say, "We feel you're not ready. You call us when you are."

The role of Prevention Educators in Australia was to be very different from their ‘education only’ role in Canada: they would be based in their local communities¹³⁶ and in effect, would be part of the community capacity building process to develop ‘community readiness’ through their role in facilitating local advisory groups.

[W]e see the education as part of the process, so we're approaching RespectED in more of a community development way, so we're helping to build that readiness through capacity building, through discussions. There'll be community development training for the Prevention Educators, but we don't want them to go out and fix things; we want them to develop the Local Advisory Group, train that advisory group on ... how they can liaise with different stakeholders, how they can engage people to build support for RespectED, how they can be advocates. So a lot of this stuff happens before [education] training might be delivered. So, training is part of it, but training is part of this process and this continuum, and Red Cross wants to be a part of that process.

The issue of ‘community readiness’ was an important one which had been highlighted during the intensive training by the participation of a diverse group of Aboriginal staff from all over Australia. It was recognised that many Aboriginal communities are in crisis, and issues associated with community and family violence are both very sensitive and potentially highly confronting. Violence is ‘normalised’ behaviour in some communities and in some regions physical ‘payback’ is an accepted part of traditional culture. Simply delivering education modules without careful preparation could exacerbate community tensions and conflict, while raising awareness of the issues was likely to lead to

¹³⁶ In Canada, community-based Red Cross staff are employed in some Aboriginal communities to coordinate delivery of Red Cross programs; they are able to speak to the programs but do not deliver the education modules.

disclosures of abuse for which the community and individuals would need to be prepared, with appropriate systems in place to respond to them. A senior RespectED staff member reflected after the training that there were very fundamental differences between Australia and Canada in the operating environment.

In Australia, the RespectED process is about facilitating and capacity-building in the community to grapple [with] those issues, to take control of them, and to engage more effectively on those issues. The Red Cross in Canada draw the line at just providing education, because they're reliant on services governed by Indigenous people to undertake the strategic planning and engagement on the issue of violence and child abuse, whereas that's a tremendous gap in Australia. We don't have the Indigenous infrastructure ... They have Aboriginal police. They now, in the last six years, have Aboriginal child protection. The institutions on reservations, they are governed by Indigenous institutions. That's not the case here in Australia ... the significance is enormous, because you've got a power-sharing situation over in Canada, and you've got a power exclusion situation in Australia, which is covered over by layers of discourse about people 'not being capable' of managing their own issues, and being victims of violence to the extent that it's endemic and only can ever be endemic. So there's a number of things that need to be challenged in the Australian community to create the space for Aboriginal people to become active players regarding violence and child abuse, and child protection.

In important respects RespectED in Australian Aboriginal communities was aiming to achieve something very different from the Canadian program, yet did not have the infrastructure, the program history, the staff and resources or the expertise of the Canadian program; nor, at this stage, did Australian Red Cross have much expertise in the community development approach that was to be an essential foundation of the Australian program.

7.2.4 The first six months

Red Cross's contract with FaHCSIA listed 'deliverables' for the first six months of 2010 which anticipated rapid progress in selecting sites, recruiting staff and training them in prevention education, establishing the National Advisory Group, commencing national, state/territory and local partnerships, and not only adapting the program materials, but even translating them into local Aboriginal languages (Australian Red Cross, 2010c). At that six month milestone, however, adaptation had scarcely started and it was evident that developing RespectED as a national flagship program would be much more complex than originally anticipated.

Reporting back to FaHCSIA on program activity to June 2010, the Red Cross RespectED acting National Manager described some progress in most of the ‘deliverables’ but reported difficulty in recruiting Prevention Educators at one of the learning sites. Compared with the scale and ‘rapid rollout’ approach set out in the national funding proposal a few months earlier, the report reflected the shift in thinking about the program and an awareness that working with communities to establish relationships and create community ‘readiness’ would be an essential and necessary part of the process. Red Cross reported that it “recognised the importance of working slowly with communities in order to build awareness of, and support for, family violence prevention” as this was “essential for building and assessing community readiness for education programs”. Red Cross advised the funding body that the community development process that was essential to community ownership “requires patience, flexibility and creativity to engage and mobilise communities. It can take a long time.” (Australian Red Cross, 2010c, p.3).

At the time of the report to FaHCSIA in mid-2010, however, significant staffing problems which would plague development of the program were becoming evident. The first National Manager had resigned in May 2009 after only three months, but was quickly replaced by a senior Aboriginal staff member with community development experience who had originally been recruited as a Curriculum Development Officer. In June 2009, however, she signalled her intention to resign as Acting Manager in July to pursue further professional development and tertiary qualifications, and the position was filled by the only other member of the program management team, the remaining Curriculum Development Officer, a non-Aboriginal staff member, pending a new appointment. These resignations and ‘acting’ placements had a string of consequences for the program and suggested that recruiting appropriately qualified and experienced people at all levels of the program might prove difficult (discussed further in section 7.4).

7.3 Community development – working at the cultural interface

By the time of the initial training, the Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy was concluding that there was an organisational deficit in intercultural

capacity¹³⁷ and in understanding and practice of community development, including lack of understanding and experience amongst Aboriginal staff. Therefore, rather than immediately concentrating on the resource materials and training to deliver them, the next stage in the program was, in effect, to take ‘two steps back’ to focus on building these skills amongst the Prevention Educators. At the end of the initial training, Prevention Educators were asked to go back to their communities and begin a process of community mapping and stakeholder analysis to identify potential LAG members. This section outlines organisational efforts to build community development skills within the RespectED team and describes the learning sites and community-based activities of Prevention Educators to support the development of ‘community readiness’. The following sub-sections discuss issues of selection and retention of staff in the Prevention Educator positions, the challenges of providing support to them in isolated locations, and the views of program staff about their experience of the program.

7.3.1 Community development training and mentoring

While site selection and staff recruitment continued, the small (and already depleted) program management team prepared for Induction, the first formal training session for Prevention Educators as a team. The second Acting Program Manager had a strong professional background in international development, but had not previously worked with Aboriginal people in Australia. As a recent recruit to Red Cross, she had found low organisational awareness and capacity in community development:

We’re planning an induction for the RespectED Prevention Educators in August which is basically an introduction to community development – and just trying to find what the organisation has done previously in this area ... and it’s like there’s been this drive to “This is how we’re going to work in the future,” but at the same time, the people who are in charge of that ... as far as I understand, they’ve had a bit of a battle trying to gain currency within the organisation to push this ... the staff that we’ve hired as the Prevention Educators aren’t strong on community development either, and that’s not their fault; it’s not Red Cross’ fault, putting them in those positions. It’s also that there’s not a lot of knowledge within Red Cross. There’s not a lot of knowledge within Aboriginal staff that are working for different organisations about this approach ... you know, it’s a difficult program and we’re starting from a low base in many ways.

¹³⁷ Preliminary findings of the IDI survey conducted in early 2010 indicated that the senior leadership group significantly overestimated the organisation’s intercultural capacity to lead Red Cross’s new Indigenous engagement (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B).

The week-long Induction was held in August 2010. By then, the four learning sites had been finalised and most of the eight Prevention Educator positions were filled. At this time there were very few internal Red Cross resources or training tools¹³⁸ and the introduction to community development was devised and implemented from within the RespectED team (i.e. the remaining senior staff member with advice from the HATSIS). The Induction introduced community development principles and practice, however as the Acting Manager observed, community development work was an ongoing process.

It annoys me, because I've had so many people say, "Oh, it's common sense," and I don't think it is common sense ... people think it's obvious and it's easy, but it's not obvious to everyone, and it is something that you have to always be conscious of: "What am I doing? Why am I doing it? What's going on in this town, in this room? Who else could I talk to? Who else could I meet? How could I do things differently?" And that's hard! It's tiring, and it can be easier to sit in your office. When it's your own community, it's hard to have that additional level of objectivity, to really remove yourself and say, "Why am I doing this? How am I doing this?" It's easier to do it if it's not your own community, because you already have that outside perspective.

As a research participant observed: "You can't teach community development, but you can mentor it". Formal training was supplemented by the appointment – initially for three months – of a Community Development Adviser who had many years' experience in community-based Aboriginal community development work. The adviser visited the learning sites to work with and mentor the local teams, and provided remote support and assistance 'on call'. This experiment was very successful and the position was extended several times until August 2011.

In addition to the Induction and staff mentoring, a series of shorter two to three day workshops were held in November, 2010, April 2011 and August 2011 to further develop staff skills and support team development (refer to Figure 7.4 RespectED timeline, in section 7.4 below). An effective and powerful training innovation was the facilitation of the November 2010 workshop by *Natjil*, an Aboriginal 'theatre for change' group.¹³⁹ *Natjil* used interactive dramatisation to illustrate potential points for intervention in family violence scenarios and engaged the program team in devising and improvising community interactions which would challenge them in their roles as Prevention Educators and Red Cross staff members. These activities encouraged communication and

¹³⁸ The Australian Red Cross *Ways of Working* booklet was not published until November 2010.

¹³⁹ The *Natjil* website can be found at <http://www.natjil.com/theatre-for-change.html>

prompted valuable discussions and learning exchanges about the complexities of their 'neutral' role as Red Cross staff at the interface with their communities.

7.3.2 The learning sites

The choice of learning sites was largely negotiated between Red Cross and the funding body, FaHCSIA, which had a strong influence on the site decisions. A summary of the characteristics of the learning sites is provided in Table 7.2. The sites were in very different states of 'readiness' in terms of capacity, interest and willingness to engage with the program. The level of previous engagement with Red Cross also varied considerably. At some sites considerable difficulties were encountered due to community conflict, power struggles between local organisations, 'gate-keeping' groups, and sometimes resistance towards, or lack of knowledge about Red Cross. At one site it was very difficult to gain 'traction' or interest, and FaHCSIA eventually withdrew funding for this site; at another, the lack of prior Red Cross presence or relationship with the Aboriginal community posed particular challenges for staff attempting to generate interest in the program while establishing a new office. While the only Curriculum Development Officer acted in the role of National Manager, no further work was done on adaptation of the program materials, and at all sites the lack of resource materials presented problems. Without them the Prevention Educators found it difficult to explain and illustrate the program aims and concepts to community members as they attempted to generate interest in *RespectED* and mobilise community support. On the ground, each site told a different story about the *RespectED* project, each revealing important insights into the challenges Red Cross faced at this critical interface in implementing its wider commitment for change.

Site 1 Remote town

Site 1 is small, remote town which is a service hub for a large region: there are numerous service providers and government agencies, several key Aboriginal community organisations and other NFP agencies. It has a history of proactive Aboriginal engagement with key social issues such as reducing the availability of alcohol. A Safer Communities Committee that included the major Aboriginal organisations and services had already been established. Red Cross had recently established a small presence in the town and was operating Good Start Breakfast Clubs and nutrition programs. The location

Table 7.2 Summary of RespectED learning sites

	Type of location	Population (approx.)	Aboriginal population (% approx.)	Distance from Red Cross state HO	Site description
Site 1	Remote town	< 5,000	30%	Remote (>500km)	Remote service town for a large inland region linked to a number of remote communities. 10 Aboriginal languages spoken in the region, 7 Aboriginal town living areas. 4-5 community controlled Aboriginal organisations based in the town (e.g. health, legal, language). Commonwealth and state/territory government services well represented, several NFP/NGO services.
Site 2	Former Aboriginal reserve, urban centre	< 500	100%	Adjacent (<100km)	Former Aboriginal reserve established 1930s, long term resident families. Serviced by approx. 15 service organisations and NGOs, poor housing and community infrastructure.
Site 3	Regional town	> 10,000	20%	Intermediate (>100km)	The town is a major gateway hub servicing a large region. Large transient population, approx. 14 major Aboriginal language groups with 4 major community controlled Aboriginal organisations and additional government funded services. Discrete Aboriginal community near town and several other former missions in the region. Established Red Cross office.
Site 4	Remote town	< 5,000	25%	Remote (>500km)	Remote centre with several key primary industries. Aboriginal community comprises two major groups which are in conflict. A single peak Aboriginal organisation services the town and outlying homelands and several community organisations provide health, legal and other services.

and layout of the office on the upper floor of a Commonwealth Government agency were not optimal as there was no private meeting space and, with no street access, the location discouraged community visitors (who were also refused access to shared toilet facilities).

There were initial difficulties in recruitment and retaining staff at this site. It was not possible to recruit the preferred gender balance and two women were appointed. The appointment of a community member who was an active proponent of the Safer Communities Committee initially strengthened Red Cross's relationship with the Committee and Red Cross took on the role of chairing it, with considerable early success and numerous community meetings. This could not be sustained, however, when the staff member went on extended leave and finally resigned. RespectED activity stagnated despite some support from site 2. The remaining Prevention Educator had strong language and cultural skills but had difficulty initiating community consultations and with other aspects of the work. Progress resumed when two new appointments were made in late 2010 and early 2011. The new appointees faced difficulties in securing the support of a key Aboriginal organisation because of internal community conflict and this continued as a major blockage to further progress until late 2011.

Site 2 Former Aboriginal reserve, urban

Site 2 is a former reserve, with some 12-15 clan groups and a usual population of about 200 but sometimes as many as 400-500 in response to seasonal circumstances or ceremonial events. Although near a major urban centre, it had the characteristics of a remote community, such as poor community housing and infrastructure, but was serviced by a number of agencies and NFPs/NGOs which constituted a large non-Indigenous 'stakeholder' group to be consulted. It was originally intended to offer the program at a discrete remote community which would have required staff to 'fly in-fly out', however this site was selected instead because of its proximity to a Red Cross state/territory head office and therefore lower cost, and in order to include an urban location amongst the trial sites. There was some limited Red Cross engagement with the community in nutrition programs and development of a community garden.

The Prevention Educators had difficulty gaining traction at this site. Although the funding agency was represented by a full-time officer on site and also funded an Indigenous Engagement Manager in this community, these people played a 'gatekeeper' role, blocking community consultation and stating that the community "didn't want the program". While according to site staff, a core group of community council members were "keen and motivated", the Indigenous Engagement Manager was an influential community member

and without his support and that of another key community-based employee of FaHCSIA – “the two most important people in the community” – it was difficult even to meet with the council as a whole or make progress.

Alternative approaches to work around the blockage, including door-knocking and visiting community members at home, met with little interest. Poor community infrastructure (for example, lack of an air-conditioned meeting space in a very hot climate) further limited opportunities for consultation and the lack of program resource materials, including an outline of the education modules, also made it difficult for the Prevention Educators to generate interest in the program at this site. Some progress was made in establishing relationships by collaborating with other Red Cross activities, generating a community newsletter (which was welcomed) and taking part in cultural activities (for example, the female Prevention Educator was invited to go fishing with community women).

Although gender balanced, this was the only bi-cultural team (an Aboriginal male and non-Aboriginal female) and there was some disparity between these Prevention Educators in age, skills and qualifications which did not make for a comfortable working relationship. FaHCSIA withdrew funding for the site in mid-2011. One Prevention Educator resigned at this time and the other acted in the role of Training and Resource Development Officer while the incumbent was on maternity leave, but continued low-scale community activities on a part time basis until their resignation in early 2012.

Site 3 Regional town

The geographic location of site 3 makes it an important service and transport hub and ‘gateway’ between the state’s major metropolitan centre and remote regions. There is a large, diverse Aboriginal population and 14 major Aboriginal language groups (of some 25 Aboriginal languages spoken). There are several active Aboriginal community service organisations (e.g. health, media, employment) although this sector had contracted considerably in recent years. Red Cross had a well-established presence and a large regional office with predominantly Aboriginal staff, and an Aboriginal manager. Relationships with the community had developed over approximately five to six years through a number of programs delivered to towns and communities in the immediate

region and in remote areas. There was pre-existing collaboration with a local men's organisation, which shared the office space.

There was strong community interest in RespectED at this learning site even before the appointment of the Prevention Educators. Several key Aboriginal community members had travelled to the state/territory metropolitan centre to attend a presentation by Shelley Cardinal, the Canadian Aboriginal RespectED consultant, and had expressed keen interest in the program. A first meeting of key individuals and community stakeholder organisations held in July 2010 was well attended and generated the formation of a Local Advisory Group. Over following months the Prevention Educators engaged the community through further meetings and collaborative activities with community organisations which lifted Aboriginal community engagement in related events such as 'Reclaiming the Night' and 'White Ribbon' Day.¹⁴⁰ Support and endorsement was also generated amongst a wider group of community stakeholders (e.g. local government). The stability of the program and staff at this site (the only one which retained its original Prevention Educator staff throughout the research period) and pre-existing interest of the community were major positive factors in laying the program foundations.

Site 4 Remote town

Site 4 is a small, remote town, similar in size to site 1 and a similar distance from the major metropolitan centre in that state/territory. There are four major Aboriginal language groups and the town serves approximately ten homelands and some larger discrete communities in the area. The major challenge at this site was the schism between two major Aboriginal community groups and the difficulty of recruiting and retaining suitable Aboriginal staff who could bridge community divisions. There were delays in making the appointments and both Prevention Educators appointed resigned within 12 months. Red Cross did not have an established presence in this location and was unfamiliar to the Aboriginal community. Considerable groundwork was needed to establish a presence and new office while attempting to generate community interest in the program in a highly conflicted context.

¹⁴⁰ International movement led by men for the prevention of violence against women, established in Australia in 2003: <http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/>

The Prevention Educators, new to Red Cross themselves, experienced difficulties. The role of 'Prevention Educator' was considered too junior to allow them to attend interagency meetings (of government and service provider organisations). From the perspective of its suitability as a welcoming place for the community, the office space was somewhat poorly located in shared premises that had no private space for meetings or for smokers. Its proximity to the court house also attracted unwanted attention on sitting days that caused conflict with other tenants. Prevention Educators from site 3 made a number of visits to provide additional support (and continued the engagement even after both Prevention Educators at this site had resigned). A highlight of the work in this community was a visit by *Natjul* to conduct its 'theatre for change' workshops with several community groups, which was very well-received. While there was some keen interest in the program and valuable activity, such as the creation of a men's group with participants from both the major community groups, community tensions impeded progress as did inter-organisational conflict and the refusal of an important Aboriginal stakeholder organisation to participate in or support the creation of a Local Advisory Group. Community interest in the program continued, with ongoing support and engagement from site 3, but the Prevention Educator positions remained unfilled over the following 12 months.

Overview of the learning sites

At each of the four learning sites, RespectED faced at least some difficulties. In each site, however, there were pre-conditions which could help or hinder progress. While care was taken and there were good reasons for selecting these particular learning sites, in some cases little progress was made, while in others, where there was community driven action, supported by community capacity, program foundations were laid. Some of the key factors that influenced progress were:

- Timing and community social dynamics – any combination of community circumstances could have an impact on whether the program could gain traction, such as a recent event, conflict between groups, key families or community sectors, or opposition of a particular person in a key community organisation.
- The 'right' team – the right combination of skills, personal qualities and acceptability to the community and their capacity to work together as a team.
- Established Red Cross presence and long-standing relationships with the community.
- The progress the community had already made in tackling the issues and pro-active community engagement.

As Taylor (2004) observes, “family violence intertwines with a host of interconnected community issues and problems” and addressing these issues requires holistic, community-wide solutions which must not only include Aboriginal stakeholders but building effective relationships with non-Indigenous service providers (Bennett & Zubrzycki, 2003; Taylor et al., 2004; Cripps, 2007). During their first 12 months in the program’s start-up phase, the Prevention Educators grappled with these issues as they endeavoured to garner support amongst community members, stakeholder organisations and service providers, and built the profile of the issue in preparation for introducing the education modules. In at least one case, the ‘gatekeepers’ blocking progress were other major NFPs that had established influence and saw Red Cross as a threat. Much of their work required persistent effort to gather and maintain momentum in the community while gaining access to and the engagement of mainstream service providers. Some examples of their activities in various locations included:

- meeting with Aboriginal organisational stakeholders, such as legal services, health services, town camp resource organisations
- attending inter-agency meetings and meetings with other stakeholders – local government, police, state/territory and Commonwealth departments
- agitating for greater Aboriginal representation and/or pestering for admittance to join existing committees that addressed similar or related issues
- gaining the support of a notoriously racist local government council (and securing funding support for some activities)
- forming or collaborating with existing men’s groups, holding ‘bush’ camps for men
- holding a community march in conjunction with ‘White Ribbon Day’ activities with a follow-up barbecue at which police in plain clothes did the cooking
- active participation in ‘Closing the Gap’ day activities
- active participation in NAIDOC week activities
- ‘Theatre for Change’ workshops that engaged community participation to explore issues of family violence
- forming Local Advisory Groups
- setting up reference groups
- mentoring youth to support and encourage emerging leaders to engage and join advisory and reference groups.

7.3.3 Prevention Educator selection and retention

The Prevention Educator role called for individuals with a high degree of capacity to initiate community consultations and meetings with stakeholders, communicate the aims and objectives of the program and, especially in relation to the community, a degree of standing and broad 'acceptability'. In the view of the Community Development Adviser, who worked closely with all of the Prevention Educators during 2010-2011, those who were most successful in the role and were able to expand the range of activities to lift the profile and engagement of the Aboriginal community in 'mainstream' events such as White Ribbon Day (one of the aims of the RespectED program), had strong and extensive family networks with individuals in key positions in community and stakeholder organisations which they could effectively mobilise. The role of the Prevention Educator was therefore not only about the skills and personal qualities the individual could bring to the position, but their relationships with family and other networks that were critical to the success of the role.

There was some 'trial and error' in Red Cross's recruitment of the community-based Prevention Educators. At some sites it was difficult to find staff with relevant skills, experience and the right 'fit' with the community. The nature of the Prevention Educator positions called for a wide range of skills and capacity (see Appendix D, Australian Red Cross Prevention Educator position advertisement) which were difficult to find in smaller towns (or which may be difficult for a mainstream organisation to attract because it is unknown to the Aboriginal community or uses 'mainstream' recruitment practices). The role also required them to work closely and collaboratively as a small team under personal and community pressure and in isolation from other teams. Each of the Prevention Educators (indeed, everyone working in the program) experienced some personal crisis while working with RespectED, such as the death of close family members, family or personal ill health or marriage breakdown. The Prevention Educators were not recruited as 'teams' and in some cases were poorly matched, perhaps a reflection of Red Cross's lack of local knowledge and networks and experience in recruitment of Aboriginal staff (see Chapter 5, section 5.2).

Over the 18 month research period, five of the six Prevention Educators at three sites resigned within 12 months. Some resigned for personal reasons while others had difficulty

with some aspects of the work: one or two never quite grasped the program or their role in it and were under performance management prior to their resignation. Only one of the four learning sites retained the Prevention Educator team originally recruited. This site (site 3) was also the site at which there was strongest interest in and support for the program from the outset and where Red Cross had the strongest presence in an established regional office with a large Aboriginal staff and had built relationships with the community over a period of some years. These circumstances provided stability and support for the staff and their work, in contrast to other locations where Red Cross did not have an established presence or relationships with the community. The difficulty in filling positions and high staff turnover had ongoing consequences for the program and created further challenges. Of the Prevention Educators who remained at the end of the research period, only two had attended the initial intensive training in the program modules with the Canadian trainers. The continual turnover meant that a considerable investment was lost to the organisation, while staff recruited later missed the program Induction and the subsequent training and team-building workshops.

7.3.4 Isolation and staff support

The general isolation of Aboriginal program staff from city-based management in head offices, which has been described in previous chapters (see Chapters 4 and 5), was especially pronounced in the RespectED program. The four learning sites were spread across two states/territories and in the same state/territory were distant from each other (700-1,000 km apart). While nearly all of the community-based Prevention Educator teams lived and worked in remote areas, the program management staff were located in distant city head offices. In the case of RespectED, distances between *all* the program staff were remarkable, as even the small program management team were based in different states/territories from each other and were not located in the same head offices. For most of the research period, even the National Manager was not located in the same state/territory as any of the learning sites, and when the Curriculum Development Officer positions were filled, they were located in different state/territory head offices, separate from each other and the National Manager.

Distance and isolation made forming and developing a sense of a team and managing communications very difficult. Red Cross's limited IT infrastructure did not permit

internet downloading or the use of VOIP technology such as 'Skype', so the only forms of communication available were email and phone teleconferences. Visits to learning sites by program managers and other program staff were limited by the budget and the cost in time. The only opportunity to meet as a team occurred at the team training workshops held at four to five monthly intervals. The community-based staff found the regular team teleconferences initiated by the Acting National Manager between July - December 2010 valuable, but these became more irregular and less frequent after the appointment of the new national manager in early 2011. As well as limiting opportunities for the Prevention Educators to share knowledge and ideas, these circumstances left the community-based staff isolated and largely unsupported in a challenging work environment. The matrix management structure was unhelpful in this National office program, as rather than reporting to local or state-based managers, the program team reported to a distant national manager and received limited support from the state/territory structures.

The role of the Community Development Adviser was extremely important in this context. As well as giving practical advice regarding work planning and community consultations, much of her role (largely unrecognised) was in providing personal support to stressed and isolated staff. During a year which was fraught by changes in management, funding (and therefore job) insecurity, difficulties in securing community support and personal, health and family problems faced by Aboriginal staff, the Community Development Adviser provided continuity and professional and personal support. Maintaining the well-being of staff was discussed during team workshops as an important priority due to the pressures on them and the sensitive nature of the program, but although incorporating staff well-being measures into the program (such as compulsory quarterly debriefing, 'time out', and support for self-nurturing activities) was seen as an urgent priority, no action was taken to establish a structural process within the program to address this issue.

7.3.5 Staff perspectives on RespectED

An opportunity to workshop staff perspectives of the program arose towards the end of the field research period at a national team meeting held over three days in August 2011. Much of the discussion focussed on their difficulties and frustrations as Red Cross staff who were engaged in a program that was very different in content and approach from most Red Cross activities. One of the first issues raised was that Red Cross lacked cultural knowledge of its

staff and their communities, and did not understand the complexity of the relationships or the constraints of community-based work – the “politics, stakeholders, individual relationships, factions, protocols” – and the importance of the staff members’ credibility in the community as individuals. Hunt (2010) observes that “community development experience in Indigenous Australia is not always successful or easy” and draws on Eversole’s emphasis on the underlying complex networks of relationships in any development activity which can be understood through “the basic concepts of power, motivation, legitimacy, and trust ... who has the power, motivation, and legitimacy to mobilize people to change, who can they mobilize, and what does that change look like, for them?” (Eversole, 2003). As the program staff put it, the people selected for these jobs had to “be the right person” in the community and had to have the capacity and be given the time needed to engage with these complex networks and develop relationships. The team dynamic and its internal harmony were also critical to success because of the complexity of engaging with different community sectors, age and gender groups.

Program staff questioned the reasons for site selection and broadly felt that the decisions were “not well informed” and “not made for the right reasons”. Red Cross’s own site selection criteria, which included having an existing office, an established presence and verified community interest in the program, had not been followed in the site selection (and were in fact met in only site) and some staff felt they were trying to “force” the program on a community which did not really want it or wasn’t ready for it. There was also discussion of Red Cross’s reputation and skills, and community perceptions of the organisation (which affected their role) that might not be evident to Red Cross – for example that Red Cross was “another NGO coming in to do programs”, “taking blackfellas’ money”, “competing for funding”, and “recruiting Aboriginal people away from Aboriginal organisations”. The office locations were in some cases unsuitable for the aims of the program, contributing to a negative view of Red Cross. Conversely, when working to its strengths by helping in emergencies (for example, flooding in the region of one of the learning sites), the response had been effective and created a positive image of the organisation.

Isolation and difficulties in communication were also raised, one staff member describing the isolation from the rest of the program team as “just awful at first”. The isolation was exacerbated by the fact that program staff reported to a distant National Manager, and

did not have a direct relationship with the state/territory Red Cross offices, managers or staff. They had no influence on property management decisions (such as choice of office location) and it was difficult to secure resources and equipment: individual staff had to ‘negotiate’ what they described as ‘factions’ in Red Cross, without the support of a local manager. There were barriers to communication within the team (staff teleconferences initiated the previous year were valued but had become less regular by this time), and staff felt isolated from other Red Cross staff by the nature of their work and the lack of understanding of their role: “Programs work in silos – still”; “Others can think you are not working – there are misunderstandings because of a lack of shared understanding”. These views reflected the sentiments expressed at the national Forum held in December 2009 (see Chapter 5, section 5.1), but may have been even more strongly felt by RespectED staff isolated from each other and from program management.

The RespectED program staff felt further isolated by Red Cross’s inexperience in community development. They felt they had been “chucked in the deep end” in a role that was not understood or supported by the organisation, and were expected to know what community development was about when the organisation itself did not:

Red Cross is still getting its head around what community development is and why it is important to working in community ...

Not a shared concept of what community development is in Red Cross ...

Talk the talk – don’t know how to walk the walk.

The first point made in this discussion was that “in order to develop the capacity of the community, Red Cross needs to develop the capacity of its staff”, but Red Cross provided “no supervision, no support, no training”. The support of the Community Development Adviser was valued and “vital”, but those who had not had previous community development experience felt they needed a more structured training plan and clear guidance about their role and responsibilities. The Red Cross *Ways of Working* practitioner guidelines, finalised in late 2010, articulated Red Cross’s approach to community development and those who knew of it thought it a “great resource”, but even within the RespectED team not everyone had been made aware of the document. It had not been launched and was “just put out with no support or discussion” and had not been promoted to the staff. The team questioned why it had not been “unpacked, workshopped, operationalised” in Red Cross.

More than a year into the program, the education modules were still in the process of adaptation and were not ready to be trialled in communities. The staff view was that the resources should have been in place before the program started: communities that were reluctant might have engaged more readily if there had been tangible materials, and without them it was difficult to explain the program, while communities that were ready were frustrated by the delays and wanted action in the program to begin.

7.4 Operational and organisational challenges

This final section addresses the operational challenges that impacted upon the development of the RespectED program. These included the difficulties of start-up and securing resources while mobilising a complex program, inadequate funding, high staff turnover, and the consequences of these issues on development of the program resource materials. The final sub-sections consider Red Cross's broader organisational capacity in community development, the complexities of Red Cross's matrix management structure and the persistent difficulties in retaining staff in the senior program positions which drained momentum and diluted the program's original 'vision'.

7.4.1 'Chicken and egg'

One of the program's senior staff later reflected on the challenges of setting up a national program with several remote learning sites:

The hard thing in setting up a program is that you can't just start with one thing ... it doesn't work in this neat, linear way. You have to start things at the same time, because some things happen quickly, some things take ages to go, so you have to get them going ... you kind of need to be firing on a number of different fronts, and things are inter-related as well ... and then so much of it is a bit 'chicken-and-egg'. What do you do first? And so much needs to happen when the other thing has already happened ...

The resignation of the first National Manager after only three months in the position disrupted the process of establishing the program's basic infrastructure, framework and strategic plan, while other aspects such as staff recruitment and training had "raced ahead".

I think we're a lot further behind on that side of things, when other things have kept ticking over. Prevention Educators have been hired, the training went ahead

... so all these other components, these chicken-and-egg components happened, but this program structure wasn't set up really clearly, and wasn't really clearly articulated. So yeah, there's been other things that have been racing ahead, but some bits have not only fallen behind but have kind of gone backwards, really.

The program's structural foundations were put in place while the remaining curriculum development officer acted as National Manager, but difficulties in recruiting a permanent replacement for the manager's position resulted in further substantial delays in commencing adaptation of the program resources.

7.4.2 Funding

The March/April 2010 proposal for a \$15 million rollout of RespectED as a national program did not receive funding approval and throughout the research period there was difficulty securing sufficient funding to fully establish the program and assure an adequate funding stream into the future. A further grant of from FaHCSIA in May 2010 to support two additional learning sites carried the program into the 2010-2011 financial year,¹⁴¹ but the next funding commitment was not received until December 2010 and was insufficient to fully fund the program to June 2011, leaving a funding shortfall of approximately \$250,000.¹⁴² Delays in securing ongoing funding may have been partly due to uncertainty in the Federal electoral cycle¹⁴³ or to limited availability of funding for this program area, and/or reluctance to commit funds to an unproven new program.

Uncertainty about future funding made it difficult to fully staff the program and respond to both program and community challenges as they arose. While Prevention Educators were recruited to the four learning sites, other positions remained unfilled. For an extended period the program was led by an Acting Manager without program support staff (see Table 7.3 RespectED Staff movements and resignations). Both curriculum/resource development positions remained vacant for six months and two key

¹⁴¹ The Australian financial year is from 1 July to 30 June.

¹⁴² Australian Red Cross email to FaHCSIA, 9 Dec 2010.

¹⁴³ A Federal election was due to be held during 2010 and in preceding months government departments may be reluctant to commit funding to new programs because of policy uncertainty post-election. In 2010, a dramatic change in the leadership of the governing Labor party and election of the Hon Julia Gillard as Prime Minister triggered an early election in August 2010 which resulted in a 'hung' parliament. Uncertainty as to whether another election might be held early in the life of the new parliament may have also affected or delayed funding decisions.

state/territory coordinator positions that were to provide state-based management support to the learning sites were never filled. Conference and travel costs were also cut, reducing opportunities for the widely dispersed team to meet, train and work together. Funding instability added to stresses in the small program team, created job insecurity for community-based staff on 12 month contracts and threatened the future of the program and Red Cross's reputation.

In April 2011, the funding issue was still not resolved: at this time, according to the National Program Manager, the program was substantially overdrawn on its funding by \$1.8 million and no confirmation of further funding was in sight. In May 2011, a senior staff member reflected on the constant tension and impact of the funding uncertainty on the program:

[FaHCSIA] have been influential in the sense of withholding funds and withholding our capacity to do things either by design, in terms of not being sure about the program, or just by circumstance, like the election happening and then the other funding pool not coming through and that's one of the challenges and frustrations with donors ... they are always like "Well how come you haven't made more progress?" and it's like "well, we had to hold off on a number of things because we didn't have funding for them and you haven't funded the whole program so we can only do what we can do with the funds available." So it's kind of this 'catch 22' and this really tense situation. I guess their major impact has been that we haven't been able to progress as we would like, as quickly as we would like because we haven't had the funding to do it ... So many things have been put off and there has been an advantage to that because we have had this build up time with the communities and so on, but it hasn't been as ideal, it hasn't been the ideal plan, the ideal approach.

In addition to the ongoing pressure of funding shortfalls, a recurring theme in staff workshops and National Advisory Group teleconferences was a sense of pressure from the funding body to meet program 'milestones'. This pressure in some cases included workplace visits and detailed inspection of staff work plans and because of a lack of understanding of the program's community development principles, the funding body gave program staff conflicting messages about their priorities:

One of the challenges we are having ... [is] the lack of understanding of community development from FaHCSIA ... We are really trying to impress that upon staff that it's community driven and then you have FaHCSIA coming in and saying "well we need results, we need to see why your implementation plan hasn't met these milestones". People are getting really different competing messages about what way of working is right so I think that's really confusing for people both on the ground as well as management.

Ultimately, funding for one learning site was withdrawn in August 2011 because the funding body considered that the program milestones were not met.

7.4.3 Staff turnover

By April/May 2011, despite the challenges of the uncertainty of future funding, there was a sense that the program was coming together and the team was starting to ‘gel’: a National Manager had finally been appointed, both positions designated to develop the program resources were filled, and all the learning sites had had a full complement of Prevention Educators for about six months. By July/August 2011, however, further staff changes had impacted the program and by the end of 2011, only two sites were functioning.

Staff turnover in the RespectED program was exceptionally high at all levels in the small program team, even in the context of generally high staff turnover in Australian Red Cross (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.1). Table 7.3 illustrates staff movements and resignations within the program team during 2010 and 2011. Recruiting a suitably qualified Aboriginal person to permanently fill the National Program Manager position proved very difficult: there were several rounds of recruitment and the position was not finalised until January 2011. Within six months, the new manager was promoted to a more senior position within Red Cross and, drawing again on the existing program team, the Community Development Adviser was asked to fill the role as ‘coordinator’ pending a further appointment.

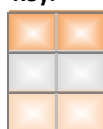
In less than two years, six different people held or acted in the National Manager’s position. Reflecting later about the difficulty of recruiting an Aboriginal person to the job, the former HATSIS recognised that there were few Aboriginal people who had the right combination of community development skills and senior management experience, and who would be prepared to accept the remuneration offered in the NFP sector:

Most Aboriginal people have got very limited experience in community development. That’s the first thing. Most of our mob, if they’ve got high level capabilities and competencies, they’ve acquired them through the public service, so you really need somebody like [the first Acting Manager] who’s had that on the ground experience and there’s very few of them around ... People are used to being very well paid. Anybody with a decent skill set, they’re highly marketable. You have to have a real passion for this stuff to be prepared to take it on at the crappy pay that NGOs pay.

Table 7.3 RespectED staff movements and resignations

		2010												2011											
	Positions:	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	Head Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Strategy																(leave)								
Project mgmt & admin	National Manager, RespectED			resigned		A/Mgr1				A/Mgr2					New appointment			(promoted)				A/Mgr3		New appt	
	Training & Resources Development Officer (1)					resigned				(vacant)															
	Training & Resources Development Officer (2)									(vacant)									Matern leave				PE (3) acting		
	State Coordinator (1)																								
	State Coordinator (2)																								
	Admin Support Officer																								
Program delivery	Community Development Advisor (mentor)																							Position not renewed	
	Site 1 Prevention Educators	PE (1)									(leave)				New appointment										
		PE (2)																						New appointment	
	Site 2 Prevention Educators	PE (3)																						Acting TRDO(2)	
		PE (4)																						Funding w'drawn this site	
	Site 3 Prevention Educators	PE (5)																							
		PE (6)																							
	Site 4 Prevention Educators	PE (7)																							
		PE (8)																							
Training and national workshops																									
		CRC training												Induction											
		National Workshop												National Workshop											
		National Workshop												National Workshop											

Key:



position filled

position vacant

temporary appointment



incumbent on leave, position vacant

incumbent A/National Mgr, position vacant

research period

- A/National Manager June-Dec 2010 without program support

- State Coordinator positions unfilled

- No admin support until June 2011

- All Prevention Educator positions filled only between Dec 10 – May 11

Figure 7.4 RespectED Timeline



The frequent changes in management resulted in a series of losses of corporate knowledge of the program and its history. Changes in leadership style and practice were unsettling for staff and the temporary nature of several appointments in the leadership team meant that important decisions were delayed pending a permanent appointment. Staff training and development of the program resource materials were also delayed as these positions remained vacant for extended periods. Recruiting qualified Aboriginal staff to the resource development/training positions was a priority and especially important with respect to culturally appropriate adaptation of the resource materials, but this also proved difficult and of the four staff who worked in these positions over the period, only one was Aboriginal. In turn, lack of program resources, training and staff support impacted on the remote community-based staff, and as discussed in section 7.3.3, the Prevention Educators had a high rate of turnover, with five of the six staff at three sites resigning within 12 months.

7.4.4 Adapting and developing program resource materials

It was initially expected that adaptation of the program resources and education modules would be a straightforward process of inserting Australian content that would be completed within a few months. The adaptation was delayed by extended vacancies and staff turnover, but the process itself also proved more complex and challenging than expected because the program approach in Australia was to be very different from the Canadian model.

I think that one of the things that really appealed to me about this program was that we weren't starting from scratch. Like, we had this Canadian – this huge amount of expertise and resources and training programs and everything to rely on, and then very quickly I started to feel like it was actually restrictive, because we weren't starting from scratch. We kept coming into this block of how they had set things up, and so I think it has taken us a while to work out how much we're going to be like them, and how much we're not.

That the modules might contain different or additional content became more evident after the initial training by the Canadian Master Trainers, when the Australian program team saw the content workshopped. The WTPC module in particular, focussed on the negative impact of colonisation practices towards Indigenous peoples (in Canada, for example, the removal of children to residential schools), but gave less attention to the history of resistance and strategies of protection and resilience that might already be in place in communities and could be built upon. The shift in approach reflected the

evolution of thinking about the program approach in Australia (refer to sections 7.2.2 and 7.2.3 above). As senior staff researched the availability of other resources in Australia it also became clearer that a number of programs were already operating and some had well-developed resource materials that should be included, with permission and acknowledgement, rather than duplicated or ‘reinvented’.

After the initial training, progress on development of the resource materials slowed considerably while the positions were vacant, and the program focussed on community development training and community consultations. Work resumed when the positions were again filled in early 2011, but progress on adapting the modules continued to be slow and by August 2011, more than a year after the initial training, the materials were still undergoing adaptation and were not ready to be trialled. In mid-2012 the materials were still in draft and an extended consultation phase with LAG members was underway.¹⁴⁴

7.4.5 Red Cross organisational capacity

RespectED had a high profile in Red Cross and there were high expectations and hopes for the program. There was particular interest in its community development approach and some excitement that Red Cross was moving to this way of working. RespectED was seen as a flagship program and a model for future Red Cross community development programs. Interviewed in July 2010, a senior National office manager summed up the organisational leadership view of the program:

I think it's really exciting since it's based on what's happened and worked successfully in Canada ... Aboriginal communities are generally pretty excited about the prospect of working with a RespectED type program, it meets all the things about working in partnership, long term relationships, capacity building, those sort of things. It's being warmly received by our own Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and the training that's going with it seems pretty comprehensive, and government seems pretty enthusiastic in terms of some longer term funding ... it just seems to tick lots and lots of boxes ... the potential I think is extremely high ... it seems to me like a really good, solid well researched model.

¹⁴⁴ Adaptation of the education modules WTPC and *Ten Steps* was eventually outsourced to Aboriginal education experts and the modules were finally trialled and introduced to some of the learning sites in 2013.

In contrast, a RespectED staff member interviewed during the same month was concerned about unrealistic expectations of the program and Red Cross's lack of organisational experience.

*I've been a bit concerned that there's been a lot of excitement about RespectED, and a lot of people have said to me, "Oh, I'm so excited about RespectED because I've been wanting to do community development, and **this** program will be community development." And I'm just like, "Oh my God!" I mean, this is a big program to start community development with ... So I feel like [saying], "Oh great, RespectED's here, we're going to do community development" is like we're misunderstanding community development and how it works ... people are looking at RespectED as being both the silver bullet for family violence in Aboriginal communities as well as being the silver bullet for Red Cross and where some people in the organisation want it to go, in terms of getting away from old programs and the new strategic direction. And I think that's a lot of pressure on a program that is ... is dealing with some really difficult issues that Red Cross doesn't have a lot of experience with, and it's a new style of program for Australia as well. So I feel like there's a lot weighing on its shoulders when the organisation doesn't seem quite ready yet.*

As discussed in Chapter 6, Red Cross's experience and capacity in community development work was at a very early stage when this program commenced. The HATSIS later reflected that her vision for RespectED had relied on assumptions about the organisation's capacity:

I made the assumption about Red Cross generally that it would as an organisation have had a much better level of knowledge and capability in terms of development work, both because of its international work [and] because that was very much the language they were using around community services. So the language was there, but it wasn't matched by capability, and I think we were almost talking at cross-purposes ... If you don't have the capability, how do you do any of this? How do you manage, supervise or support staff? So there were deficits all round. I don't know if I should call them deficits, or perhaps gaps – more a lack of specialist knowledge and expertise would be a better way of putting it, the requisite specialist expertise ... I think the biggest mistake I made in all of my work in Red Cross was just blindly accepting, or not challenging in any rigorous way, both my assumptions, but also the language that was being used at the time. And I don't see that as any criticism – that's the way it was ... We just simply weren't ready.

7.4.6 Matrix management, communicating "vision"

The matrix management structure had presented structural difficulties for other National office programs because responsibility for staff supervision remained with state and territory managers (Chapter 6, section 6.1.3). For RespectED, the HATSIS negotiated an arrangement that gave the RespectED National Manager direct responsibility for staff supervision, although there remained 'dotted line' reporting to state/territory managers and Executive Directors. While this gave the National Manager authority to direct staff it did not entirely alleviate the difficulties, as some staff received at times contradictory

instructions from state/territory managers or conversely, received little state/territory support when it was needed (see section 7.3.5). Nor did the arrangement give the HATSIS authority to guide and direct the program. In retrospect, she believed it would have been best to have stepped aside from her strategic position and taken a direct role in managing the program, but although she had proposed this she was persuaded to remain in the strategic role.¹⁴⁵ Despite having initiated the program, in relation to RespectED her role was purely advisory and to provide the “vision” for the program.

I was meant to shape and influence and lead from the side and it started to feel a bit like this dog roaring down the road in a hail of dust as the car takes off and I'm barking and yapping at the tyres! That's exactly how it felt! ... I had no power and authority. I didn't actually have the ability to even take some real lead and control over that RespectED program. They wanted me to hve it off and give it to somebody and get out of the way, and I think that was a real mistake. If it's your vision and you don't have the ability to shape it and create it and drive it with some real strong direct one-on-one influence, and having to work through a third person, the whole thing gets a bit distorted and diluted.

A ‘dilution’ effect could be seen in a changing understanding of the program’s aims and direction as the staff became increasingly distant from its early vision and development. By the end of the research period, the HATSIS had resigned. Only one of the Prevention Educators had been part of the early research trip to Canada and only two had attended the initial training by Canadian Master Trainers. The program management team in place by this time had not been part of the seminal early discussions and debate about the program approach, or taken part in the community development training and team workshops that were a part of the early program development and were more directly influenced by the original vision.

7.5 Conclusion

Considered purely in terms of the early program ‘goals’, that is, the adaptation and delivery of the educational resource materials, the program clearly did not achieve its goals within the expected time frame. In retrospect the HATSIS acknowledged that the plans for a national rollout put forward in the original funding proposal of March/April 2010 were “over-ambitious”: the program was trying to achieve “too much too quickly”.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Olga Havnen, personal communication, 19 May 2013.

¹⁴⁶ Olga Havnen, personal communication, 3 June 2013.

Yet considered as a development intervention founded on a 'bottom up' approach, the long process of community engagement was clearly necessary to give Prevention Educators and communities the space and time to work through issues and reach a level of agreement and 'readiness' to participate. This could not be pre-determined, and although Red Cross and (to some extent) the funding body were prepared to support this process, there was clearly concern that the program had not started to produce visible outcomes within a shorter time frame, while the program was caught in the 'catch 22' of having insufficient funding to fully establish and staff the program. The work at community level was valuable and could be seen as an end in itself, even though projected schedules for delivery of the education modules were not met. Three years after the program started, the site which was difficult to engage due to community conflict (site 4) retained a continuing interest in the program and prevention education modules commenced in late 2013. The initial work of breaking down barriers between the conflicted groups and inspiring some to work across those differences may in itself have had a lasting influence that has been carried forward by the community.

The initial proposal for a national rollout reflected early expectations and assumptions in Red Cross that were challenged by the subsequent trajectory of the program: first, that adaptation would be straightforward and that the 'total package' could be directly transferred from Canada to Australia; second, that training of Prevention Educators could be undertaken in short intensive training blocks solely in the program modules; and third, that there would be a pool of suitable staff available for recruitment to fill the program's staffing needs. While Red Cross responded to these challenges and adapted to meet them, it was unable to maintain the momentum of the RespectED program and lost staff and continuity in the communities and in key program management positions. At the end of the research period in 2011, nearly all of the community-based staff had resigned while the resource materials were yet to be ready to be trialled. In many respects, the program had to start all over again. This cycle continued, and by late 2013, all of the original (and replacement) staff had resigned: even the site that was most stable at the end of the research period had lost both staff.

The program resource materials were eventually redrafted by external Indigenous educators. One module, *Be Safe!* (targeted to young children), was dropped altogether because a number of existing programs to target this age group were already available. While the Canadian Red Cross RespectED program was well researched, it proved very

difficult to simply substitute local content into resources that had been developed in a different political and cultural context, and more research as to the resources and programs already available in Australia and where and how RespectED might have complemented them would have been of benefit. Nevertheless, reports from one site (site 2) indicate that as the program modules were introduced, they were well-received (Australian Red Cross, 2013c, 2013a).

Developing and introducing RespectED presented considerable, complex challenges. Red Cross's high expectations of the program were not backed by a solid organisational base of capacity to support a community development program at that time, and funding shortfalls were clearly a major factor in holding up progress at critical stages and had serious consequences in the attrition of the program leadership. Reliance on external funding and its concomitant pressure to deliver contracted outcomes, insufficient resources and uncertainty of funding continuity were recurrent themes, not only in relation to RespectED, but more widely throughout the programs in which Red Cross employed Aboriginal staff. As was evident in the RespectED experience, and is more widely the case for the NFP sector, these issues had a powerful influence on program development and delivery. The next chapter takes up the issue of the influence of funding and resource availability as powerful drivers of action and choice in Aboriginal employment and programming in NFPs.

Chapter 8. Funding and resources

One of the attractions of devolving government-funded services to NFPs and charities during the era of the Howard Government was its cost-effectiveness. Launching a Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal in 2002, the then Treasurer, Peter Costello, lauded the services that could be delivered through voluntary associations “much more effectively because of the quality of character of the people” and because “the overheads and the administration are so much lower in the delivery of services” (quoted in Maddox, 2005, p.249). Why in the case of welfare services, Maddox wondered, was a government “so wedded to leaving things up to the market” willing “to abandon the all-powerful market in favour of a sector that directly undercuts it?” She concluded that in privatising and outsourcing welfare services, NFPs “did more work than they were paid for” and that the welfare burden had been shifted to churches and charities “supported by cut-price government input” (2005, pp 248-250). This corresponded with the Howard Government’s neo-liberal agenda: the withdrawal of the state from direct provision of services to achieve greater efficiency, its concept of a ‘social coalition’ of government, business and welfare organisations, and its emphasis on individual responsibility, volunteerism and mutual obligation (Van Gramberg & Bassett, 2005; Kenny, 2008). Paradoxically, the emphasis on contracting has led to greater professionalisation of NFPs, and a reduced role for volunteers closer to the ‘grass roots’ (Kenny, 2002).

The Productivity Commission’s inquiry (2010) into the contribution of the NFP sector (discussed in Chapter 2) found that NFPs did much more than they were paid for: “many government funded services provided by NFPs are not sufficiently funded to cover the cost of service provision” and on average, only about 70% of the actual cost of services was met by government (Productivity Commission, 2010, pp 280-281). This required NFPs to subsidise service costs from other revenue sources and squeeze wages so that it was difficult to recruit and retain professional staff, with consequences for the quality of services (Productivity Commission, 2010, p. xxxii). Further, government had moved away

from making capital grants,¹⁴⁷ and required that any surplus left over at the end of a contract be returned, so little funding was available to NFPs for investment to improve effectiveness and efficiency (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.xxxii).

A high proportion of NFPs rely heavily on government funding (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.1) (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.302). Australian Red Cross is amongst those that depend on government funding to undertake programs and services. Although at times Red Cross invested some of its own funds during the study period to develop its Aboriginal engagement, in most regions it relied on external funding to expand into new programs, employ staff and sometimes to cover the cost of new infrastructure such as office accommodation and vehicles. This chapter explores the challenges and consequences of that reliance. Amongst those is the broader policy setting of ‘mainstreaming’ of Indigenous programs, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Although Red Cross had made a major commitment to working with Aboriginal people and communities, in 2012 it reported that only 3% of the government funding it receives is allocated specifically to Aboriginal programs. The most likely reason for this apparently small allocation to Aboriginal programs is that much of the funding Red Cross receives for programs that are expected to include Aboriginal clients, and in which the majority of Aboriginal staff work, are mainstream or ‘universal’ services. The funding picture is complex and it is not always clear how funding is allocated or on what basis. During the research it was evident that while some positions were directly funded by a government contract for service delivery, in many cases funds from multiple sources were ‘cobbled together’ to fund offices and infrastructure and to pay staff.

The need to secure funding and resources to operate programs has wide-reaching implications for Red Cross and other NFPs. This chapter illustrates the reliance of Red Cross and other large organisations in the sector on external funding and its implications for operational outcomes. Reliance on government funding to undertake work with Aboriginal people presented strategic, operational, ethical and program design dilemmas. Availability of funding drove the nature of program activities, the kind of staff employed and their employment security, and impacted on the locations and scale of NFP activity in

¹⁴⁷ The Productivity Commission noted that governments had contributed only about 7.6% of the funding for new capital expenditure in 2006-07 (Productivity Commission, 2010, p.xxxii).

different regions. For Red Cross it also had a significant influence on its capacity to implement its own strategic intentions because the nature of the individualised services for which most funding was available was often at odds with Red Cross's policy and its Board-endorsed strategic approach. Finally, the chapter discusses competition in the NFP sector, informed by the perspective of research participants, and considers how the overarching policies and the expanding role of mainstream organisations may contribute to a cycle of further displacement and disempowerment of local Aboriginal organisations.

8.1 How Red Cross is funded

Australian Red Cross promotes itself as a humanitarian organisation that mobilises an army of dedicated volunteers with the support of public donations. Red Cross does draw on a large volunteer base and community financial support, but humanitarian aid is a business (Weiss, 2013) – increasingly professionalised, brand-focussed and financially driven. Governments are its major clients and a substantial part of the work done by NFPs is done under contract to government funding bodies. Amongst large Australian NFPs, Australian Red Cross is one of the bigger players (Wanna et al., 2010, pp 152-154) (see Table 8.1). It is difficult to make a comparison with large faith-based NFPs as they do not report as national entities, but in terms of its total assets, annual income and number of staff, Australian Red Cross would fall just within the top 200 Australian companies if it were operating as a public company.

Australian Red Cross total income in the financial year (FY) 2012¹⁴⁸ was approximately \$A955 million (Australian Red Cross, 2012b, p.7). About 81% of its income was provided by government, and of this about 60% (approximately \$A578 million) was for delivery of the Australian Blood Service (see Table 8.2).

Governments provided about 62% (approximately \$235 million) of Red Cross's income for 'non-blood' activities (see Table 8.3). This was an 81% increase from the previous year, largely due to a substantial increase in contracted services under the Commonwealth's Community Detention and Asylum Seeker Assistance Support programs. Funds from government grants were allocated to Red Cross's key priority areas as shown in Table 8.4.

¹⁴⁸ i.e. the financial year ending 30 June 2012.

Table 8.1 Major Australian Not-for-profits¹ in 2012

Organisation	Total Assets (\$million)	No. staff	Total income (\$million)	Total income Gov't grants (\$million)	Total income donations/ Fundraising (\$million)	Total income commercial/ social enterprise ² (\$million)	Total expenditure (\$million)
Australian Red Cross (total including Blood service)	807.8	2962	954.9	813.2	60.8	34.3	915.5
Australian Red Cross (non-blood activity)			376.5	234.7			
Mission Australia	341.3	3566	330.2	264.5	33.9	18.0	318.8
Salvation Army Australia (Southern)	341.3	3137	341.3	166.2	46.4	93.5	313.2
Salvation Army Australia (Eastern)	na	4053	330.1	152.0	93.9 ³	49.0 ⁴	326.1
The Smith Family	na	601	84.2	17.4	44.0	16.5	72.7
Brotherhood of St Laurence	118.2	na	61.7	38.3	4.3	13.5	67.1
The Benevolent Society	117.4	na	81.7	81.4 ⁵			80.4

Sources: information in the table is drawn from the annual reports and financial statements of the organisations listed.

Notes:

- (1) This table does not include information about some major faith-based organisations such as ANGLICARE, UnitingCare, CatholicCare, Centacare as these are multiple entities operating in church dioceses which report separately rather than as national bodies. ANGLICARE in the Sydney diocese alone reported assets of \$171.6 million and income from government revenue of \$66.7 million in 2012.
- (2) This figure refers to gross income from commercial activities, not net income. (In some cases expenditure on commercial activity was higher than the income generated.)
- (3) This amount was raised through donations to the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal and Christmas appeal; additional 'specific purpose' appeals raised a further \$33.3 million for disaster assistance.
- (4) Income from donated goods.
- (5) Includes receipts from clients.

Table 8.2 Australian Red Cross: Four Years at a Glance

	2012 \$,000	2011 \$,000	2009 \$,000	2010 \$,000
Blood Service ¹	578,461	567,471	456,491	574,207
Government Grants ²	217,663	115,086	91,983	80,072
Community Support - everyday work	56,729	53,677	38,829	47,628
Community Support - emergency appeals	4,102	55,586	376,096	21,173
Commercial Operations	34,336	34,766	37,187	36,664
Government Grants for Commercial Ops	17,074	14,094	6,627	8,833
Other income ³	46,567	24,913	20,298	28,896
Total income	954,932	865,593	1,027,511	797,473
Blood Service	539,317	465,798	418,658	474,248
Domestic programs	223,754	121,981	111,218	93,837
International programs	28,620	17,716	19,110	17,116
Emergency Appeals ⁴	31,439	53,149	404,546	32,989
Commercial Operations ⁵	47,753	49,988	27,725	43,404
Fundraising Costs ⁶	15,965	14,880	16,563	12,600
Marketing	5,981	6,356	5,066	6,170
Administration	22,694	19,482	32,059	23,822
Total expenditure	915,523	749,350	1,034,945	704,186
Surplus/ (Deficit)	39,409	116,243	(7,434)	93,287

Source: Australian Red Cross Financials 2011-12⁷

Notes:

- (1) The Blood Service annual report and financial statements available at donateblood.com.au
- (2) Government grants exclude Blood Service and Commercial Operations - shown separately
- (3) Other Income includes investment income, net gain on disposal of property, plant and equipment, non-government grants, rental revenue, ticket sales and membership income.
- (4) Emergency appeals include domestic and international appeals
- (5) Commercial operations include Red Cross College, Red Cross Products and Retail
- (6) Fundraising costs include all costs for raising revenue and in-kind support from public, government and non-government grants.
- (7) http://redcross.org.au/annualreport_2012/financials/at-a-glance.html

Table 8.3 Australian Red Cross income for ‘non-blood’ activities 2011-12

Income source	Approx income (\$ million)	Approx %
Government grants	234.7	62
Community support (donations, corporate partnerships, bequests, member and community groups)	60.8	16
Sale of goods/provision of services	49.0	13
Disposal of property, plant and equipment	27.0	7
Investment income	2.5	<1
Other	2.5	<1
Total	376.5	100

Source: Australian Red Cross Annual Report Financials 2011-12¹⁴⁹

The funding picture is complex and is not simply a matter of government grants for specific programs. While the majority of Aboriginal participants in this research (approximately 60%) worked in programs that were directly funded by government agencies, there were often multiple funding bodies, external corporate partners or philanthropic donors, and/or partner organisations that were themselves recipients of government and corporate grants. Table 8.4 indicates that of government grants to Red Cross in 2012, 3% of these funds were allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs, but it is not clear to which programs and locations this category refers.

Most Aboriginal participants in this study (approximately 68%) worked in ‘universal’ programs not necessarily classified by the funding body as ‘Indigenous-specific’ (although in more remote regions the programs were clearly expected to have higher levels of Aboriginal participation). In one state, nearly all Aboriginal participants worked in mainstream programs that provided services to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients (such as homelessness, families at risk, mental health, youth services), which were likely to have been allocated under other priority classifications, such as ‘Locational Disadvantage’, ‘Social Inclusion’ or the large category ‘Other’ shown in Table 8.4. Several Aboriginal participants were also employed in split positions which included Red Cross Emergency Services work (e.g. to build Aboriginal participation in emergency volunteering) that may have been classified under ‘Emergency Services’.

¹⁴⁹ Available at: http://redcross.org.au/annualreport_2012/financials/expenditure.html

Table 8.4 Australian Red Cross program allocation of government grants

Government grant expenditure	Approx %
Impact of Migration	46
Other	12
International Aid and Development	21
Social Inclusion	6
Locational Disadvantage	6
Disaster and Emergency Services	6
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs	3
International Humanitarian Law	0.4
Total	100

Source: Australian Red Cross Annual Report Financials 2011-12

8.1.1 Funding, contracts and infrastructure for Aboriginal programs

As discussed in Chapter 6, the considerable variation in the nature of Aboriginal activity in different regions and locations was in part due to the availability of funding. In some regions, high value multi-year contracts to deliver programs made it possible to establish new offices and establish the infrastructure which supported further expansion into other activities and a base to seek further contracts. In others, such contracts contributed to a major expansion of staff, programs and equipment. Two such high value contracts, funded by FaHCSIA, were ‘Communities for Children’ (CfC) (see Chapter 3, section 3.1.3) and the ‘Personal Helpers and Mentors Service (PHaMS).¹⁵⁰ Red Cross received approximately \$14 million from the Commonwealth for the PHaMS program between 2009 and 2011, which enabled it to consolidate its presence in several locations, and seek additional contracts and grants from government and other donors. A senior manager in one state/territory explained the importance of securing such high value contracts to establish office infrastructure, but noted that these were to provide specific services and were less flexible than smaller grants:

... the big dollars tend to be for very specific things and the small dollars tend to be for more community based projects. It's good to have a mix of the two but in terms of paying for the infrastructure, the office, the management costs, the vehicles

¹⁵⁰ Information about PHaMS is available at: <http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/mental-health/programs-services/personal-helpers-and-mentors/locating-a-personal-helpers-and-mentors-service>

running costs, etc, we are very heavily dependent on FaHCSIA, in particular, and on the Personal Helpers and Mentors program in particular, because they are the programs that have the big dollars, compared to the other programs.

A senior manager in a state/territory where 90% of all of Red Cross's regional/remote services are supported by government funding described a "smorgasbord" of small contracts and grants to build on the program base provided by one high value program, and stated that one small office which had employed Aboriginal staff for several years was "hanging by a thread" because there was very little funding for it. Even larger offices were in the precarious position of being so reliant on one high value program that if that program were to cease, "the whole house of cards would collapse" and half of the regional/remote team would lose their positions.

The comparative ease with which Red Cross and other mainstream NFPs secure contracts that provide sufficient resources to establish infrastructure and move into new regions illustrates the privilege they enjoy in comparison with Indigenous community sector organisations. As discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.1.3), Indigenous organisations are rarely able to secure high value contracts and are over-burdened by the high level of administration imposed by the acquittal of multiple small value grants (ANAO, 2012b, p.20), yet have difficulty even securing funding for operational and administration costs (Bond & Brady, 2013; Muller, 2008b, 2008a).¹⁵¹ The CDEP scheme, which was a major provider of Aboriginal employment, was funded only annually and could not secure adequate funding for capital costs (Altman & Sanders, 2008). Yet, Red Cross was able to obtain specific purpose grants from FaHCSIA (from Indigenous funding streams) to establish itself as a provider in new locations. In 2009 a grant of \$660,000 was made "for establishment of Red Cross services" in a remote town in one state/territory and in another, further grants were made in 2010 for fit out of two regional offices (approx. \$200,000). These grants were made from FaHCSIA's Indigenous Communities Strategic Investment program.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Bond and Brady (2013) describe an Aboriginal community organisation in Queensland which receives an annual income of \$600,000, comprised of 42 different grants of an average value of \$14,000, but was unable to secure funding for a Finance Officer or CEO. Board/management committee members processed pay for staff and acquitted funding grants.

¹⁵² This information was available on the former FaHCSIA website (2013). The identification numbers for these grants were 63813, 70742 and 70706. Information on grants made by FaHCSIA from 2009-2013 is available on the DSS (formerly FaHCSIA) website at

8.1.2 Seeking new contracts

High value, multi-year government contracts played an important role for Red Cross in helping to establish service infrastructure in some locations, but such funding was not available in all regions (or may have been won by other organisations) and there was continuing pressure to pursue and secure additional resources. Like other large NFPs, Australian Red Cross subscribed to tender information services that alerted its 'Strategic Growth' team to government funding opportunities. Between 20 and 40 notifications were received daily and forwarded to National program managers to decide whether these should be pursued. During the research period Red Cross implemented a 'new and expanded programs' process (NESP) to ensure that those pursued were aligned with Red Cross's strategic priorities, 'ways of working' and organisational capacity, and had received required internal approvals. If funding was sought for new Aboriginal programs, the NESP process was intended to ensure compliance with Red Cross's Indigenous core principles, that Red Cross's role had been negotiated with communities "on the basis of reciprocal and long term partnership" and that the program would take a community development approach.

There was some disconnection between the team that applied for funds and those who delivered programs. The Strategic Growth team is a 'virtual' team of coordinators (submission writers) in each state/territory head office, led by a National manager based in the Melbourne National head office. The team was largely desk-bound and there were few opportunities to visit the more distant locations where Red Cross predominantly worked with Aboriginal people; the day-to-day work, program reporting and funding acquittal were dealt with by program staff.

The main focus of the Strategic Growth team was on winning government tenders and grants. Higher value (multi-million, multi-year) government contracts are usually tenders which prescribe both the objectives of the program and the service delivery model to be followed, while grants were typically of lower value but more flexible as to how the objectives were to be achieved. Proactive 'pitches' for Red Cross initiated projects – such as

<http://www.dss.gov.au/grants-funding/grants-funding>, but only one of these grants is listed, under what is now termed the Indigenous Capability and Development Program.

the RespectED program – had to be targeted to areas that government had identified as a priority to have any chance of success. As the RespectED example illustrates however, even a successful pitch may not secure adequate funding to fully resource the proposal.

8.2 Funding constraints on resources, staff and strategy

Maddox observes that one of the consequences of shifting the burden of service provision to the NFP sector is that workers “are likely to find themselves expected to provide cheap services for minimal return” (Maddox, 2005, p.250). Similarly, government underfunding of program costs means that they are expected to do so with limited resources. The theme of resource constraints emerged frequently in the research interviews, and it was also evident that funding constraints influenced implementation of strategy and Red Cross's capacity to retain staff and sustain long-term engagements.

8.2.1 Resources

Participants often mentioned that the program resources were insufficient, perhaps in part due to Red Cross's inexperience in tendering for programs in new locations. This placed additional burdens on program staff and was interpreted as lack of senior management support or lack of understanding of the challenges of delivering programs to Aboriginal communities.

Yes, we're always working on a shoestring, for sure. Always working on a shoestring, and trying to match that shoestring up to getting the results on the ground. That budget on a shoestring was not enough to deliver. It was never, never, never, never enough to deliver ... Yeah, but I've found I wasn't the only one. Once I started, you just talked to different people across the board, across the state, and I've got that same feedback from other people working in every level – felt the same thing. They were working hard to uphold the reputation and I believe everybody was working to those Principles, but they felt a little bit disappointed that resources weren't really there. The support from upper management wasn't there to support them in the difficulties.

The impact of funding restrictions was experienced in a variety of ways: for example, some staff started new programs without work stations and computers; others whose program responsibility extended over large remote regions were unable to travel because

there were insufficient funds.¹⁵³ Some staff thought Red Cross had not sought sufficient funding when it tendered because of lack of knowledge of the region and what delivering the program there would entail.

A senior manager believed resource shortfalls had a major impact on Red Cross's work:

That is underpinning every piece of work we're doing in Australian services at the moment. I've been here for two years. This is my third budget cycle. We are going through crisis after crisis after crisis on the budget cycles. We have stretched targets in every portfolio area. We are racing out there and getting government money, even where staff are saying "We're exhausted, how are we going to do this?" So I think it's a significant factor.

8.2.2 Strategy and long-term engagement

While contracted programs helped to fund Red Cross's presence in a place and employ Aboriginal staff, Red Cross's reliance on funding posed policy and structural dilemmas that had a powerful influence on its capacity to execute the broader strategic aims of its Indigenous engagement. The nature of the funded programs reflected the priorities and values of the funding agencies (that is, government policy priorities), rather than Red Cross's priorities or the priorities of communities. As discussed in Chapter 6, the rapid expansion of Aboriginal programs and urgency to secure funding resulted in many new programs that were somewhat 'off strategy', and a review in late 2011 (two years into Red Cross's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy) indicated that the overall picture was not matching Red Cross's strategic intentions of long-term community engagement.

I think we've got a bit of a scatter gun approach. I think there is still a "let's grab the money and run" mentality ... the fact that there's so much happening in so many locations would tend to suggest to me that it's all a bit scatter gun and "Oh, the money's come up, let's grab it!" and that we really need to look at how do we make it much more targeted ... make it more in line with the strategy in terms of engaging communities – you know, really reviewing ... get this set of criteria, look at each program, make sure that it's ticking the box. My gut feeling is we'll come up wanting but then there's some places where it's working really well.

Most programs are for fixed terms that do not guarantee program continuity, so despite the policy commitment of long-term engagement over a period of at least 7-10 years, there

¹⁵³ For example, a staff member described 'hitching a ride' with the Royal Flying Doctor Service as it offered an opportunity to visit a location where there were clients she had previously been unable to meet in person.

were some locations where Red Cross had commenced programs but had been unable to sustain this commitment when funding for specific programs ceased. Further, a large proportion of Red Cross Aboriginal staff were employed in externally-funded programs and therefore employed on fixed-term contracts, as future employment could not be assured beyond the life of the contract (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.2). This had consequences both for staff retention and for continuity of engagement with communities (and clients) and the development of relationships of trust.

Even long-term (multi-year) contracts assure funding for only three years at most, and rarely allow adequate time for community consultation and engagement, nor are they oriented towards community development, responding to community priorities or supporting the development of community resilience. Senior managers at both state/territory and national level said that although high value contracts paid for infrastructure and management costs, these externally funded programs were more prescriptive and less flexible, which in turn impacted upon Red Cross's capacity to adopt community development approaches:

It restricts what we can do. We have to work within the guidelines and the parameters of the program so it is a challenge for the staff because often that's not necessarily what they really want to do. They would rather be doing something else or they have a different idea, but we have to stick within the funding guidelines. So it does restrict what we can do, we can't just go wherever we want and make those relationships work in particular ways. We're driven on achieving objectives, and delivering on outcomes.

A lot of our work is restricted by the funding that we have and these two general streams of funding. One is grant funding, which can often be a lot more flexible but is often smaller amounts of money, through to tenders which are often prescribed programme approaches that are fairly well defined. So when we work in that space, we are often subject to short lead-in times, short application times, and then if we do win it, then short consultation periods allowed for with community before we need to start delivering services. So a lot of the work we do is tightly specified funding and we try and – one of the group managers, described it – we do community development off the side of the desk. So we do what we can but we still have to deliver on what we've been funded to do.

It's a constant tension between knowing that that's a great way to work – working with community development principles at the pace of the community and all those things, is completely at odds with the fact we're driven by external funding and that's a problem that the organisation's been grappling with for a lot of years because if we didn't have government funding or external funding we wouldn't be doing anything, because the Red Cross money isn't there.

As discussed in Chapter 6 (section 6.2.3), one of the challenges for Red Cross in shifting to a community development approach was that existing staff had been recruited for work that required a different skill set.

... there's the funding and its intent that drives a lot of the regional difference because that then determines what kind of staff we are looking for and what kind of competencies ... we're looking for people with the skills to be able to implement and co-ordinate the contracts that we've been successful in gaining ... and most of those things are not community development type projects.

One state/territory experimented with a place-based approach, having secured funding that enabled it to spend two years in deep community engagement and consultation, free from the requirement to deliver specific programs.

... [W]here we've done that most successfully has been when we've had philanthropic funding that says, "Here's three years' worth of money" and we get to engage without limitations and then that creates the opportunity to find funding that's more locked down to outcomes and outputs. So yeah, we find you cannot do the community development work through just funded programs. Can't do it. You have to invest in the engagement side of things.

Untied funding for this intensive, expensive and time-consuming work is rarely available from external sources, and so Red Cross aims to generate more internal resources to increase its flexibility.

... a lot of the work we've done over the last year or two is about increasing the proportion of our internal flexible funding. So our commercial arms, the Red Cross College, the retail shops, are very much about the money they raise is for us to be able to have internal untied funding so that we can work more flexibly and work in these sort of areas. So that's certainly the business plan, is to become more independent of tied funding over the next period, next five years and we are heading in the right direction ... so we are working more on higher income generation into untied areas, that's been a huge focus.

8.3 Competition in the NFP sector

The fundamental characteristic of government-funded/NFP-delivered human services is 'purchase of service contracting' (POSC) – that is, the process whereby NFPs compete for tenders and grants to deliver the services that governments wish to fund. In the period since the disestablishment of ATSIC in 2004, mainstream NFPs have not only moved into the marketplace of 'universal' programs, but into programs specifically targeted to Aboriginal people which were previously delivered almost exclusively by Aboriginal organisations. As discussed in Chapter 2, the higher value contracts offered by FaHCSIA

as lead agency are almost exclusively available to large mainstream NFPs only. Non-Indigenous NFPs are also the main recipients of many of the smaller value grants (ANAO, 2012b, p.55)¹⁵⁴ which complement and ‘fill out’ their other activities and programs. An informant who worked in a Commonwealth Government lead agency described the impact of current funding arrangements on the Indigenous sector:

It's been a bonanza for large NGOs and it's been a holocaust for Aboriginal communities and their community organisations and the empowerment and capacity that goes with that.

Mainstreaming of funding and services, combined with the removal of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) from many communities, had had a devastating effect on Aboriginal community organisations in this public servant's view.

That program provided the critical mass of skills and knowledge in Aboriginal communities for them to administer their money, to manage their funds, to manage their affairs, to report to government, to organise their business and to plan for the future. That was stripped out of all those Aboriginal organisations that not only delivered the CDEP program but the language programs, the culture and heritage programs, the sport and recreation programs, the Indigenous justice programs, the justice advocacy programs, the prisoner support programs, the housing programs, the municipal services programs and on and on and on. They no longer exist intact as programs. They have been shifted to local government and NGOs and in a lot of cases have simply evaporated. So that large dollar resource, that large physical effort across all those communities, across the country is now no longer there.

It was clear to everybody who was warm and breathing that once you took the CDEP out of a community you took its life away and you took its skills away: you took its accountant, its manager, its community development officer, its employment officer, its mentors, its trainers, its equipment. You took away the rubbish truck, you took away the chainsaws, the bulldozer and you put these people on New Start allowance ...

In the view of this participant, the new opportunities available to the mainstream NFP sector had accelerated their growth and expansion at further cost to the Indigenous sector:

They've gone to places they've never been before. Often Federal funding, Commonwealth funding, is given to state governments for the provision of services around housing and homelessness and child protection and things like this. State governments now tender those services out to the NGO sector, so where in [remote town] you may have had [ATSIC regional council] running an anti-violence program, now you'll find the [faith-based organisation] at [another regional town]

¹⁵⁴ See also grant funding information available on the DSS website: <http://www.dss.gov.au/grants-funding/grants-funding>

runs it. That may be a mere \$150,000 a year but for an Aboriginal organisation ... that means three jobs, three families fed and three people doing work with their own people more effectively. So that shift has had a profound impact beyond Aboriginal organisations losing money. It's had a massive impact on the Aboriginal economy. These are unforeseen consequences of government policy.

The extent to which the broader funding and policy framework, and its impact on Aboriginal community organisations, was understood within Red Cross (and other similar organisations) is unclear. Red Cross appeared to see itself as a competitor with other NFPs, but rarely as a potential competitor with Aboriginal organisations, or as the means of displacing them from funding opportunities and so contributing to the disempowerment of the local communities and organisations with which it hoped to engage.

One of Red Cross's criteria for provision of services to communities is to do "what others don't do or don't do well enough" (Australian Red Cross, 2007b). The general tenor of interviews, especially with managers, conveyed the impression that Red Cross saw itself as a potential 'major player' in a field where it could make an important contribution, in the context of 'friendly competition' with other mainstream NFPs that had started sooner and were well-established in Aboriginal communities and with funding bodies.

Well, there are a lot of NGOs out there. They're not the same in terms of "we're here for the long haul, seven to ten years, Fundamental Principles", but a lot of NGOs have been working with Aboriginal communities for years here. They might not be doing it as well, as I say, but they still have connections, or are known. When we started getting into this area, people said, "Why the hell are you – why are you going for money, working with Aboriginal communities, for? What do Red Cross do?" And then there was, "Aren't you religious, by having a red cross?" Here comes the Red Cross car, with the emblem on the side ... so for people who really didn't identify with Red Cross, I can see how they'd probably see a cross and relate it to a religious symbol.

A lot of those programs in [regional town] ... those opportunities were missed by Red Cross when the funding opportunities for a lot of those programs came up here ... probably because they didn't have the connections ... So a lot of those opportunities have gone to other organisations who have them now, who are doing those services really well, so therefore when something else comes along to tack onto those services they're getting tapped on the shoulder or asked to submit, because they're doing it well. So it's quite hard here to break into getting the funded services because there are already plenty of other agencies out there who are doing them and doing them very well in those areas.

In some regions there was a sense that Red Cross was just one more NFP in an over-crowded field where far too many mainstream organisations were delivering

uncoordinated programs in discrete communities, often of the same type, in competition with each other.

We're making partnerships with other organisations, and really talking to other organisations about supporting their programs, and that is a huge problem on the communities ... There's a lot of money coming in, there's a lot of outside organisations coming to work on the community, so community are really just about standing back and folding their arms and saying, "OK, when all these silly whitefellas go away, we'll go back to normal." And of course that's not going to happen!

You know, I'm not sure why we are all competing for things in the same community. Most non-government organisations have the same intent. They do want to help and they want to do good, but we are still all a bit competitive about how we go about things and particularly in Aboriginal communities. Somebody could sit outside the front, the shop on one day and see 30 or 40 different cars coming past and 10 of them will all be delivering a financial advice program and they are all different – so some of the coordination, collaboration, partnership stuff could also be an area that we could work on.

8.3.1 Competition for 'black dollars'

Early in the field research, Aboriginal participants drew my attention to sensitivities in Aboriginal communities about the expanding role of the mainstream NFP sector in Indigenous services. This concern was widespread and emerged as a theme in interviews in nearly all states/territories. Aboriginal staff, especially those who had worked in the Indigenous sector, were generally much more aware than non-Aboriginal participants of the competitive advantage of mainstream NFPs over local Aboriginal community organisations. Some saw this in a positive light, taking the view that Red Cross had greater capacity, but would have preferred to see Indigenous organisations supported to operate more professionally and retain their funding.

I think in the great scheme of things, even Indigenous organisations – there are people still out there that still need to really be supported and trained, even in the managerial positions, to run organisations so that they don't lose these opportunities and fundings that they have, to keep the Indigenous organisation running for their community ... because I've worked in Indigenous community organisations. I'd rather see that Indigenous organisation take it on board professionally, at all levels, and run their organisations so that they don't lose their fundings, because they need to keep it there to employ Indigenous people. But when they start losing funding, we're not going to stay around there. We're going to start looking for work somewhere else. But I didn't know what was expected when I came here, that's all. I'm not saying they're the answer or the be-all, but I'm really excited to be a part of what's happening right now – what they're doing. It's the season for it and I'm happy to be here for however long I can be.

Others reported community perceptions that mainstream NFPs were regarded as competitors for Aboriginal funding, or “taking Black dollars”, and this made community organisations suspicious and hostile.

... I think if other organisations do go for funding sometimes and that organisation might get it rather than the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander group that keeps it, I know that there can be a lot of flak within the community about that and they'll call a community meeting and actually put that organisation up to question and ridicule it sometimes at that because they've got that funding and “why are you doing this?”

... it's going to be a little bit harder ... they're losing a lot of the Aboriginal organisations out here ... trying to maybe slice down the smaller services and have them all under one big umbrella ... and the little Aboriginal organisations standing alone, they're seeming to fold right up, so I don't know if they thought every time we've gone out there that we're another one trying to take over ... they've made it quite clear when we came out: “Oh, you're welcome here, but we hope the Red Cross don't think they're putting their hand in Aboriginal [funding]” That has happened with a lot of the Aboriginal services out there. I was talking to one of the fellas, and he's an Aboriginal man, his wife's an Aboriginal woman, they've got an Aboriginal service, and they lost a lot of funding. Well, it's like it was Aboriginal money to go to an Aboriginal service, and it ends up being in a Christian organisation. Why wouldn't they be pissed off?

The overall funding picture is complex (see Chapter 3, section 3.1.2), and the extent to which mainstream NFPs actively (or knowingly) compete with Indigenous sector organisations is unclear. It is certainly a complex picture from inside Red Cross, which has a policy not to compete with local community organisations, yet had sometimes done so, perhaps inadvertently, because it lacked relationships with local community organisations or was unaware of the services they provided, or was unaware of local histories and organisations that had been active locally. The effectiveness of such a policy may be undermined by lack of knowledge or be outweighed by the need or pressure to secure funding. In general (with the exception of senior managers in one state) there appeared to be limited understanding of the policy history or awareness of the extent to which the current funding and policy environment had given mainstream NFPs a competitive advantage over local Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Indigenous sector organisations are distinctly disadvantaged in competition with mainstream NFPs. They may be by-passed for opportunities that are offered as direct source contracts, be precluded from tendering because of the cost of due diligence, lack capacity to put in applications, and find fewer funding opportunities that are Indigenous-specific.

The Aboriginal organisations tell us in this state that the money that used to be available specifically for [Aboriginal programs] now is so generic that they're competing. And we're aware of that ... because of the availability of funds and how now widespread it is. It's not targeted to previously how it would have been.

A senior Aboriginal manager was motivated to work for Red Cross for the very reason that mainstream organisations were becoming preferred providers for Indigenous services:

... at that time I saw the opportunities in Red Cross as being more about a chance to impact what I saw as pretty much a green field. Red Cross didn't have the baggage of those relationships in communities ... a bit of a clean skin if you like, in terms of service delivery ... and I saw Red Cross as a place where I could ... make some big changes in the way that services were being rolled out across the state, in particular. And also at that time, and it continues to be a bit of a phenomena, all of the large NGOs – so Red Cross, Mission, Salvos – they were the ones who were becoming far more successful at actually gaining the funding to do the service and a lot of Indigenous organisations were just not being able to compete with the huge machine of these large NGOs ... it might have been two or three years before it really became apparent. I kept saying to people, "You need to understand, the big NGOs are going to be the new pseudo-government service deliverers. You know, get on board and get them ready" ... I knew that all of the large NGOs were moving into the human service sector and that in particular we were seeing more of them pick up Indigenous service contracts.

Despite the policy of not competing with local organisations, there seemed to be little awareness amongst non-Indigenous managers of the potential for competition with local Aboriginal organisations, except in one state/territory where the need for careful consideration was clearly articulated:

Look the other thing I think, around funding, is the temptation to when there's a bag of money around for us to be putting our hand up without having firstly thought about is there a more appropriate Aboriginal-led organisation who will be applying for this funding, either in their own right or if they need any sort of secondary support, perhaps that's where we could be working with them or, if there's other Aboriginal-led organisations, again it's that facilitation role. We don't have to rush and do it on our own and we should never, ever be competing with those sorts of organisations either.

The established relationships which Red Cross had developed over time in this state enabled it to seek advice from local organisations and on occasions to try alternative arrangements such as auspicing funds to support local community organisations to deliver the services. On another occasion a direct source offer of \$800,000 funding over two years was made to Red Cross in this state to provide nutrition training in remote communities,

... and of course the temptation is "Wow, that's fantastic, let's grab it!" but we just said, "Look, we need to go back and make sure that the key organisations firstly know about this, are happy with this, whether or not they want to play a role etc,"

and we did that and very quickly found out that no, they knew nothing about it and there are so many cooking, food education type programs in communities, it was kind of the last thing they needed, and so we just went back and said “Thanks, but no thanks.” We just declined the funding and they’re still struggling I think to allocate that money 12 months on because, again, they haven’t engaged with [regional Aboriginal organisations] who are much better placed to pick this up. For whatever reason, the State is just not wanting to engage with them. So it’s kind of that ego stuff again, it’s doing our due diligence to make sure that we have ticked off all our Ways of Working before we just have the rush of blood and say “Yes, thanks so much for the \$800k!”

In other states/territories, however, similar direct source funding opportunities were actively sought and accepted; in some instances tenders for the same (or similar) programs that were rejected as inappropriate in one state *were* taken up in others, in locations where there were competent community organisations with capacity to deliver them.

8.3.2 Ethical considerations

The pressure to secure external funding or accept it when offered is a powerful driver across the NFP sector. A National office program manager explained how the offer of external funding rushed the rapid expansion of a new community development program before Red Cross had the expertise to deliver it:

...the recommendations from the pilot was Red Cross has to do internal capacity building around community development first. Red Cross has to learn better how to work with Aboriginal people before this is up-scaled. That’s clearly the recommendations from the staff who were involved in the pilot program ... and then within two months we’d up-scaled it across four states to 40 communities with this funding. We just ignored those recommendations.

In another case, Red Cross received an offer of very substantial ‘direct source’ funding of \$5 million over three years to run a training program in several remote communities, and proceeded with the program against the advice of the Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy who had a number of objections to the approach of the program. These concerns included the adequacy of the consultation process, the doubtful effectiveness of the program in achieving sustainable capacity development after the life of the program, and ethical concerns about the substantial administration fee which would accrue to Red Cross – in other words, ‘making money’ out of extremely disadvantaged people. Fundamental disagreement about these ethical issues ultimately

contributed to the decision of the Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy to resign.¹⁵⁵

While longer term focus is on building internal financial resources through the organisation's commercial arm, this too poses some ethical dilemmas such as the example given above. The philosophy of this part of the organisation, as a Group Manager responsible for a remote area Aboriginal training program put it, was "we are out there not to give away for nothing but to make a profit from it". During the research period, the commercial arm negotiated contracts to deliver training programs such as family budgeting and financial management in some remote communities, in some cases independent of state/territory program management and of program staff engaged in the slow work of community engagement in the same region. This gave rise to questions about whether the commercial arm had the expertise and cultural knowledge to deliver such programs effectively and whether income-raising ventures in impoverished Aboriginal communities were appropriate for Red Cross.

8.4 Conclusion

Australian Red Cross was heavily reliant on government funding to resource its work with Aboriginal people. The nature and availability of this funding had a significant influence on the nature of activities and diversity of approaches taken in different regions. While external funding paid for infrastructure, staff and running costs in new or expanded locations, this reliance had consequences in inadequate resources to deliver programs and was a major driver of the kind of programs Red Cross offered, and the types of skills sought in recruiting staff to work in them. The short-term nature of funding cycles undermined Red Cross's capacity to retain its Indigenous staff and the type of program contracts available limited its ability to implement its strategy of applying community development approaches, responding to community priorities and sustaining long-term commitments with the communities it worked with.

¹⁵⁵ In her subsequent role as NT Coordinator-General for Remote Services, her report for 2012 was very critical of the practice of direct source funding to mainstream NFPs to deliver multi-million, multi-year contracts in remote communities on the grounds that these organisations lacked proven cultural competence and specialist expertise in the program areas for which they were contracted. The report documented instances where NFPs that had successfully tendered had been unable to deliver and had provided "poorly targeted and inappropriate" services. Some had returned the funds (ONTCCGRS, 2012, pp 56-57).

As a large, national and highly reputable mainstream organisation, Red Cross was a privileged competitor in securing funding and contracts. The complex ethical issue of competing for funds in an uneven, fragmented playing field was clearly articulated in only one state/territory, where the most senior managers had actively sought out relationships with Aboriginal organisations. For many mainstream NFPs, however, and in parts of Red Cross, the consequences of well-intentioned engagement in potentially undermining the capacity of local Aboriginal organisations seemed to receive little consideration, although avoiding competition with such organisations was part of Red Cross policy. Some parts of Red Cross entered this new field – as a senior manager put it, as “clean skins that really haven’t touched this world before” – with an enthusiasm that reflected confidence in the organisation’s capacity and an expectation of delivering best practice despite lack of past expertise.

In entering this world, some parts of the organisation seemed to approach it as a kind of *terra nullius* in which other NFPs were visible as competitors, but the network of local Aboriginal organisations that had pre-existed was unknown – perhaps even unknowable – and not thought relevant; nor was this network likely to persist in funding agency memories. The role of mainstream NFPs in displacing Aboriginal organisations may well be unintended and to some extent beyond their control, but as the example of the state/territory which did consider the consequences of accepting funding opportunities shows, it required deliberate effort to find out how Red Cross’s actions could impact on community organisations.

Mainstream NFPs working with Indigenous communities are faced with important ethical challenges by the ways they are constrained and influenced by their sources of funding and their own capacity to deliver change outcomes that are not achieved quickly and are often difficult to measure. A lack of intercultural capacity to work effectively or lack of past experience may mean that they are far less effective in delivering services and programs than they expect to be, and less effective than the Aboriginal organisations they may have displaced. The next chapter summarises the findings of this research project and considers the broader issues arising from the major upheavals in policy of a decade ago that have resulted in rapid and widespread expansion of the mainstream NFP sector into the delivery of Indigenous services.

Chapter 9. Synthesis and conclusion

... on the evidence the aborigines have always been looking for two things: a decent union of their lives with ours but on terms that let them preserve their own identity, not their inclusion willy-nilly in our scheme of things and a fake identity, but development within a new way of life that has the imprint of their own ideas. (Stanner, 1991 [1968], pp 27-28)

Australian Red Cross holds a special place in Australian life as one of Australia's oldest, largest and most prestigious humanitarian organisations. Throughout its history it has represented and reflected the dominant culture values of mainstream Australia: these were inescapably distinct from the values and experience of marginalised groups in Australian society, including those of Indigenous groups across Australia. In this sense, Australian Red Cross has been an institution of white Australia and part of the dominant 'mainstream' in Australian society. Its particular and unique role as an independent auxiliary to government distinguishes it from other non-profit organisations. Yet in its expanding engagement with Indigenous Australians, Australian Red Cross operated in much the same way as many other NFPs, competing and bidding for contracts to deliver services to Indigenous people – both specifically and in more generic programs – on behalf of government and to implement government policies, rather than pursuing Indigenous priorities. It is an exemplar of the challenges that confront mainstream Australia, including the NFP sector, in developing new relationships with Indigenous Australians.

As a secular organisation newly-engaged with Indigenous Australians, Australian Red Cross did not carry the 'baggage' of many faith-based Christian organisations – for example, their past involvement in the removal of Aboriginal children from their families – but nor did it have their experience in dealing with and coming to terms with a history associated with the early processes of colonisation or with more recent social justice initiatives and the Reconciliation movement. As an organisation it had historically had little, if any, interaction with Aboriginal people and this was probably also the case for its widespread membership and volunteer base. This absence from engagement with

Indigenous Australia parallels the lack of knowledge of and interaction with Indigenous people of most of mainstream Australia.

Like other large NFPs, Australian Red Cross approached its new engagement with confidence, in part because it did not carry this historic baggage. However its very absence reflects what Stanner referred to in 1968 as the ‘great Australian silence’ – a “cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale” (Stanner, 1991 [1968], p.27). As was evident in the ‘history wars’ and the debate over a national apology, it has been difficult for many non-Indigenous Australians to grasp that their absence from or non-involvement in Indigenous issues also carries a burden of responsibility. As former Prime Minister, Paul Keating expressed it in the Redfern Speech (1992), there is a collective responsibility in white Australia’s failure to recognise its dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the impacts of this dispossession. This collective responsibility has an important corollary: it is not just a matter of having stood by while the processes of colonisation and exclusion were underway: it was also participation in exclusion – which organisations such as Australian Red Cross down to its grass roots exemplified – that has continuing implications in the present.

Australian Red Cross’s engagement with Aboriginal people arose from a new national policy commitment that began in 2007 and was formalised in 2008. It was closely associated, and coincided with, major internal transformations in Australian Red Cross as it re-positioned itself around seven new key priority areas. The shift to operation as a single organisation under national governance rather than eight separate societies created significant internal cultural change and upheaval which influenced this first engagement. Red Cross is not a ‘singularity’ – it is a very complex organisation, a big ship that is difficult to turn. With its large staff, and much larger membership, branch and volunteer base, interest in, knowledge of and commitment to the new key priority of Aboriginal disadvantage varied enormously, from enthusiasm to outright hostility.

The field work for this research project was largely undertaken over an 18 month period in 2010-2011, at an early stage of Red Cross’s new engagement with Indigenous people and communities. Thus, of course, the research findings present a ‘snapshot in time’ which captures the experiences and challenges of participants and of a complex organisation. Individual experiences and perspectives varied considerably and no one single view was

held by all participants; rather the findings reported (and summarised in this chapter) are a synthesis of views generally or widely held.

This research, and my report to Australian Red Cross as part of the ARC Linkage Project (Colyer, 2012), highlighted the significant gap between Red Cross's policies and strategic aims and its capacity to execute them. It is important to note that during and since the research period in 2012, Red Cross was, and still is, in the process of developing and implementing changes in its approach and practice. As recently as January 2014 for example, a new policy targeting improved recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff and volunteers was launched (Australian Red Cross, 2014). As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, this research was not undertaken to provide a critique of individual programs or the efforts of staff to deliver them. Having visited many locations and interviewed the majority of staff working with Aboriginal people and communities at that time, the overwhelming impression of Australian Red Cross was of the exceptional talent, integrity and commitment of Red Cross staff doing challenging and difficult jobs, and at the same time, a sense of the challenges that arose from Red Cross's inexperience in this complex and difficult intercultural context. The research findings have implications for the policy and practice of NFPs working with Indigenous people, and more generally for national Indigenous policy.

9.1 Reflections on research design

As part of the broader linkage partnership between Macquarie University and Australian Red Cross (discussed in Chapter 1), the research questions agreed for this project were:

- What are the experiences of staff and challenges (and limitations) for Red Cross as an employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff?
- What are the challenges for Red Cross in engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; what influences the effectiveness of the engagement?
- What organisational capacity, knowledge and skills does Red Cross have to support capacity development in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?
- How do capacity-building elements of the RespectED program support the capacity development of communities and how is capacity development evident?

Using a conceptual framework that drew on Nakata's notion of the cultural interface, the research identified and investigated several specific cultural interfaces that affected the

evolution of Australian Red Cross's engagement with Indigenous Australians. These were conceptualised as overlapping points of interconnection between different groups of actors, as shown in the diagram presented in Chapter 3.

Exploration of these critical interfaces proved to be a valuable tool in examining and identifying what were often vastly different, even diametrically opposed, perspectives of what appeared to be the same issues and experiences, which in turn brought the multiple challenges and complexities of this intercultural engagement more clearly into focus. For example, it became possible to 'see' the permeable nature of the interfaces from the perspective of Aboriginal staff and the challenges this presented for them, and the relative invisibility of the cultural interface from the point of view of the organisation and its senior management. Analysing and 'unpacking' the data collected from these different viewpoints also brought broader themes and challenges to light that were not readily evident to the organisation, such as structural and everyday racism, distance and isolation, and the pressures and tensions for Aboriginal staff in their interaction with multiple cultural interfaces in everyday life.

9.2 Key Findings

9.2.1 Aboriginal perspectives of the cultural interface

The research found that most Aboriginal staff were employed in community program positions and had applied for jobs with Red Cross because of their strong motivation to help Aboriginal people through the services they provided, rather than by the desire to work for the organisation, which was largely unknown to Aboriginal people. The growing number of Aboriginal staff was viewed positively as a demonstration of Red Cross's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment rather than the tokenistic appointment of a few individuals in 'Aboriginal liaison' roles. Most Aboriginal staff interviewed wanted employment security and a career path, but the majority were on short-term contracts tied to the funding for their programs so that security of tenure and career opportunities in Red Cross were seen as limited, even for those who had management experience. Aboriginal staff were aware that there were very few senior Aboriginal staff, that those few were in designated Aboriginal positions and that Aboriginal people were not employed widely in the organisation.

Aboriginal staff experienced the Red Cross workplace as a white ‘mainstream’ environment. The view that Red Cross lacked cultural awareness and understanding of its Indigenous staff, the challenges of working in communities, and of Aboriginal people and cultures generally was widely held. Aboriginal staff were expected to ‘fit in’ but the organisation unknowingly placed additional pressures on them, as evidenced by the widely held view amongst Aboriginal staff that all non-Indigenous staff in Red Cross should have cross-cultural training. Job-oriented training was available and encouraged, but there were few structures to provide support and mentoring of Aboriginal staff in a non-Aboriginal organisation or for their work with highly stressed communities. Only one state/territory had offered ‘leadership’ workshops that aimed to empower Aboriginal staff, and this was not sustained (having ceased before this research project commenced). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Forum was valued as an opportunity to network with other Indigenous staff, but was experienced as ‘one-way’ communication from Red Cross.

Aboriginal program staff were usually located in regions where racist attitudes and discrimination towards Aboriginal people were commonplace, and, with the exception of Darwin in the Northern Territory, were geographically isolated from their state/territory head office, from the national head office and from functional areas such as Finance, IT, Human Resources and from senior management. Distance and isolation from the main centres exacerbated cultural misunderstandings, particularly tensions between head office HR expectations and ‘on the ground’ practicalities of remote locations. Experiences of ‘everyday racism’ were common, especially for those who worked with non-Indigenous co-workers in isolation from other Aboriginal staff. Many felt they were micro-managed and mistrusted by non-Indigenous managers who did not understand the cultural practice that was critical to the success of their work. A significant source of tension at this interface was the pressure felt by Aboriginal staff to ‘deliver’ to meet the expectations of managers and funding bodies while conscious of the need to take things slowly in communities, both to respect cultural priorities and to take the time needed to allow relationships and networks to develop.

These staff were relied upon for their cultural expertise to deliver programs and provide an interface with communities, but found the organisational culture of Red Cross was slow, reluctant or unable to change or to recognise, accommodate and support them. Many Aboriginal staff expressed a strong sense of loyalty and responsibility towards their

communities (rather than to Red Cross) but also recognised that Red Cross would be judged by *their* actions and that *they*, rather than Red Cross, would be held personally accountable by the community.

9.2.2 The organisation, the cultural interface and intercultural capacity

As discussed in Chapter 4, by 2011, Australian Red Cross had made some progress towards its goal of achieving an Indigenous staff level of 6%¹⁵⁶ but was still well short of the goal, and had not succeeded in its other major aims to achieve equity and promote organisational cultural change through recruitment of Aboriginal staff into the full range of positions at all levels of the organisation. Red Cross lacked knowledge and experience of effective Indigenous recruitment and in some parts of the organisation there was lack of interest and some resistance to changing recruitment practice. Most Aboriginal staff were in poorly paid community program positions. High Aboriginal staff turnover caused Indigenous employment levels to fluctuate widely due to the high rate of resignations and because many worked on ‘maximum term’ contracts that ended when funding for their program ceased. In 2013 Red Cross recognised that the high proportion of Aboriginal staff in casual positions and ‘maximum term’ contracts was a significant contributor to the poor rates of Indigenous staff retention (Australian Red Cross, 2014).

Most non-Indigenous Red Cross staff and managers had little or no previous experience of working with Aboriginal people or communities. Red Cross ‘bought in’ cultural expertise by employing Aboriginal staff, relying on them to provide cultural expertise to satisfy funders and deliver programs, and on just one or two Aboriginal people in senior positions to develop policy and strategic direction and advise on implementation. Red Cross also drew on its Aboriginal staff to ‘educate’ non-Indigenous colleagues, managers and members. The Red Cross *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Sub-strategy* (2009a) includes an outcome regarding cultural awareness, but the specific requirement that all staff and volunteers would receive compulsory cultural

¹⁵⁶ The highest level reached to date (2014) is approximately 4%. Although short of the 6% goal, as noted in Chapter 5, this goal is substantially higher than the proportion of Indigenous people in the general Australian population, approximately 2.5%. Indigenous employment levels in NFPs vary widely: in 2012, Save the Children Australia reported that 20% of its staff in Australia were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent, while The Smith Family reported that 1.2% of its staff identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Save the Children Australia, 2012; The Smith Family, 2012).

training has not yet been put into effect, although cultural training for managers had commenced by the end of the research period. Organisation-wide cultural awareness training was expected to commence in late 2014.

The IDI research conducted as part of Red Cross's wider research partnership with Macquarie University found that the Red Cross leadership group substantially overestimated its intercultural capacity (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B). Several non-Indigenous senior staff referred to a 'journey' of gaining understanding and learning how to work in this complex area, but there were diverse views in the senior leadership group which reflected the varying experience and intercultural awareness and capacity of its members. As anticipated by the IDI research, some senior managers were frustrated by their colleagues' lack of interest or understanding, the lack of discursive space to identify and respond to issues of concern, and the organisation's tendency to believe that statements of intention somehow translated into action:

... as of the launch of something, that's therefore what you are doing ... We just name it and consider that we're doing it.

The distance of the head offices from Aboriginal staff and programs in almost all states and territories meant that the mainstream of Red Cross and most of its senior managers and decision-makers had little interaction with the cultural interface and its pressures. This impeded momentum for organisation-wide change and development of an understanding of what change was needed.

9.2.3 Cultural interfaces within Red Cross

As discussed in Chapter 5, increased employment of Aboriginal staff was only one element of multiple major transitions which heightened tensions within the organisation at the interfaces between Red Cross management and staff, its boards, members and volunteers. In rural and regional areas especially, the 'old' monocultural Red Cross (often elderly, conservative, non-Aboriginal branch members and volunteers) came up against a 'new' Red Cross (an urbane, expanded, more ethnically diverse workforce) quite dramatically as the organisation became increasingly professionalised, transitioned from programs that had been staffed by volunteers and applied increasing regulation to volunteer workers (McDonald & Warburton, 2003; Warburton, 2009). Conversely, in new locations predominantly staffed by Aboriginal employees, there was often little contact with local

non-Aboriginal members, in contrast to the usually close relationships between offices, branches and volunteers elsewhere.

The challenges at these internal organisational interfaces were important to an understanding of the need for whole-of-organisation cultural change. The leadership group acknowledged a sense of distance between themselves as decision-makers and the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples (Howitt et al., (in review), see Appendix B), but the increasing professionalisation of the organisation also meant that they formed a distinctive group that was distant from the culture and lived experience of Red Cross's long-standing support base. Some senior staff were concerned about attitudes towards and support for the shift to Aboriginal engagement (and other major organisational changes) in "branch-land". The response of members was seen as ranging from reluctance to hostility. Some saw members and volunteers as both the 'heart and soul' of Red Cross and at the same time the greatest impediment to organisational cultural change because the 'old' Red Cross was seen as monocultural, racist and unlikely to support Red Cross's radical change of direction; others saw the grass roots membership as an essential support base that had not been sufficiently 'tapped' or supported to join in the journey of change.

9.2.4 The organisation and the interface with communities

Red Cross's approach to engagement with Aboriginal communities varied considerably from region to region, reflecting different state/territory leadership approaches, differing views of the aims of the engagement, and varying availability of funding and resources. The style of the initial engagement varied across a spectrum from generally well-intentioned paternalism, to slow, careful relationship-building. In some regions ready availability of government funding for a wide range of programs in numerous locations encouraged a scatter-gun approach that produced superficial 'engagement' and a tendency to rush to action to deliver 'helping' programs initiated with little (or no) consultation with Aboriginal communities; in others, efforts were concentrated in few locations and gradual expansion of activity guided by advice from community-based Aboriginal organisations. Engagement was most effective where time was taken to establish relationships and where senior staff, including the Executive Director of the state/territory concerned, took an active role in leading the engagement.

In all locations, challenges arose from the lack of prior relationships, organisational inexperience and lack of expertise in the intercultural setting of Indigenous community work, from resource limitations, and being unknown to communities. Constraints imposed by funding arrangements that required specific outcome targets set by governments also influenced the effectiveness of the engagement: funded service delivery contracts usually allowed little time for consultation and community engagement, especially where the focus of the program was on individual clients and case management. There was pressure for upward accountability to the funding body rather than to the community and responding to local priorities. These factors undermined capacity to develop the 'respectful partnerships' referred to in Red Cross policy and strategic documents. They also undermined efforts to focus on community development approaches described in the *Indigenous Core Policy Principles* (2007b), the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy* (2009b) and *Ways of Working* (2010d). While some relationships had developed between Red Cross and community organisations (or between the staff), few that built capacity or empowered local organisations (for example through joint funding agreements) had been established. Formal partnership arrangements were rarely sought, however a mid-strategy review of progress towards achieving Red Cross's strategic outcomes in this area in 2012 acknowledged the need to develop and promote active partnerships with Aboriginal organisations to support capacity development.

Empowerment and community capacity development

Red Cross's policy prioritised community development approaches to support sustainable change driven by communities, but most of the work with Aboriginal people undertaken during the research period was in tightly-defined service delivery programs where it was difficult to integrate these principles. As a result, there was a discrepancy between its policy and the strategic approach intended, and its actual practice in most locations. Although by 2010 Red Cross had recognised a need to shift to a community development approach, the processes and practice of community development and what was meant by 'community capacity building' were generally not well understood across the organisation and few of the staff already employed had knowledge about Indigenous Australia or skills in this kind of work. As demonstrated in Chapters 6 and 7, Red Cross lacked organisational experience and expertise and in its early rapid expansion had recruited staff for service delivery roles rather than for their skills in community development.

RespectED: a community development program case study

Red Cross initiated RespectED in Australia in 2010 as a flagship community development program. The case study presented in Chapter 7 demonstrated that establishing a program of this kind was, not surprisingly, a protracted, complex process. Lack of organisational capacity and expertise in community development and insufficient, insecure funding severely hampered program and staff development and there were additional difficulties in ‘translating’ a program that had been developed in a different cultural, political and historic context. The program developed over 25 years in Canada operated on a ‘strictly education’ model, delivered to communities when they were ‘ready’ for and requested the program. It was soon apparent that this approach would not be applicable to the trial locations in Australia, and that community readiness would need to be built by RespectED staff as part of the rollout of this program. Developing staff skills in community development became the major focus of the program in its first 12-18 months, coinciding with Red Cross’s efforts to build internal organisational competence in this area from a low base. The appointment of a community development adviser to mentor and support the Prevention Educators in their communities was an important and valuable innovation, but provision of sufficient support to these isolated staff was a continuing challenge.

The choice of trial sites was a ‘top down’ rather than ‘bottom up’ process. In the absence of an existing program which could be requested by communities, the program had to be trialled somewhere, and the four sites were settled by negotiation between the government funding body and Red Cross. Strong active interest in the program existed in only one of the selected locations. Generating the community support needed to mobilise the program proved impossible at one site, while in others local divisions and turnover of Red Cross program staff disrupted progress. Slow community-based work ultimately resulted in a sustained interest in some communities that enabled Red Cross to establish a tentative base for the program, although over a much longer time-frame than originally envisaged, and at the end of the research period, RespectED was still at an early stage, far short of the rapid nation-wide rollout anticipated when it was initiated.

Funding shortages and uncertainty had a significant impact on the program as critical positions needed for development of education and program resources and to support community-based staff were left unfilled, and there were major difficulties in attracting

and retaining suitably qualified Indigenous staff in both management and community-based positions. Organisational inexperience and lack of broader organisational support for this type of program may have contributed to high staff turnover, along with other factors such as poor choice of office locations and lack of support for isolated remote staff. The experience of RespectED demonstrated the need for continuity and the challenges of sustaining it: the difficulty of recruiting a senior Aboriginal manager and frequent changes of personnel in that and other key positions in the critical first 18 months of the program impacted negatively on program development and resulted in a dilution of the program's original vision. The capacity to attract and retain capable Aboriginal staff from a limited pool remains a significant issue for the non-Indigenous NFP sector.

9.2.5 Funding and resources

In some locations Red Cross commenced its engagement with local Indigenous groups by drawing on its own resources (for example, to establish breakfast clubs) but over time became progressively more reliant on external funding, primarily from government contracts, to resource its work with Aboriginal people. Much of the work and its location appeared to be influenced by the availability of funding rather than the outcome of thoughtful strategic planning.

External funding enabled Red Cross to build its own capacity – to employ Indigenous staff, establish and maintain infrastructure, and in some locations to fit out new or existing offices. But while external funding made the work possible, it mitigated against the community development approach and long-term engagement Red Cross aimed for in its policy and strategies. Funding availability was acknowledged to be a major driver of the kind of programs delivered and also dictated the skills and experience of the Aboriginal staff employed, so that when Red Cross sought to shift its approach towards community development, the staff who had been employed to deliver contracted programs lacked the necessary skills.

Reliance on external funding was a major factor that contributed to the difficulty Red Cross faced in retaining Aboriginal staff, by recruiting them into funded programs on 'maximum term' contracts. The high turnover of Aboriginal staff that resulted also carried the risk of undermining the development of the relationships Red Cross needed for successful long-term engagement and partnership development. The trap of public

funding was further illustrated in the example of RespectED, where Red Cross initiated a flagship program aimed at supporting local community capacity and resilience, but was unable to execute it effectively because of the difficulty of securing funding sufficient to resource it.

On some occasions, contrary to its policy, Red Cross competed with Aboriginal community organisations for tenders, but the longer term attrition of local Indigenous organisations had already begun more broadly as part of a wider recent history that had undermined local community capacity. Fuelled by government contracting practices that made small, local groups ineligible or uncompetitive, the previous decade had seen the loss, amalgamation or contraction of Indigenous community organisations that might once have been potential partners for the mainstream sector. For mainstream organisations without grass roots experience with Indigenous community organisations, this may well have been hard to read as an absence, and may have been seen as simply the way things were. Red Cross and other NFPs recruited some of their Indigenous staff from the pool of people displaced by the contraction or closure of local organisations, and by their very presence may have contributed to further undermining local organisational and community capacity and agency by delivering services that would previously have been delivered by communities themselves.

9.3 Broader issues

The Australian Government has identified Indigenous disadvantage as a ‘wicked problem’, a seemingly intractable issue that has been characterised by chronic policy failure, but one in which the NFP sector has a significant role to play in distributing goods and services on behalf of government to build ‘bottom up’ Indigenous community capability (APSC, 2007, pp 5, 20).

This research has investigated the interplay between two policy domains in Australian politics: the NFP sector and Indigenous affairs. The role of mainstream NFPs in delivering services to Aboriginal people and communities has changed profoundly in the decade since the disestablishment of ATSIC in 2004. The shifts in policy and in relationships between governments and NFPs rapidly transformed the sector during a period which also overturned the past policy of self-determination/self-management in Indigenous affairs. NFPs were swept up in these changes, sharing government optimism

(and ideology) that they could do better than governments and that both could do better than damaged Indigenous communities in achieving well intentioned policy goals and outcomes. Yet the extent to which they have become involved in competing to deliver programs and services to Indigenous people has been an unannounced element of policy change and there has been little critical debate within and between governments, funding bodies, NFPs, or the sector as a whole about the privileging of mainstream NFPs or the potential consequences of their engagement.

In the backdrop to the shift in Indigenous policy a decade ago was a hostile climate of blame and condemnation of Indigenous people, communities and organisations (Sanders, 2008). The sense of crisis, emergency and past failure that predominated in 2004 precipitated a once in 30 year policy change in the period 2004-08 which Sanders (2013) describes as a “generational revolution”: one of those times when

... through ideas of failure, past policies and institutions are abandoned and new approaches are developed by new generations of actors ... Australian settlers seem to periodically lose confidence in their approach to the difficult cross-cultural task of Indigenous affairs, which is also the enduring, great moral challenge of Australian nationhood.¹⁵⁷

The ‘Closing the Gap’ policy that emerged from this generational revolution constructs Indigenous people as the problem (Ingamells, 2010), and the desired change as change in the people themselves:

The group is named, separated out, mapped and targeted for intervention. Failure to self-govern according to dominant group norms attracts government and community censure. The structural dimensions, the policy inadequacies, the ethnocentricity and historical legacy are obscured by the direction of the policy gaze. Neither of these policy domains has a clearly or theoretically articulated strategy for change. Apart from service inputs, and partnerships with industry to generate employment, it is unclear how the shift from A to B will occur. As Pholi, Black & Richards (2009) argue, there is nothing new about the ideological heritage of the approach, it is guided by the same individualistic norms and assumptions as have been the cause of exclusion. (Ingamells, 2010)

The insistence on mainstreaming, or ‘universal’ approaches and programs requires Indigenous people to fit into mainstream structures regardless of their suitability or

¹⁵⁷ Sanders argues that Indigenous policy moves over time between three principles of ‘equality’, ‘choice’ and ‘guardianship’, generally balancing these principles, but that Indigenous affairs is subject to talk of policy failure and crisis which can lead to precipitate switching between the competing principles rather than a considered balance: such a policy shift, or ‘generational revolution’ occurred in 2004-2008 (Sanders, 2013).

capacity to accommodate cultural and geographic diversity. Policy vagueness about how the ‘desired change’ will occur, and the direction of policy gaze that focuses on Indigenous failure but fails to recognise policy inadequacy and ethnocentricity are deeply embedded in current Indigenous policy and in the increasing reliance on mainstream NFPs to provide services as a proxy for government, rather than support Indigenous people and organisations to act on their own behalf.

Peter Shergold, formerly a senior public servant who had significant responsibility for the design and oversight of Indigenous programs over 20 years (2013a, 2013b),¹⁵⁸ acknowledges a sense of personal and systemic failure. In Indigenous policy, he reflected, the “best of intentions” had produced “the worst of outcomes”:

Process rules. Programs are often designed and regulated to the most exacting of ethical standards, meet every guideline, tick every box and acquit every expenditure but still end up disconnected from the outcomes they were meant to deliver. (Shergold, 2013a)

Shergold’s present view is that government programs are designed for administrative convenience and treat the problems of all Indigenous communities, whether remote, regional or urban, as uniform rather than tailoring services to local needs and devolving responsibility and decision-making to communities, while expenditure remains focussed on crisis intervention rather than investment in preventative intervention. Yet, despite recognising the comprehensive failure of public policy, his perspective remains true to the norms of the generational policy revolution in which he played a central role: that the fault lies with welfare dependency and financial and administrative barriers that prevent Aboriginal people taking ‘real’ control of their lives.

It remains unclear *how* policies that promote the involvement of mainstream NFPs to the extent that they have become the predominant providers of Indigenous programs will result in improved outcomes for Indigenous people. While they are advantaged in competing for contracts to deliver Indigenous services because of their capacity to “tick every box and acquit every expenditure” (Shergold, 2013a), current policy and its

¹⁵⁸ Over a 20 year period, Professor Shergold was CEO of ATSIC, Departmental Secretary of Employment, then Education. He was Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet from 2003-2008, the period during which the Australian government experimented with ‘whole of government’ approaches, the ‘COAG trials’ and Shared Responsibility Agreements, disestablished ATSIC and implemented the Northern Territory Emergency Response (The Intervention).

associated funding arrangements do not require NFPs to establish evidence of their intercultural capacity to deliver in complex and diverse Indigenous settings, despite well-documented barriers to Indigenous access to mainstream programs. Red Cross acknowledged its lack of history in Aboriginal development work but rather than an impediment, saw this as an opportunity to develop “best practice” (Australian Red Cross, 2009a, p.3). But as an Aboriginal staff member described Australian Red Cross:

... I think it's an organisation that means well in the world of the Aboriginal and Islander people but they just haven't got the learning experience yet to be there.

Mainstreamed government bureaucracies lack Indigenous-specific cultural and intercultural expertise (SSCC, 2012, pp 59-61) and fail to recognise the kind of capacities that responses to Indigenous cultural diversity require. Mainstream organisations are favoured because of their capacity to acquit funding grants, and cultural competency and capacity are inadequately tested and either reduced to generic formulaic assessments, are assumed or not considered.

As a respected mainstream organisation, Australian Red Cross had only to decide to “address Indigenous disadvantage” as part of its mission to “help the most vulnerable” and was soon rewarded with contracts and funding. Despite its inexperience and in some cases without even a presence in the geographic location where it sought funding to deliver programs, Red Cross was given substantial financial assistance in some locations for capital costs, administrative and other overheads. This contrasted with the barriers Indigenous organisations have experienced when seeking similar support.

Collaboration, compliance and accountability

Influenced by the need for resources to fund its rapid expansion into new Indigenous programs and regions, Red Cross experienced ‘mission drift’, diverging widely from its original aims to build sustainable local capacity and work in partnership with communities in ways owned and driven by them (*Indigenous Policy Core Principles* 2007). Rather than community development, its reliance on external resources led it instead into contracts to deliver pre-determined programs and services on behalf of government. As an organisation, Red Cross lacked understanding of the development approach its early policies described and it was several years before there appeared to be some awareness that it had taken a different path: while it *intended* collaboration with

Aboriginal people and communities, reliance on external resources resulted instead in collaboration with Commonwealth/state funding bodies in implementing government policy.

This paradox lies at the heart of the dilemma for the mainstream NFP sector in working with Indigenous Australians. Such collaboration involves compliance with the state's requirements as to the nature of services, design of programs and upward accountability to the funder for delivery of the outputs expected, rather than accountability to the needs and priorities of the Aboriginal people and communities that are intended to benefit. Aboriginal people have been relegated to the position of recipients of the well-intended activities of others without the right to be consulted about what services are needed, how they would most appropriately be delivered and by whom – let alone the right to identify local solutions, or support to build their own capacity to design, implement and evaluate local solutions. The implication for NFPs is that good intentions can lead them into participation in and collaboration with further deep colonising processes (Rose, 1999). This presents a very significant challenge: how to contribute to improved outcomes for Aboriginal people without contributing to further losses and disempowerment.

Ignatieff (2007) explains that an essential function of human rights legislation is

... to protect human beings from the therapeutic good intentions of others ... by mandating an obligation to respect human agency ... and to desist from any actions, even those that are intended to help, if these agents refuse or in any other way give signs of a contrary will.

In Australia, there is no Bill of Rights that protects human rights in a single piece of legislation (AHRC, 2006), and racial discrimination legislation has not protected Indigenous people from interventions implemented on the basis of race, such as the NTER (the Intervention) or the continuation of some of its discriminatory measures despite the protests and concerns of those affected (Harris, 2012; Maddison, 2012; Altman, 2013, pp 58-60, 116-120; Yu et al., 2008). Indeed, the Racial Discrimination Act was suspended by the Howard Government to allow passage of the racially discriminatory elements of the NTER, and remained suspended for this purpose for several years, despite significant criticism from the UNCERD that provisions of the NTER were incompatible with Australia's human rights obligations (Anaya, 2010; UNCERD, 2010; Nicholson et al., 2012).

From an Aboriginal perspective, NFPs have generally failed to consider their role in undermining Indigenous autonomy and agency and in doing so, NFPs themselves have become not part of the solution, but ‘part of the problem’. The expanding role of non-Indigenous NFPs in Indigenous programs has not gone unnoticed or unquestioned by Aboriginal people but in the current policy framework and in the absence of independent representation, no avenues are available to Indigenous interests to challenge the pre-eminence of non-Indigenous NFPs in Indigenous service delivery. Some Indigenous organisations have endeavoured to re-establish Indigenous influence and agency by developing principles for more constructive engagement (APO NT, 2013, at Appendix E; Wilcannia CWP, 2011). In 2013, the Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APO NT) initiated the development of “Principles for a partnership approach for NGOs working with Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Northern Territory” with mainstream NFPs (see Appendix E). These call on non-Indigenous NFPs to respect the existing role and expertise of Indigenous organisations, seek meaningful partnerships and avoid competing with Aboriginal service providers, and consider their own capacity to deliver effective and sustainable outcomes (APO NT, 2013). A number of major NFPs, including Australian Red Cross, Mission Australia, Anglicare NT, Save the Children, The Smith Family, and Brotherhood of St Laurence, have endorsed the principles (NCAFP, 2013).¹⁵⁹

Noel Pearson (2013) points directly to the role of non-government welfare organisations such as Mission Australia, the Smith Family and “an array of mainstream bodies” that have moved into the vacuum following the dismantling of ATSIC and “pushed Indigenous organisations to extinction”: mainstream bureaucracy, NGOs and outsourced service delivery providers have become the principle actors (Pearson, 2013). Apart from their reliance on external/government funding, a further contributing factor may be that as new actors that have moved into the vacuum, mainstream NFPs lack knowledge of the impact of past and current policy, and awareness of the history and role of local community organisations.

¹⁵⁹ While endorsement of such protocols by major NFPs is important, they remain ‘principles’ and are not entrenched in funding policy guidelines (as for example AusAID) and are reliant on the understanding and commitment of participating organisations. As such, these commitments can be superficial or fragile: while a number of the NFPs say they are adhering to the policy, proper consultation with Aboriginal organisations to ensure that they are not competing is sometimes questionable (R. Johnston, personal communication, 13 November 2013)

Mainstream NFPs that lack awareness of local context may exacerbate the sense of a generic 'Indigenous' which implies expectations of cultural similarity that elides and erases local particularities – histories and geographies, conflicts, cultures, languages, aspirations and experiences – reducing them to an all-encompassing singularity for which the 'one size fits all' approach of government policies becomes the universalising discourse that overwhelms intentions to support Indigenous agency and capacity for self-determination. Further, the focus of many government programs and services is on individuals (or individual families) rather than addressing structural causes of social problems that allow for collective Indigenous responses to them.

Red Cross had a formal policy not to compete with Indigenous organisations, and saw itself primarily as competing with other large organisations like itself in what Goerke (2003) describes as a "race for growth and more dollars", but rarely attempted to form partnerships with Indigenous community organisations, and in early engagements often failed to consult because of its lack of knowledge. There are strong indications that the expansion of these organisations into Indigenous programs has impacted Aboriginal capacity and agency, displacing local organisations that are unable to compete for desperately needed funds and replacing local capacity with external 'universal' services that by-pass Indigenous leadership and local solutions.

Dominant culture and the 'learning journey'

The confidence with which large NFPs have contracted for major multi-year contracts despite lacking previous engagements with the targeted communities points to a degree of over-confidence, or even arrogance about their capacity to deliver culturally appropriate services and improve outcomes in a field which is renowned for its intractable challenges and failures. This is reflected in Red Cross's assumption that its lack of 'baggage' would enable it to achieve 'best practice', despite the absence of relationships which were essential to such work and must be developed over time.

NFPs appear to have complied with the assumptions that underlie current policy and its implementation: that imposing mainstream solutions and practices will 'fix the Indigenous problem'. National Indigenous Affairs policy has imposed an expectation that Indigenous people will fit into universal services. While acknowledging the importance of cultural sensitivity in their funding applications, the *actions* of many NFPs suggest that

initially, at least, they are unaware of the need for broader organisational intercultural capacity and rely on recruitment of Indigenous staff to supply the necessary cultural expertise to meet funders' minimal requirements for culturally appropriate delivery, and these staff in turn are expected to fit into their mainstream structures and culture.

Within Red Cross, the dominant culture norms and values of the organisation were not readily visible to non-Indigenous staff and managers, and the pressures and costs in stresses on Aboriginal staff were not well understood or recognised. Experiences of everyday racism were not acknowledged or were poorly managed, and in some cases were acted out by over-vigilant managers who mistrusted Indigenous staff. Structural racism was further reflected in the failure of HR systems to adjust recruitment practices to meet Indigenous needs and organisational inability to recognise and respond to high Indigenous staff turnover or address the disparities in employment status, pay and job security between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, which have only recently begun to be addressed, seven years after the Australian Red Cross Board endorsed its *Indigenous Core Policy Principles*.

The recurring theme that Red Cross was on a 'steep learning curve' or 'learning journey' was often expressed by research participants, and similar ideas have been expressed by other NFPs (Perkons & Brown, 2010; The Smith Family, 2008). The 'learning journey' suggests a process of development – that individuals will learn by experience and organisations gradually come to recognise the need for better practice and so develop new (or in Red Cross's case, implement existing) policies and strategies. In Red Cross there appeared to be few opportunities for reflexivity during the research period, and as mentioned in Chapter 1, there was a high level of sensitivity in Red Cross concerning the Indigenous engagement. Wright suggests that in the pressures of the welfare marketplace, compliance is rewarded; seeking advice, raising concerns or disagreeing with the organisation's direction are considered signs of weakness or not being a 'team player' (Wright, 2003). Further, internal protectiveness regarding brand, representation and reputation creates difficulties in tackling robust criticism and creates a risk that deeper learning to avoid 'well-intentioned' failure and deep colonising will continue to be difficult for many NFPs.

Although slow to develop, the 'learning journey' is evident in Red Cross, especially in respect of internal organisational intercultural capacity. In late 2013, cross-cultural

training for all managers (initiated in 2011) had not yet been followed by training for all non-Indigenous staff (a 2007 policy commitment) but an organisational cross cultural curriculum was in development. A practice manual to improve cross-cultural management practice ('Tips for Managers', commenced in 2010) was still in development but was to be included in the broader organisational curriculum, expected to be implemented in late 2014,¹⁶⁰ and a 2013 internal review of the circumstances of Indigenous staff led to a recommendation to transition 'maximum term' contracts into ongoing positions wherever possible to address high levels of staff turnover, and that had commenced by early 2014 (Australian Red Cross, 2014).

There were also some indications of a broader reconsideration of Red Cross's approach to its Indigenous engagement. Internal research into progress towards achievement of key strategic outcomes, for example, in forming partnerships with Indigenous community organisations, had targeted areas for improvement. In 2012, a departing senior manager presented a discussion paper that proposed a fundamental rethink of the Indigenous engagement, and questioned the sweeping, generic 'one size fits all' approach of governments and whether as a conduit of government-specified deliverables Red Cross was potentially doing harm (Farrell, 2012). A debate in Red Cross "yet to be fully had and resolved" was whether Red Cross should, over time, 'unpick' its dependence and withdraw from further contracts. Another senior manager reflected on the wisdom of the kinds of engagement Red Cross had undertaken:

... where we may receive three year funding, deliver a program, there may be some benefit for individuals interacting with the program during that time but at the end of the period we may walk out and actually have left the community in a worse off position than they were previously because we may have sucked out capacity of that community and they may have become more dependent on what we are offering rather than continue to deliver their own services or solve their own problems and particularly in the food security area, I'm quite concerned about things like breakfast clubs for feeding kids. Why are we feeding a kid and what's the plan about not feeding kids into the future? I'm quite happy to provide relief to people who are very vulnerable, particularly children, but there has to be a plan about when do we stop doing that and how do we hand over responsibility or hand back or build capacity for people to be able to do that themselves?

Such reflections were not common, and although they suggest that the organisation has both the capacity and internal talent to question its practice, it appears unlikely that the

¹⁶⁰ P. Romios, National Coordinator Research, Australian Red Cross, personal communication, 2 January 2014

internal debate proposed in the discussion paper and reflected in the comments above will be “fully had and resolved” in the foreseeable future.

9.4 Further research / next steps

This research project has highlighted the growing expansion of the mainstream NFP sector in Indigenous services and through the example of Red Cross, the challenges they face in intercultural capacity development. To date, academic scholarship has paid little attention to the role of the mainstream NFP sector in the implementation of national Indigenous policy and its implications. If, as Pearson (2013) argues, Indigenous organisations have been pushed to extinction, how did this come about when the national NIRA principles for Indigenous service delivery are intended to promote Indigenous engagement, empowerment and representation? It was beyond the scope of this project to explore the extent of NFP expansion in Indigenous programs and its implications, but this would appear to be a critical area for further study. The following areas for further research are proposed to assist in framing a critical understanding of this field of practice:

- Research into the current level of engagement of the mainstream NFP sector in delivery of Indigenous programs and services and the value of this funding to the sector
- Research regarding the competing motivations of mainstream NFPs for this engagement: to what extent are they influenced by altruism, the attraction of funding or the need to position themselves in the humanitarian marketplace?
- Research on the effectiveness of mainstream delivery of Indigenous programs and services, evaluation methodologies and the influence of competing accountability measures on program delivery
- Further research on the Indigenous community sector and the extent to which the interplay of current policy implementation and the expanded role of the mainstream NFP sector have impacted upon the viability and capacity of Indigenous community sector organisations
- Further research on the experience of Aboriginal staff in mainstream organisations and the capacities needed by employers for sustainable Indigenous employment and retention
- Further comparative research on the experience of Aboriginal workers in mainstream (‘universal’) programs and those who deliver exclusively Aboriginal programs
- Further research into the effectiveness and outcomes of organisation-wide cross-cultural awareness training, such as that expected to be rolled out in Australian Red Cross from late 2014.

9.5 Final reflections

My interest in this research project was originally inspired by the prospect of exploring the potential for cross-cultural development engagement between a major NFP organisation and Indigenous communities. I expected there would be cultural challenges for an organisation so steeped in mainstream values, but that the flexibility, innovation and independence that NFPs could bring to their work with Indigenous communities would be of great value in supporting Indigenous strengths and resilience. My research journey unfolded very differently, however.

I returned from my first field trip in 2010, with the sense that Red Cross's Indigenous engagement in the locations I had visited was somehow fragile. I had interviewed the majority of the Aboriginal staff in the state/territory that then had the highest number of Aboriginal staff, but only one worked in a community development role and most were on contract in government funded service programs. Although there was a significant Aboriginal presence, it was somehow separate from the organisation, orbiting it rather than integrated into it, and Indigenous employment was insecure. There was an uncomfortable sense of competition with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations and some unease among Aboriginal staff that Red Cross was perceived as "taking Black dollars". The rapid expansion and commitment to high levels of Indigenous employment were impressive but it seemed doubtful that it was sustainable, or that the work in case management at the 'crisis end' would significantly contribute to Red Cross's goal of addressing Indigenous disadvantage. This initial impression was not only unexpected, it raised issues that informed the need to go beyond the specifics of Red Cross's experience to consider wider policy and social changes, and guided subsequent research into the links between changing government policies in relation to both the NFP sector and in Indigenous affairs (described in Chapters 2 and 3).

Through the course of the field work the impression of organisational inexperience, ineptitude, lack of cultural awareness and reliance on government contracts firmed. In conducting the research, I experienced a paradox of my own: on one hand, finding great inspiration in encounters with individual staff members, and on the other, enormous discouragement that the policy turn had effectively disenfranchised Indigenous organisations in favour of large mainstream ones with doubtful intercultural capacity and little awareness of their inadequacy and cultural bias. Indeed, it was not always easy to

see cultural bias in the course of the research and to observe dominant culture values critically and objectively. As a non-Indigenous researcher, it was sometimes difficult to maintain perspective in an intercultural research project framed within and managed by a large, mainstream institution, and in the absence of an Indigenous reference group to guide the project. The conceptual framework proved a valuable tool that helped bring the critical interfaces into view and into focus from multiple perspectives.

The invisibility of cultural bias and dominant culture in mainstream NFPs presents significant challenges for the sector. A research participant who had many years of experience working in remote communities described the cultural gaffes of other NFPs in her region, and commented that it takes 20 years to learn from your cultural mistakes. As my supervisor suggested, it is like the ‘Irish joke’ in which a request for directions to another place elicits the response: “Well, I wouldn’t start from here ...” It seems a silly proposition to suggest that to be where it needs and wishes to be, an organisation should have started 20 years ago, however, it seemed to me that mainstream NFPs were in just such a process and that it may well take 20 years to build their capacity to work effectively with communities and for Red Cross to become the ‘employer of choice’ for Aboriginal staff that it aims to be.

This begs the question of whether there are other alternatives – for example, what if NFPs were to employ not only community-based Indigenous staff to supply the cultural expertise needed, but also supervisors and senior managers who had a depth of knowledge and experience in Indigenous community engagement? I believe there are several responses to this question, and they are still questions. If in this case study it had occurred to (or was an option available to) Australian Red Cross to employ managers with this kind of experience, up to and including senior levels, would it have been able to find them? If it *had* found and employed them, would this have changed the organisational culture that was founded in ‘doing’, which discouraged reflection and which had difficulty, for example, in changing its mainstream HR and Finance practices? Even if both circumstances had occurred, could this have had a significant impact in a circumstance where an organisation had not interacted with Indigenous communities in the past, was unknown to Indigenous Australia and lacked the long-standing, trusting relationships needed to work effectively with Indigenous communities? And finally, is the role that it appears that most NFPs have chosen – that is to deliver services on behalf of government – the right one, or the only one open to them?

Concluding remarks

A little-acknowledged failure of the previous policy era was that governments and mainstream departments abjectly failed to ensure that needed services were equitably accessible to Indigenous people. While a separate funding stream was available through ATSIC, cost-shifting practices enabled all governments to shirk their responsibilities to Indigenous citizens, and ATSIC with its limited resources was expected to make up the shortfall (CGC, 2001, p.57). Indigenous organisations cannot meet all needs or develop every expertise: culturally competent mainstream services that can accommodate and respond to the needs of Indigenous people are clearly needed.

However, although mainstream organisations have an important role to play, to borrow a phrase used by former Prime Minister, John Howard, the “pendulum has swung too far” in assuming that their greater organisational and financial capacity equates to competency in Indigenous engagement. The funding arrangements and bureaucratic decision-making that favour mainstream NFPs are unlikely to change in the short term, but a more constructive and ethical path is open to NFPs either through adopting their own principles of engagement along the lines developed jointly by Aboriginal peak organisations and non-Aboriginal NGOs in the Northern Territory (Appendix E), or by seeking engagement with local Aboriginal organisations to develop protocols to guide NFP engagement in their own regions. In 1968, WEH Stanner expressed his view that Aboriginal people had always been looking for two things: “a decent union of their lives with ours, but on terms that preserve their own identity” (Stanner, 1991 [1968], pp 27-28). The aspiration of Northern Territory Aboriginal peak organisations and others to ‘harness the mainstream’ by working *with* mainstream NFPs but on their own terms opens a door to an alternative approach that could fulfil mainstream NFPs’ ambitions to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal peoples, communities and their organisations.

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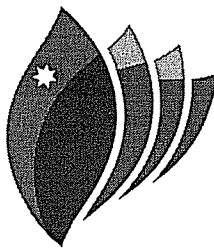
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Appendix A

Ethics approvals



16 December 2009

Ms Claire Colyer
Human Geography Discipline
Department of Environment and Geography
Macquarie University

Reference: HE27NOV2009-D00204

Dear Ms Colyer,

FINAL APPROVAL

Title of project: Australian Red Cross and capacity building in Indigenous communities

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Ethics Review Committee (Human Research) and you may now commence your research.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is **conditional** upon your continuing compliance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*.
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years) subject to the provision of annual reports. **Your first progress report is due on 16 December 2010.**

If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report on the project.

Progress Reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).
4. Please notify the Committee of any amendment to the project.
5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at: <http://www.research.mq.edu.au/policy>

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide Macquarie University's Research Grants Officer with a copy of this letter as soon as possible. The Research Grants Officer will not inform external funding agencies that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Officer has received a copy of this final approval letter.

Yours sincerely



Dr Karolyn White
Director of Research Ethics
Chair, Ethics Review Committee (Human Research)

Cc: Professor Richard Howitt, Department of Environment and Geography

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COPY

13 May 2010

Professor Richard Howitt
Department of Environment and Geography
Faculty of Science
Macquarie University

Reference: 5201000483

Dear Professor Howitt

FINAL APPROVAL

Title of project: *Australian Red Cross and capacity building in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.*

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Human Research Ethics Committee and you may now commence your research. The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Professor Richard Howitt- Chief Investigator/ Supervisor
Dr Rochelle Spencer and Ms Claire Colyer -Co-Investigators

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is **conditional** upon your continuing compliance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*.
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5 years) subject to the provision of annual reports. **Your first progress report is due on 13/05/2011.**

If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report on the project.

Progress Reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/forms

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Yours sincerely



Dr Karolyn White
Director of Research Ethics
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Cc: Ms Claire Colyer, Department of Environment and Geography, Faculty of Science

Appendix B

Organizational capacity for engaging with Indigenous Australians

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ABSTRACT:

Community capacity building is a common goal for programs and policies involving Indigenous peoples, but it relies heavily on organizational capacity to work effectively in intercultural settings. This paper reviews the organizational capacity of the senior leaders of Australian Red Cross and institutional efforts to build a culturally appropriate and respectful organization. It reports results from a survey of the organization's leadership team and follow-up interviews undertaken in 2010, reviews the challenges facing the organization in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and considers institutional progress in building internal capacity to lead change in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The paper concludes with discussion of wider implications of this research.

KEYWORDS:

Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI); community capacity building; organizational capacity; leadership; Indigenous peoples; Australia; Red Cross.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS:

IDI Intercultural Development Inventory

Community capacity building is a pervasive idea in academic, policy and practice discourses. It is, however, no simple idea. Chaskin, for example, noted that "there is little clarity about the meaning of community capacity and capacity building in practice" (2001: 292). Verity (2007: 9-10) links the notion with both New Labour's Third Way thinking and New Right ideas, variously emphasising local scale empowerment, participation, responsibility and accountability. In the context of Australian Indigenous policy, a House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquiry considered the capacity of individuals, communities and organizations to deliver services to Indigenous communities (Australia: House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2004). Hunt acknowledges the importance of these three levels (individuals, communities and organizations) in any discussion of capacity building in Indigenous settings, but concludes that it is:

not something simply done to others. It requires new capacities and mindsets in the people and institutions interacting with those whose capacity is ostensibly to be developed. Capacity development implies two-way learning (2005: 9).

This paper reports on research undertaken in partnership with Australian Red Cross, focussing on the senior leadership group in 2010. Australian Red Cross is a National Society of the world's largest humanitarian movement, and provides personal support to victims of natural disasters in Australia and internationally, advocates through humanitarian diplomacy on behalf of vulnerable and disadvantaged people, operates the Australian Red

Cross Blood Service and delivers a range of humanitarian programs and services across seven priority areas throughout Australia (Table 1). The paper considers the capacities that Australian Red Cross brings to an ambitious strategic commitment to community capacity building and community development initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. It does so on the basis that Australian Red Cross understands itself as a window on mainstream Australia's ongoing struggle to develop more just, equitable and sustainable relationships and engagements with Indigenous citizens in particular and intercultural diversity more generally. For the leadership of Australian Red Cross, participating in a survey of this kind was a significant internal capacity building initiative in itself.

Table 1: Australian Red Cross's seven priority areas, November 2008

1. Strengthening national emergency preparedness, response and recovery
2. Increasing international aid and development
3. Championing international humanitarian law
4. Addressing the impact of migration
5. Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
6. Overcoming social exclusion by providing bridges back into the community
7. Tackling entrenched locational disadvantage

(Source: Australian Red Cross, 2008: 3)

Leading change in this politically and socially complex field is a matter of national significance. Transforming intercultural relations in Indigenous domains is a fundamental social justice issue in Australia. Ospina and Foldy (2010) identify key leadership practices involved in such transformation in social change organizations. In particular, they emphasise the need for leadership to develop what they refer to as 'bridging' strategies to secure alliances that produce change. Building integrative leadership (Sun and Anderson, 2012) is widely seen as a necessary condition for leading the sorts of social transformation Australian Red Cross, along with much of civil society in Australia, aspires to achieve.

Capacity building in Indigenous Australia

In Indigenous Australia, community capacity building has often been delivered in top-down programs driven by diverse (even divergent) policy objectives by a variety of agencies. For Indigenous groups in Australia capacity building has often been limited to training in skills aimed at securing community compliance with development agendas set by others. With transfer of welfare responsibilities from the state to private, corporate and not-for-profit agencies (Mendes, 2009), a shift towards indicator driven performance organizations across the welfare and service delivery sectors (Gray, 2010) and a powerful commitment by Australian governments to measuring and closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians on a variety of key indicators (health, employment, housing etc.) (Altman et al., 2009; Commonwealth of Australia, 2009; Ingamells, 2010; Jordan et al., 2010), community capacity building became an important keyword in Indigenous affairs (Australian National Audit Office, 2012). Its emergence as a keyword, however, has been less obvious in practice, and this draws attention to the capacity of key institutions to lead change in Indigenous development.

Australian policy in Indigenous affairs confronts a repetitive cycle of well-intentioned policy failures (Gray and Sanders, 2006).ⁱ Unresolved issues of social justice (Briskman, 2007; Howitt et al., 2012; Green and Baldry, 2008; Baldry and Green, 2002), human rights (Calma, 2009; Calma and Priday, 2011), sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2006; Reynolds, 2006; Langton, 2001) and inclusion (Green, 2011; Baldry et al., 2006) haunt the efforts to close gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through service delivery, community development and social action programs. In focusing on the urgent need for change as what former Australian Prime Minister John Howard referred to as 'practical reconciliation' (Borrows, 2004; Sanders, 2009), the emphasis was often placed on changing Indigenous communities in terms of behaviours (McRae-Williams and Gerritsen, 2010: 16), opportunities (Adams, 2010) and outcomes (Bradley et al., 2007).

Researching the Red Cross leadership team

The intercultural competence and capacity of organizations involved in community capacity building activities with Indigenous Australians is important. The spaces of intercultural engagement in Australia are troubling and difficult for many organizations. In recent years, high level policy reform in this field (see e.g. Robbins, 2007; Lawrence and Gibson, 2007; Altman and Hinkson, 2007) has seen earlier colonial discourses of benevolent paternalism replaced with discourses of mutual responsibility. Service delivery contracts have shifted many responsibilities to not-for-profit agencies (Australian National Audit Office, 2012), creating opportunities and resources for mainstream agencies to work in Indigenous communities. Other changesⁱⁱ further highlight the difficult terrain of community development in Indigenous Australia.

Australian Red Cross is one of many not-for-profit agencies that moved into new service roles in Indigenous domains in the last decade. In the case of Australian Red Cross, this shift also reflects a deliberate and strategic commitment to changing its relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians by developing new ways of working, a new attentiveness to the most vulnerable sectors of the national population, and implementing a renewed sense of responsibility to Indigenous well-being. In 2008, a comprehensive review of Australian Red Cross services across the country identified seven priority areas for action, including working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Table 1) (Australian Red Cross, 2008). This commitment forms part of a renewed vision to improve the lives of vulnerable people in Australia and internationally by mobilising the power of humanity.

The new organizational strategy committed Australian Red Cross to working in culturally appropriate and respectful ways with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities to maximize their life opportunities; to work in ways that were informed and guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organizations and communities themselves, and reflected deepening understanding of their cultures and circumstances.

Australian Red Cross now has a policy commitment to develop partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians that are oriented towards community service, community development and community capacity building. For any organization starting in this field, its own capacity to lead change, to respond to the demands and expectations of

intercultural engagement constructively and effectively, is a matter of great importance. Recognising this, Australian Red Cross used its research partnership with Macquarie University's Centre for Research on Social Inclusion (see Acknowledgements) as a timely opportunity to invert the conventional lens of capacity building research, and to focus on institutional capacity to engage with Indigenous Australia.

Australian Red Cross sought a robust assessment of intercultural competence across its ambitious agenda in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Organizational capacity and intercultural competence were recognised as central to the task of leading change to foster Indigenous resilience and autonomy. The *Intercultural Development Inventory*® (IDI®) (Hammer et al., 2003; Hammer, 2009; Hammer, 2011) was selected to provide an objective evaluation of intercultural competence across the broad Red Cross leadership team in place in 2010. The specific purpose of the research was to consider the intercultural capacity of the senior leaders of the organization against relatively objective criteria, and to explore the nature of the challenge the leadership faces in moving to a different sort of engagement with intercultural relationships. The research surveyed the organization's senior leadership and provided an aggregate assessment of that team. It was supplemented by follow-up interviews that explored implications of the survey findings and participants' experiences.ⁱⁱⁱ

The IDI is widely recognised as a reliable and cross-culturally valid tool that measures individuals' or groups' perceived competence in intercultural competence and their performance (Hammer, 2011). The IDI comprises a 50-item questionnaire plus standardized demographic questions. For this research six additional questions specific to Australian Red Cross were included. The IDI was selected as the best available tool particularly because it

Assess[es] a group's capability to deal with cultural differences ...[and provides a] blueprint of the group's overall capabilities and can help identify the struggles the group will likely encounter as they attempt to work together to accomplish tasks that involve bridging across cultural difference (Hammer, 2009: 214)

The organizational capacity study

IDI Survey Data

The research focused on members of the Australian Red Cross senior leaders, including members of the National Board, the Senior Executive and National Leadership Team and Senior Management Teams in each of the national, state and territory offices around Australia. This leadership team includes those responsible for approving and overseeing national strategic direction for Australian Red Cross (National Board), for proposing and implementing organizational directions and priorities (Senior Executive and National Leadership Team) and management of organizational activities in various jurisdictions (Senior Management in various national, state and territory offices). Seventy-seven people were invited to participate in the research. Forty-five (57%) consent forms were returned and participants completed the IDI survey online. Forty-three surveys were completed (a final participation rate of 55% of the invited group). Twenty-eight participants were interviewed (62% of the total group who consented to participate in the research). There were participants from each State and Territory and strong participation from the national

office (Table 2). Each geographical and functional area was represented in the survey by multiple responses.

Table 2: Summary of participant group (n=77) drawn from the Australian Red Cross leadership team

	n	% of total invitees	Consented to Participate		Interviewed	
			n	%	n	%
National Board	15	19.5	9	60	3	20
National Management Team	19	24.7	11	58	8	42
Senior Managers	43	55.8	25	57	17	39

Source: Survey data, 2010

The IDI reports intercultural competence along a continuum (Figure 1) and measures Cultural Disengagement, a sense of disconnection or detachment from one's primary cultural group. Responses range from more monocultural orientations (Denial, Polarization) to more intercultural/global perspectives and behaviours (Acceptance, Adaptation) (Hammer et al., 2003; Hammer, 2009; Hammer, 2011). In the middle of the continuum is Minimization, a transitional perspective between more monocultural or ethnocentric orientations and more intercultural/global mindsets. What is needed to lead organizational change to facilitate community capacity building is a level of competence across the organization – a shared intercultural mindset that recognises, values and responds to cultural diversity (or at least is transitional towards an intercultural position). This sort of competence supports organizational development of partnerships across cultural difference and the work of change agents to transform monocultural habits, structures and practices within the organization to more multicultural, inclusive practices. In addition, a strong orientation to value intercultural competence is necessary across the senior leadership group to support and inspire required organizational change.

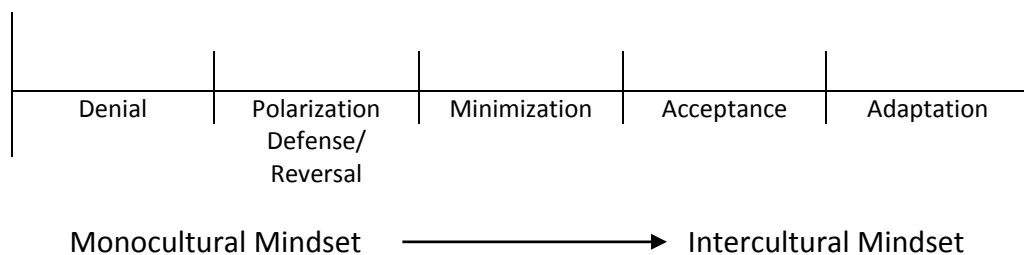


Figure 1: The Intercultural Development Continuum (Hammer 2009: 206)

The IDI records:

- 'Perceived Orientation' – reflecting where the group as a whole places itself along the intercultural development continuum;
- 'Developmental Orientation' – indicating the group's primary orientation towards cultural differences and commonalities (as reported by the IDI), and indicates the perspective the group is most likely to use in situations where cultural differences and commonalities need to be bridged; and
- 'Orientation Gap' – reflecting the difference between Perceived and Developmental Orientation scores.

The IDI Group Profile for the participants from Australian Red Cross recorded a Perceived Orientation score of 126.12. This score indicates that the group rated its own intercultural capability to understand and appropriately adapt to cultural difference within 'Acceptance' (an orientation that recognises and appreciates patterns of cultural difference and commonalities). The group's Developmental Orientation score of 106.05, however, indicates that the group's primary orientation towards cultural differences fell within the category referred to as 'Minimization' (an orientation that reflects a tendency to highlight commonalities across cultures that can mask important cultural differences in values, perceptions and behaviours). In other words, the group as a whole saw itself as substantially further along the intercultural development continuum than its performance placed it.

An Orientation Gap of more than 7 points is considered as indicating a meaningful difference between the group's perception and performance in terms of intercultural competence. For the participants in this study the Orientation Gap was 20.07, suggesting the group substantially overestimated its level of intercultural competence. The group, overall, likely evaluated its own policies, views and practices as being more culturally responsive and competent than would be viewed or experienced from Indigenous community perspectives.

The survey data also reported a wide range of Orientations from Polarization (5%) through Minimization (47.5%) to Acceptance (25%) and Adaptation (5%), with 2.5% classified on the cusp of Minimization and 15% on the cusp of Acceptance (Table 3). Since both monocultural and intercultural mindsets operated within the team, at least in 2010, it is likely that clear consensus across the team on what would be the best response in particular circumstances would have been difficult to secure. There was a range of views and differing ideas across the senior leadership team on how to make sense of and adapt behaviours to cultural differences and commonalities and how to respond to the challenges of cultural diversity. In the context of implementing the strategic commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities, this represented a challenge for the organization.

Table 3: Intercultural orientation of survey participants

Intercultural Orientation	% of survey participants
Denial	0%
Polarization	5%
Cusp of Minimization	2.5%
Minimization	47.5%
Cusp of Acceptance	15%
Acceptance	25%
Adaptation	5%

Source: Survey data 2010

Survey participants were also asked to provide basic demographic data and respond to a number of specific questions about their intercultural experience and views toward Indigenous issues in Australia (Table 4). That data reflected a lack of diversity across the leadership, in keeping with much of Australian society. The vast majority of participants (95%) reported they were Australian citizens, and 95% reported they were not members of an ethnic minority group in their country of origin. Most (83%) grew up in Australia, and a further 13% grew up in Western Europe. None of the participants were under 30 years old,

and most (66%) were over 50. Only a minority (18%) had lived overseas for more than five years. One quarter of the surveyed group did not answer the question on how many years of experience they have in working with Indigenous Australians, and a further 28% reported less than 12 months experience. 18% of the group surveyed reported more than five years' experience working with Indigenous Australians. 56% of the group reported that they had some degree of confidence in the capacity of Australian Red Cross' Indigenous employees (with 13% disagreeing that they had such confidence, and 28% not responding), while only 46% expressed confidence in Australian Red Cross' own capacity to develop sustainable partnerships with Indigenous Australians (with 15% disagreeing that they had such confidence, and 29% not responding). In response to the question exploring respondents' confidence in their own capacities, none agreed unequivocally that their previous experience would ensure success of new staff in Indigenous programs, and only 18% agreed somewhat more than disagreed, and 51% disagreed that they felt their previous experience provided a foundation for success (31% not responding).

Table 4: Customised supplementary questions focusing on Indigenous Australian issues

1. I am comfortable in social and family gatherings with Indigenous Australians.
2. I have Indigenous friends with whom I am comfortable in public places such as a restaurant, bar or cinema.
3. My previous experience at working successfully in Indigenous Australian communities will ensure success of new staff in Indigenous programs.

Source: Survey 2010

Implications of the IDI Data

The IDI survey data pointed to the specific challenges which faced the senior leadership team in leading change in community capacity building and community development partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. According to the Australian Red Cross 2010 Annual Report, approximately 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members were employed in mid-2010. By mid-2013, Indigenous employment had expanded to 128 employees (4.2% of the total workforce). However 82% were employed at the community worker level, with three individuals in significant management roles. Among the more junior staff, 65% faced end-of-contract pressures on their positions under government funding arrangements, contributing to the persistently high turnover of Indigenous staff, and in 2010, only one Aboriginal person was included in the survey group.

One implication of the IDI survey data is that elements of the leadership team in 2010 were likely to see new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees as a source of the intercultural capacity that the leadership team aspired to develop in the organization. New Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff would need both to adapt to existing Red Cross cultures developed within a milieu defined by the dominant culture, and provide new capacities to work in Indigenous domains and with Indigenous clients, staff and volunteers in Australia. This response of building capacity by importing rather than building skills is common in organizations facing the need to augment intercultural capacity quickly. In responding to the research, however, Australian Red Cross also gave priority to ensuring increased intercultural competence amongst managers across the organization through a range of training commitments including cross-cultural training and more sensitive human

resources and support processes across the organization, including cultural leave provisions and senior management appointments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce engagement and partnerships.

Indigenous employment targets provide an important performance indicator towards organizational change. Australian Red Cross acknowledges that simply buying in new skills in the form of new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff without building increased intercultural skills and sensitivity of existing staff and without shifting the organization's dominant cultural values through new training, recruitment and performance cultures will exacerbate rather than address any intercultural deficits within the organization. A recent internal review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment has recommended conversion of Indigenous staff from contract to permanent ongoing employment wherever possible. A new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel was implemented in mid-2013 with terms of reference that will advise the National Leadership Team on the development of whole of organization capacity to attain cultural proficiency in all aspects of its activities, as well as implementation and renewal of key policies and strategies and whole of organization engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers. The work of this panel is complemented by six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in senior management roles across the country.

The historical labour market and educational conditions experienced by Indigenous Australians, and expanding demand across many sectors for Indigenous employees with strong intercultural skills, however, presents Australian Red Cross and other not-for-profit agencies with a set of challenges. There is no large pool of skilled Indigenous workers from which Red Cross can recruit. Similarly, retention of talented Indigenous staff will rely on convincing them that organizational commitments are more than rhetorical. Recognising this, Australian Red Cross is committed to becoming an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and acknowledges that achieving this requires whole of organization commitments and reforms, of the kind described above. Failure to do so will risk exacerbating rather than addressing intercultural deficits within the organization. Indigenous staff employed in such circumstances would face very high expectations in difficult work settings, risking burn-out and disappointment.

In mid-2013, the majority of Indigenous staff in Australian Red Cross are employed in the Northern Territory (28%), Queensland (34%), Western Australia (16%) and South Australia (10%), with 82% of Indigenous employees in the Northern Territory and Queensland, some still employed on maximum term or casual contracts. Although some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are employed in state and territory head offices where they can more deeply influence organizational understanding of Indigenous issues, the great majority remain relatively invisible across the organization as they work in regional and remote locations in community development roles, with perhaps less capacity and opportunity to influence wider organizational culture. Australian Red Cross has commenced concerted enhancement of intercultural skills and capacities within its National Leadership Team (and, indeed across the organization as a whole), rather than relying solely on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to deliver intercultural effectiveness. This reflects a wider recognition of the importance of integrative or transformational leadership in addressing

organizational change in complex intercultural settings (Crosby and Bryson, 2010; Simola et al., 2010; Sun and Anderson, 2012).

Interview data

The IDI survey data was supplemented by interviews that explored specific issues related to the context of Indigenous Australia. Most participants also received separate debriefing of their IDI results.^{iv} The interviews explored participants' understanding of the challenges of leading Australian Red Cross through a period of change in its relationships with and responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (see Table 5). The interviews were completed in mid-2010.^v They revealed high levels of commitment, trust and loyalty across the senior leaders, with high levels of critical engagement with the issues and challenges facing the organization as it responded to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The interviews were exceptionally frank and open, providing generous access to the insights, concerns and achievements of a skilled, talented, experienced and committed leadership team working in a difficult set of circumstances, including a substantial change and reform agenda across all levels of the organization's work.

Table 5: Interview protocol

<p>Leadership and Capacity Building</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What characterises good leadership in addressing Indigenous issues in Australia? 2. What leadership challenges do you see as important in implementing the organization's strategic commitment to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in 'genuine partnerships' and developing community capacity, leadership, governance and organizational development? 3. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the organization's leadership team in implementing a new direction in its relationships with Indigenous people in Australia? <p>Delivering leadership in Indigenous domains and issues</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. A shift from service delivery to a 'development' approach is an important feature of the Board-approved approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. How do you see the difference in these approaches? What do you see as the most important issues arising from that shift? 5. Could you identify and discuss a situation within the organization where you think it has demonstrated either high or low levels of capacity to work effectively with Indigenous people? <p>Scenarios for responses</p> <p>I would like to explore how you think about these issues faced by the organization by presenting some scenarios and seeking your responses (up to four scenarios were presented to interviewees)</p> <p>Other issues</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. What do you see as the key strengths and concerns for implementing the Indigenous engagement programs under development in the organization? 7. Are there any other issues you would like to raise?

Source: Research Protocol 2010

In the rapidly changing environment of humanitarian work, efforts to develop new ways of working that are responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their diverse cultural settings are just one element of managers' operational environments. For Australian Red Cross, reorienting some program areas from service provision to community development partnership approaches while always prioritizing management of operational capacity to respond to humanitarian disasters has been difficult. Doing so in a period of deep and wide organizational transformation, alongside national and global financial and political volatility, exacerbated many of the tensions that are raised in any process of organizational change. Some participants reflected on the difficulties they experienced in

reaching consensus across the leadership team, affirming the conclusions reached on the basis of the range of intercultural competencies and capacities recorded by the IDI. Their commentaries ranged from frustration with the speed and direction of change to concerns about competition for scarce resources to implement Board approved-initiatives.

The communication task facing those leading change is to inform and inspire a wide cross-section of Australian society. In most settings, including those within Australian Red Cross, this means communicating with and transforming the dominant national culture rather than Indigenous and other minority cultures. Australian Red Cross confronts one of the historic divisions in Australian society and requires support for people across significant differences as they develop intercultural understanding, knowledge and skills that are now seen as fundamental for the transformational organizational capacities anticipated in the new policy framework for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. It is necessary, then, not simply to secure agreement across the senior leaders but to build capacity for change across the entire organization. Australian Red Cross is a large and complex organization with about 3000 staff, 20,000 members and 34,000 volunteers across a complex organizational structure. To lead change within such complexity, the senior leadership team itself needs to lead development of the intercultural capacities involved and to integrate the requirements of its Board-endorsed commitments to Indigenous Australians into the way the organization works.

Interviewed participants^{vi} acknowledged that good leadership was central to success in developing intercultural capacity to work with Indigenous Australians. They commonly identified the passion, commitment and integrity of the senior leadership, with several referring explicitly to the importance of the Chief Executive Officer's outstanding record of public service in the field^{vii} as central to securing buy-in from both Indigenous communities and Red Cross personnel. This was balanced by recognition that leadership must involve attention to the pace of change, and accessibility to those leading it. Competing priorities of the senior leadership team across the organization were identified as creating difficulty in securing focused attention from senior leaders.

Leadership styles were also seen differently by different people, with the same actions invoking divergent responses. It was also common that knowledge of the circumstances of Indigenous Australians was seen as important for leadership in this field, including an ability to listen across differences. Indeed, the terms 'humility' and 'listening' were often used in the interviews to describe the characteristics of good intercultural leadership. While humility and listening were highly valued, however, it was also clear that interviewed participants saw the demands of high-level leadership in international humanitarian work to require a degree of hard-headedness and advocacy that was recognised as paradoxical in the sensitive fields of intercultural engagement.

For many of the participants interviewed in 2010, the changes being led in Australian Red Cross inescapably involved questioning and challenging the nature of the dominance exercised by the dominant culture in Australian national life. There was recognition that conservative cultural values and lack of cultural diversity in Australian Red Cross posed a challenge in working to dismantle entrenched national patterns of racism towards Indigenous Australians, presenting personal and leadership challenges within the

organization, even at very senior levels. The structural racism of Australian society and its echoes within a major Australian institution may have created a sense of distance between decision-makers in Australian Red Cross and the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. Yet, few Australians have much direct experience of conditions in the diverse communities and environments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. For some of the participants, this produced a sense of disconnection between their organizational roles as decision-makers and leaders and their confidence in their own knowledge and understanding of Indigenous vulnerability, needs and aspirations. In 2010, participants in this research worried that important decisions would be made within the leadership group with insufficient information or understanding, and with inadequate attention to detailed questions of implementation, resources and long term planning. While there were divergent views about the responsiveness of the leadership team to these challenges, new training and induction programs that address cross-cultural training, including training in Indigenous issues, have been put in place across the organization.

The fundamental principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Table 6) provide a powerful and constructive foundation for leading change in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Their implications in some Indigenous settings, however, were rather contested and, at least for some of the research participants, rather unresolved in terms of just how they would be mobilised in practice. The interview participants discussed scenarios involving how to address cultural differences as realistically providing opportunities to explore how the fundamental principles are relevant to working in Indigenous Australia. They generally acknowledged that the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality were central to working in Indigenous settings, but it was a matter of debate how managers and staff might work consistently with those principles and in ways that remain respectful of specific cultural values and differences:

I think the principles can be quite problematic because obviously one of the bases of the principles is that Red Cross will work with anyone and we are impartial in our work with people. Now that is quite different to the way some Aboriginal communities work where there is not always a willingness to work with other tribes and other people, and so there is a real potential conflict there for us, which I don't think frankly, we've fully grappled with yet (Interviewee 11, Interview 2010).

Internal discussion of the findings of the 2010 survey contributed to a number of initiatives in Australian Red Cross aimed at responding to the concerns identified in the research including development of a Reconciliation Action Plan in 2012 which, among other specific priorities committed to:

Ensuring that all Red Cross people are able to work supportively and effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Australian Red Cross 2012: 4).

The actions from this plan had been fully implemented by the end of 2013 and a new Reconciliation Action Plan is being developed for implementation in 2014.^{viii}

Table 6: Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, co-operation and lasting peace amongst all people.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary Service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

Source: Australian Red Cross Strategy 2010

Conclusions

The research reported here offers a window on the challenges of leading change to respond to the specific culturally-contextualised circumstances, needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples. In focusing on organizational capacity and leadership in Australian Red Cross, the research used the IDI to identify a significant gap between the perceived and developmental orientations of the senior leadership group surveyed in 2010. In the cultural context of contemporary Indigenous–non-Indigenous relations in Australia more generally, this gap emphasises the need for this large and complex organization aiming to lead change to pay careful and urgent attention to questions of intercultural competence within and beyond its leadership group.

Responding to the findings that the senior leadership group sits within the Minimization category on the intercultural development continuum, and encompasses a range from Polarization to Adaptation represented a significant organizational challenge. While the IDI offered some insight into the nature of those challenges, and guidance on how to respond, critical decisions rested with the leadership group as a team. In particular, the IDI data suggested that development of intercultural understanding across the senior leadership group through Indigenous-specific training, development of basic management systems that are responsive to increasing internal cultural diversity in the organization's workforce, and encouraging critical reflection on the context of work within the Indigenous sector should be given priority. To its considerable credit, in the period following the research, Australian Red Cross has targeted each of these areas and developed culturally specific staff development programs and a range of new internal human resource procedures and principles for external partnerships, including partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. This work is ongoing and is being pursued in the context of changing policy, financial and staffing circumstances, but the challenges involved are a microcosm of the intercultural challenges facing Australian society generally.

One of the key risks that this research points to is of well-intentioned efforts to accommodate cultural diversity being affected in practice by minimization or misunderstanding of the particular challenges of working in different sorts of settings with vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. The interviews completed in 2010 explored the internal manifestations of such risks and identified the idea of 'one size fits all' style policies and programs across Australia as unlikely to meet the targets Australian Red Cross had prioritised. The deeper lesson of the fundamental principles listed in Table 6, of course, is that accounting for differences in the varying circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in different locations and different social, cultural and economic circumstances requires transition to new levels of intercultural competence across society and the not-for-profit sector (and Australian society) generally.

Australian Red Cross has responded with careful planning and commitment of resources to improve both intercultural competence in general and specific competence and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures across the leadership group (and more broadly across the organization), as well as fostering of cultural diversity across the leadership group. This work continues across Australian Red Cross.

The Anglo-centric culture that originated in Australia's colonial past continues to dominate this small but diverse multicultural society. Significant challenges exist in decolonising relationships with Indigenous peoples (Rose, 2004) and in dealing with the rights and needs of other minority cultural groups (Dunn et al., 2004; Poynting and Mason, 2008; Dandy and Pe-Pua, 2010). Transformative action must also face the nuances of rapid political and societal change (Tsiolkas 2013). Australia's ability to build the capacities of its constituent communities to participate in and contribute to national life depends significantly not just on building community capacity, but also in reshaping the intercultural competence of the dominant culture and its organizations. As this research demonstrates, this represents a challenge to those leading social and organizational change.

Beyond the specific context of Australian Red Cross, this research suggests other not-for-profit groups must consider their own capacity to work in the complex domains of diverse Indigenous settings in Australia when they respond to changes in Australian governments' approaches in Indigenous affairs. Rather than addressing Indigenous disadvantage, cultural incompetence will simply reproduce the deep colonizing of previous rounds of well-intentioned but poorly conceptualised or poorly executed engagements across cultural differences to the continuing detriment of Indigenous Australians.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The research was undertaken in 2010 as part of the research partnership between Australian Red Cross and Macquarie University's Centre for Research on Social Inclusion. Funding was provided by the Australian Research Council, Macquarie University and Australian Red Cross (Linkage Project LP0882152). The chief investigators in that project are Dr Rochelle Spencer, Professor Robert Fagan, Professor Michael Fine, Associate Professor Robyn Dowling and Associate Professor Kevin McCracken. Ethics approval for the research reported here was provided by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval HE27NOV2009-R00196). The authors acknowledge the ongoing support of both Macquarie University and Australian Red Cross in this project. We are particularly appreciative of the careful engagement with our argument and its expression in this paper by readers within Red Cross, whose patience and persistence has helped bring the paper to fruition.

NOTES:

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- ⁱ Altman et al. (2009: 225) suggest at the national scale there has been steady improvement in most socioeconomic outcomes for Indigenous Australians in the last 35 years, but that the evidence on improvement relative to the total Australian population is uneven (as it is at disaggregated spatial scales) and that for some key indicators, "convergence is unlikely to occur within a generation, if at all".
 - ⁱⁱ For example, the trajectory of the national reconciliation process, amendments to Native title legislation, shifts in the governance and oversight of key policies in Indigenous affairs, including the disestablishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the framing of high-level Commonwealth intervention into Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.
 - ⁱⁱⁱ The research reported here is one element larger partnership exploring questions of community capacity building and volunteering as well as organizational capacity. The organizational capacity study was endorsed by Australian Red Cross and received Macquarie University ethics approval in late 2009.
 - ^{iv} The debriefings were undertaken by Huchendorf independently from the research. As required by the terms of the ethics protocol approved by Macquarie University, data from the debriefing sessions has not been included in the reporting of the research in any way.
 - ^v The interviews took from 35 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes. All interviews, with one exception, were undertaken as telephone interviews and all were recorded electronically with permission of the interviewees.
 - ^{vi} We note that interviewees were all drawn from the members of the leadership team who completed the IDI survey. The open-ended interviews were not framed for quantitative analysis, but to offer clarification of the ways in which the challenges and issues pointed to by the IDI survey data were experienced and understood by participants. Confidentiality provisions in the ethics approval for the research precluded disclosure of individual participant identities or responses to Australian Red Cross or other participants. It is not, therefore, appropriate to read the interview responses as 'representative' in any statistical sense, but rather as indicative of issues raised by interviewees and recognised by the researchers as significant in framing our understanding of the significance of this research.
 - ^{vii} The Chief Executive Officer of Australian Red Cross, the Hon. Mr Robert Tickner, was previously the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Australian Government (1990-1996) (see Tickner, 2001).
 - ^{viii} Australian Red Cross has also endorsed the principles developed at a summit of Aboriginal Peak Organisations and non-government organisations in the Northern Territory in February 2013. The principles are aimed at empowering Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Northern Territory to take control of their futures (see <http://www.apont.org.au>).

Appendix C

Australian Red Cross Key documents

Appendix C-1 The Fundamental Principles of the IFRC

Humanity	The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect human life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.
Impartiality	It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.
Neutrality	In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.
Independence	The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.
Voluntary service	It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.
Unity	There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry its humanitarian work throughout its territory.
Universality	The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

How we help

Priority Areas

Red Cross works with the most vulnerable people and communities in Australia and internationally. Our work is focused around eight priority areas.

1. Strengthening national emergency preparedness, response and recovery

Red Cross seeks to reduce the negative impacts natural disasters and other emergencies can have on individuals, households and communities. In our role as 'auxiliary' to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, we work with all levels of the Australian Government and other agencies to help people prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters and other emergencies.

2. Increasing international aid and development

Red Cross supports healthier, safer, better protected and more sustainable lives for people in the Asia Pacific. Placing people at the heart of our work, we help to create resilient communities by strengthening regional Red Cross Red Crescent partners and planning for effective disaster response and early recovery.

3. Championing international humanitarian law

International Humanitarian Law (IHL or 'laws of war') is a set of rules which seek to limit the effects of armed conflict in order to reduce suffering. IHL protects those who are not, or are no longer, actively involved in the conflict and restricts the way that war is fought.

Building on our specific mandate in International Humanitarian Law and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, we develop understanding within the broader community that 'even wars have laws'. We also work with Australian governments to ensure that the principle of humanity is considered by policy makers and all those who use IHL in their operations.

4. Addressing the impact of migration

Red Cross provides support to refugees, asylum seekers, immigration detainees and other people who become vulnerable as a result of migration. We do this through a range of services which ensure that the health, dignity and well-being of vulnerable people are protected and upheld and that family links are restored when sought.

5. Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Red Cross is committed to building long-term and respectful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – individuals, families and communities – to enable better life opportunities. Red Cross does not compete with community led or managed services nor seek to replace them. We aim to assist communities drive and lead their own solutions. Our programs are focussed on prevention, early intervention and education.

6. Overcoming social exclusion by providing bridges back into the community

Within Australia there are people who live on the margins of society, excluded from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which enable them to fully participate in their communities. Red Cross works towards overcoming this social exclusion, supporting an inclusive society where all people are valued and live with dignity, their differences respected and basic needs met.

7. Tackling entrenched locational disadvantage

Red Cross works with individual communities experiencing entrenched locational disadvantage to assist them plan and implement local solutions that support a healthy and sustainable standard of living.

Locational disadvantage refers to neighbourhoods or geographic areas in which multiple factors create intergenerational cycles of vulnerability and disadvantage. These factors include poverty, income inequality, low education, poor working conditions, low employment levels, adverse environmental factors, poor housing and areas of residence, lack of transport, lack of community cohesion, discriminatory practices and uncertain supply or poor quality food.

8. Australian Red Cross Blood Service

Improve the lives of patients and perform a critical role in health care, as an auxiliary to government in the humanitarian field by providing, through the Australian Red Cross Blood Service, a safe, secure and cost effective supply of blood, blood products, essential services and leading edge research.

POLICY STATEMENT 05**INDIGENOUS POLICY CORE PRINCIPLES****1. PURPOSE**

The humanitarian purpose of Australian Red Cross is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity. Worldwide, the Red Cross movement works to prevent and alleviate human suffering, to protect life and health and ensure respect for every human being. Nowhere are the Movement's aims more relevant and important than in supporting the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote, rural and urban communities.

Australian Red Cross acknowledges and accepts that past government and community practices, policies and attitudes have had a detrimental and lasting impact on the social, economic, cultural and spiritual lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their families. These impacts are still felt today.

Australian Red Cross also acknowledges the courage, strength, wisdom, talent and potential present in every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community provides a wonderful platform for positive change for both indigenous and non indigenous Australians.

With this statement, Australian Red Cross acknowledges we have a role to play in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their drive to address community challenges and build a prosperous, safe and healthy future. Our commitment to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is long term and will be pursued in a manner consistent with the framework set out below.

2. TACKLING VULNERABILITY

In accordance with Strategy 2010 there are four consistent criteria for every service we provide to the community:

- It benefits vulnerable people, giving priority to those most in need;
- It does what others either don't do or don't do well enough;
- It is participatory (involving Red Cross volunteers wherever possible), and strengthens communities;
- It delivers results, which are based on agreed and realistic targets & ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

In addition tackling vulnerability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

- Involves working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, but is owned and driven by the community
- It builds capacity, which is sustainable;

3. CORE PRINCIPLES

The core principles are as follows:

- In line with ARC's fundamental principles we will:
 - ✓ Be open to all and not be discriminatory;
 - ✓ Be impartial and not engage in controversies of a political, or religious or ideological nature;
 - ✓ Maintain autonomy to be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of Red Cross;
 - ✓ Promote mutual understanding ,friendship and cooperation; and
 - ✓ Give priority to the most urgent cases of distress and need.
- We will acknowledge, be respectful and sensitive to culture and custom.
- We will work from a perspective of where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at, rather than an expectation of where they should be or what they should know.
- Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will be from a position built on the strengths of individuals and communities.
- Our engagement will be undertaken in a climate of mutual respect and co-operation, being open and transparent in our relationships with each other and wherever possible build sustainable, positive and mutually beneficial partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities.
- We will seek to understand and also be understood through the use of appropriate and respectful dialogue.
- We will encourage two way, mutual learning with the aim of a richer and more informed understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and traditions.
- We will ensure that all ARC people have appropriate cultural awareness and an appreciation of diversity.
- We will be respectful and follow protocols. We will adopt a flexible approach to community priorities and recognise and respect that at times community cultural and ceremonial practices may impact on our requirements and priorities.
- Where agreed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we will support the development and delivery of programs and services. These programs and services may include existing ARC initiatives (modified as necessary) or entirely new programs and services to meet local requirements.
- The development of programs and services will be undertaken in a collaborative, consultative and co-operative manner ensuring that the wishes of local communities are taken into account in service delivery.
- The development of programs will reflect the specific needs of local communities and not be designed on a "one-size-fits-all" basis.
- Where possible we will ensure that programs and services are delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, community members and volunteers.

- We will give priority to employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all levels, including volunteering and governance representation. This will occur within a Human Resource Management framework that takes account of cultural differences and diversity.
- ARC will ensure that staff and volunteers delivering services and programs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are properly trained and supported.
- ARC will ensure that all promotional and marketing communications in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are culturally appropriate and reflect images and language supportive of and endorsed by the particular community.
- In applying for Government and community funding for services and programs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ARC will work closely with these communities to ensure that proposals are supported by them, taking into account their needs and requirements.

Adopted by resolution of the ARC Board: 17th February 2007

Date of First Issue: February 2007

Date of next Review: **February 2009**

Issued by: **Board Secretary**

Distribution: Executive Directors, Intranet Site

Include this table in the Policy for future revisions.

Revision No.:	Date Issued:	Distribution:

Appendix C-4 Australian Red Cross 'ways of working'

The new direction for Red Cross is underpinned by the following ways of working	
<p>How we work is as important as what we do to help.</p> <p>Our new direction will be underpinned at all times by our commitment to:</p>	
1. Applying our Fundamental Principles	We are guided at all times by the seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross - Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality.
2. Working as auxiliary to government	Although always independent, we work alongside government in meeting humanitarian needs both within Australia and internationally, affording us a unique position in the humanitarian sector and unique responsibilities.
3. Negotiating a role with communities	We work with communities on the basis of reciprocal partnership, combining our resources and their local knowledge and involvement to create solutions that improve the lives of disadvantaged people for the long term.
4. Building on strengths	Recognising the inherent strengths of all people we will deliver training and develop skills to build on these. We help people to take control of their own lives and environments by building on their existing strengths.
5. Prevention through early intervention	We will focus on early engagement to break the cycle of disadvantage, while continuing to support and respond to crises where necessary.
6. Working in partnership	We will work with community groups, business, governments and other not-for-profit organisations to identify and respond to needs in communities. To provide the best outcome we will facilitate instead of delivering services where our partners can do it better.
7. Avoiding duplication	We will attempt to provide services where we can deliver the best outcome. We work closely in partnership with other agencies working towards the same goal to maximise the benefits for disadvantaged individuals and groups.
8. Joining up our responses	We will establish linkages locally and engage with other agencies already working in the community to deliver the best outcomes possible.
9. Acting on evidence	We will ensure our work is based on solid evidence by building our own research capability and by drawing on a wealth of experience, locally and internationally to produce work which is well planned, measured and evaluated.
10. Advocating for change	We will use the information and evidence from our work to highlight the issues faced by the most disadvantaged and marginalised people and communities. We will engage with governments to bring about positive change and talk to the public through campaigns where necessary.
11. Mobilising volunteers	The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is renowned for mobilising volunteers - especially in times of disaster. We know that volunteering helps create cohesive and resilient communities. We will work to increase the level of volunteering in disadvantaged communities to both help strengthen them and to deliver services.
12. Embracing diversity	We strive to understand and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, of ethnically and culturally diverse communities, to people with disabilities and to the different needs of men and women. We will build a more diverse workforce to ensure we are best placed to do this.

5. Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



Red Cross is committed to building long-term and respectful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – individuals, families and communities – to enable better life opportunities. Red Cross does not compete with community led or managed services nor seek to replace them. We aim to assist communities drive and lead their own solutions. Our programs are focussed on prevention, early intervention and education.

Outcomes we are seeking	What we do to achieve this
Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their families and communities have the support and capacity to challenge the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Address underlying causes of and specific vulnerability to social and emotional well being. Focus on working with young people to create better opportunities through programs such as holiday activities, childhood and parenting, family and community safety, and health promotion.
Individual, family, and community health and well being is improved through health and household budgeting information, including food security.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focus on groups most vulnerable to food insecurity – infants, children, pregnant women and new mothers. ■ Work in partnership with communities, government and other stakeholders, taking a holistic approach to food security, supporting existing strengths and initiatives and filling gaps where appropriate.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders, ex-offenders and their families are supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with offenders, ex-offenders and their families to reduce the impact of imprisonment and help reduce reoffending through government and community support.
The impact of homelessness on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is reduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop programs and services that reduce homelessness in priority locations.
The impact of disasters and emergencies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is minimised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apply a “whole-of-community approach” and focus on prevention and preparedness; response and recovery; education and capacity building.
Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff work with us to build cultural awareness and understanding within Red Cross and to support their communities to make their own decisions for better lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adapt our approach and Ways of Working to ensure we develop individual, community, and organisational capacity to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance, legitimacy and decision making. ■ Attract, retain and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers. ■ Deliver cross-cultural training to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers. ■ Ensure our programs are accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Appendix D

RespectED documents

THE NEED



In every community and cultural group, every day, thousands of children and youth are harmed by emotional, physical and/or sexual maltreatment. The ramifications on individuals, families and society are staggering: children and families become embedded in pain and dysfunction while society attempts to respond with crisis interventions that are often too little, too late.

Violence against children and youth is widespread in the world and in Canada

- Worldwide, 150 million girls and 75 million boys experience sexual violence yearly.
- There are over 1 million images of child sexual abuse on the Internet.
- Girls with disabilities are victims of sexual abuse four times more often than girls without disabilities.
- Only 2.4% of the world's children are legally protected from corporal punishment in all settings.
- Every year 1 in 5 children is sexually solicited online.
- 275 million children witness violence in their homes yearly.
- In Canada:
 - 38% of children under 18 are physically abused.
 - 25% of children under 18 are sexually abused.
 - 75% of Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have been sexually abused.

Relationship violence among youth is rampant

- Survey findings indicate that 30–35% of youth report violence within dating relationships.

Bullying and harassment take a toll every day on young people

- In Canada, 39% of children under 18 have been bullied.
- A major study in Toronto schools found that a bullying act took place every 7 minutes; teachers were aware of only 4% of these incidents.

PREVENTION IS THE SOLUTION



The effectiveness of prevention education is well-documented. A recent study found that young women who had not received sexual abuse prevention education in childhood were twice as likely to experience sexual abuse than those who had participated in such a program.

RespectED: Violence & Abuse Prevention has been helping to promote healthier relationships and safer communities since 1984. Built on decades of Red Cross experience in prevention education, community-based safety programming, and volunteer involvement, this award-winning service has helped more than 3.4 million Canadian youth and adults understand abuse, harassment and interpersonal violence issues. All programs engage learners in an interactive process, and encourage a proactive, comprehensive, community approach to prevention that incorporates education for youth and adults, risk assessment, policy development, evaluation, advocacy and monitoring.

The aim of RespectED: Violence & Abuse Prevention is to break the cycle of abuse, neglect, harassment and interpersonal violence through prevention services, and in so doing, promote safe and supportive relationships between individuals, within the family and throughout our communities.

HOW RESPECTED HELPS



RespectED educates and certifies volunteers, teachers, and community members as Prevention Educators. In collaboration with schools, sport organizations, community agencies, and other institutions, RespectED Prevention Educators deliver presentations and workshops that enable participants to:

- define healthy relationships
- understand violence and abuse of power
- promote safe environments
- learn that abuse, harassment and bullying are never the victim's fault
- locate helping resources.

RESPECTED PROGRAMS



MAKING A DIFFERENCE EVERY DAY

Comprehensive Risk Management Programs

● **Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments for Children and Youth** equips youth-serving organizations to establish safe environments for young people through risk assessment, policy development, codes of conduct, and educational and support services.

● **Prevention in Motion** helps adults and organizations to create safer environments through an increased understanding of abuse, neglect, their indicators and effects on children. It is available in-person and online, and can be customized to suit the audience, including sport, child/youth care, faith institutions, and others

● **Walking the Prevention Circle** acknowledges the history, challenges and potential of Aboriginal individuals and communities while exploring issues related to abuse, neglect and interpersonal violence.

Prevention of Violence Against Children Programs

● **C.a.r.e.** (Canada) and **Be Safe!** (International) are personal safety programs with the goal to prevent abuse against children aged 5–9. These programs combine story-telling, puppetry, songs and interactive activities and games to educate children, parents, teachers and community members.

● **It's Not Your Fault** helps youth define abuse and neglect, understand why it occurs and how to get help or help a friend. This program has received the Seal and Certificate of Recommendation from the national Curriculum Services Canada.

● **Respect In Sport** is an on-line program that educates coaches, sport leaders and parents on the prevention of abuse, bullying and harassment in sport.

●● **Training programs for Youth Peer Facilitators and adults** offer certification training for youth and adults to deliver RespectED programs.

Promoting Healthy Dating Relationships Programs

● **What's Love Got to do With It?** examines healthy and unhealthy peer romantic relationships, focusing on dispelling stereotypes, and building communication and prevention skills.

● **Not Just Puppy Love** examines the issues relating to youth relationship violence, defines sexual assault, emotional and physical abuse, and offers prevention strategies

●● **Training programs for Youth Peer Facilitators and adults** offer certification training for youth and adults to deliver RespectED programs..

Prevention of Bullying & Harassment Programs

● **Beyond the Hurt** explores all aspects of bullying and peer harassment, interpersonal power issues, the rights and responsibilities of individuals, as well as prevention and intervention strategies. This program is delivered by youth, to youth.

● **Beyond the Hurt** for adults explores the dynamics of bullying and peer harassment, and helps adults establish appropriate policies and guidelines to foster prevention and intervention.

●● **Training programs for Youth Peer Facilitators and adults** offer certification training for youth and adults to deliver RespectED programs.

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 ● Programs for Children ● Programs for Youth ● Programs for Adults

To order RespectED materials or to register for courses in RespectED's OnLine Learning Centre, please contact 1-888-307-7997 or wz-contactcentre@redcross.ca.

For more information on RespectED programs, please visit www.redcross.ca/respected or email respected@redcross.ca.

Since 1984, RespectED has:

- Trained more than 5,700 volunteer Prevention Educators
- Educated over 2.6 million children and youth
- Educated more than 936,500 adults

Australian Red Cross RespectED Prevention Educators (on-line advertisement)

- work for the world's largest humanitarian organisation
- 2 positions in [location] and 2 positions in [location]
 - full time positions

Relief in times of crisis, be it big or small. Care when it's needed most and commitment when others turn away. With more than 100 million volunteers worldwide and 60,000 members and volunteers in Australia we reach people and places like nobody else and care for local communities in Australia and Asia Pacific. Red Cross is there for people in need, no matter who you are, no matter where you live.

Position information

Are you an experienced educator or community worker ready to empower and deliver prevention education to the community?

RespectED is a Red Cross developed program, which delivers works with communities to reduce levels of violence. The emphasis is on the delivery of the prevention education using a community development approach

Our RespectED Prevention Educators are responsible for developing and implementing the RespectED program within specified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in South Australia.

A high level of integrity, drive, team work and adaptability will see you succeed in this role.

Experience working within remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and experience in community development and training is required.

We require two full time Prevention Educators in [location] and two full time Prevention Educators in [location]. All four positions are 12 month fixed-term contracts.

Access to salary packaging tax benefits is also available.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strongly encouraged to apply.

Position requirements

To be successful in the role you will have:

- demonstrated knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues particularly the challenges faced in delivering training programs within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
 - ability to work effectively in isolation and as part of a team
 - relevant experience in a complex community development setting
 - mentoring and facilitation and/or facilitation skills and experience
- demonstrated ability to work cooperatively with internal and external stakeholders at various levels, establishing and maintaining strong partnerships
 - well developed problem solving and decision making abilities
 - highly developed oral and written communication and negotiation skills
 - good computer proficiency
- sensitivity and confidentiality abilities in relation to working respectfully in communities
- relevant community development and training experience and/or tertiary qualifications
 - current [state] drivers licence or equivalent, including a 4WD license.

Appendix E

APO NT Principles for a partnership-centred approach for NGOs

Principles for a partnership-centred approach for NGOs working with Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Northern Territory

Purpose

These Principles are designed to guide the development of a partnership-centred approach for non-Aboriginal NGOs engaging in the delivery of services or development initiatives in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

Objective

Development of these Principles is underpinned by the strong aspiration of Aboriginal community controlled peak organisations in the NT to work with and secure the support of non-Aboriginal NGOs towards the essential goal of strengthening and rebuilding an Aboriginal controlled development and service sector in the NT. It is about putting Aboriginal people back in the driver's seat.

Context

These Principles embody the spirit and substance of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). They have been developed through an understanding that a fundamental shift is required in policy approaches towards Aboriginal communities from a narrow service delivery focus to one based on a development approach. It is understood that to be effective, these Principles require a corresponding commitment from government to provide an enabling environment to properly support and resource action under the Principles.

The Principles

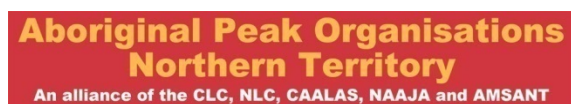
In supporting these Principles, non-Aboriginal NGOs agree to undertake to:

1. **Consider their own capacity:** Non-Aboriginal NGOs shall objectively assess whether they have the capacity (either in service delivery or development practice) to deliver effective and sustainable outcomes in the NT context.
2. **Recognise existing capacity:** Non-Aboriginal NGOs will recognise the existing capacity and particular strengths of Aboriginal NGOs and identify how they can contribute to further developing this capacity.
3. **Research existing options:** Non-Aboriginal NGOs shall thoroughly research existing Aboriginal service providers and development agencies before applying for service delivery contracts or prior to considering community development projects.¹
4. **Seek partnerships:** Where there is an Aboriginal NGO willing and able to provide a service or development activity, non-Aboriginal NGOs shall not directly compete with the Aboriginal service provider, but will seek, where appropriate, to develop a partnership in accord with these principles.
5. **Approach to partnership:** Non-Aboriginal NGOs will be guided by the priorities of the Aboriginal NGO in developing a partnership. Partnerships will be based on building and

¹ APO NT should be contacted for advice where there appears to be no relevant Aboriginal organisation/s providing services or undertaking development work. <http://www.apont.org.au>

strengthening, rather than displacing, Aboriginal organisational capacity and control. Processes for developing partnerships will need to recognise the inherent power imbalance between large NGOs and small Aboriginal organisations, and will need to allow sufficient time for partnership development.

6. **Recognise, support and promote existing development practice:** Non-Aboriginal NGOs acknowledge that many Aboriginal organisations already have robust and effective development practices embedded in a cultural framework, although some of this may be implicit and undocumented. Non-Aboriginal NGOs agree to recognise and support these practices, including through partnership arrangements.
7. **Work together with Aboriginal people to create strong and viable Aboriginal organisations:** Non-Aboriginal NGOs recognise Aboriginal organisations and communities as lead agents in creating sustainable governance and leadership in Aboriginal communities in the NT, and agree to work within structures and processes that provide Aboriginal decision-making control. This may require formal delegation of power and the dedication of self-generated resources to assist with this process.
8. **Ensure Aboriginal control, not just consultation:** Non-Aboriginal NGOs agree that Aboriginal organisations need to be in the 'driver's seat' and have control of development initiatives, services and programs delivered to their communities. This should include having input to decisions regarding resource allocations and staffing.
9. **Develop a clear exit strategy:** Where the desired outcome is for local Aboriginal organisations to deliver services or provide a development role, non-Aboriginal NGOs will develop a mutually agreed, transparent exit strategy in consultation with their partners. Contracts with government should incorporate a succession plan and long term planning for local Aboriginal organisations to deliver services, with appropriate resourcing included.
10. **Ensure robust evaluation and accountability:** Non-Aboriginal NGOs will develop a robust accountability framework and evaluation process together with partner Aboriginal organisations and communities.
11. **Cultural competency and appropriate development practice:** Aboriginal organisations and non-Aboriginal NGOs will seek to work together to share learnings and establish effective development practice and cultural competency standards for development projects and service delivery initiatives.



About these Principles

These Principles were developed through a collaborative process led by Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APO NT), Strong Aboriginal Families, Together (SAFT), National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, ACOSS and NTCOSS, with input from a forum in February 2013 that brought together twenty seven non-Aboriginal NGOs with Aboriginal peak organisations. For further information see <http://www.apont.org.au>