

South Australia and Northern Territory

## **OUTBACK PRIDE**

*Outback Pride* is an ambitious programme designed to promote and expand the Australian native food industry. *Outback Pride* is also a wonderful tribute to how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can work together in successful enterprise ventures. 15 Indigenous communities within South Australia and the Northern Territory are actively involved in the project, growing produce which is subsequently manufactured into 42 different retail products. The project uses the agriculture of Australian bush foods to create employment, income and improve health within rural and remote communities.

### **The Story So Far...**

*Outback Pride* was developed as an enterprise to enable Indigenous communities to benefit from the opportunities in the Australian native food industry. In 1998, Mike and Gayle Quarmby from Reedy Creek Nursery in Kingston, south west South Australia made a commitment to the development and facilitation of the initiative. The development demanded many kilometres of travel by the Quarmbys, collecting seeds and plants, sharing information and building relationships with local Indigenous communities.

Mike and Gayle Quarmby have a long, deep seeded respect for Indigenous people and their culture. Gayle's father, Rex Battarbee, was passionate about assisting Indigenous communities in achieving self sufficiency. He fostered the talent of Indigenous artists such as Albert Namatjira and founded the Hermannsburg watercolour movement. When Mike and Gayle's son Daniel passed away in 1998, the Quarmby's made a commitment to developing *Outback Pride*. The Quarmby's wanted to develop a programme with Indigenous communities that provided them with economic benefit, sustained knowledge of the land and its produce, and

## **Exploring the Future Through Enterprise – Indigenous Australians Embarking on the Enterprise Journey**

importantly, provided employment options to Indigenous young people. The project formally commenced in 2001.

The joint venture simply involves Indigenous groups and communities establishing their own bush plots with seedlings provided by Reedy Creek Nursery. Communities grow and harvest the native foods which are purchased back by the Quarmby's for processing, marketing and distribution.

Using traditional knowledge, plants appropriate to the region are selected to be propagated and returned to communities to be grown. Selection of specific species for each community is made according to certain criteria including local Indigenous species, marketability, climatic factors, transport and skills base. All plants grown within communities are Indigenous to that area, which has two key benefits. Firstly, people within the specific community are already familiar with the growing and harvesting of these products. Training is reduced as people are continuing the tradition of harvesting plants that have been known to their local community for thousands of years. Secondly, as species planted are relevant to the physical and environmental aspects of a specific area, there is little need for additional irrigation. A plot of 15, 000 plants may only require the same amount of water as used by one domestic household per year. Also, the hardiness of many Australian plants means that grey water can also be used for watering.

More than 200,000 bush food plants, consisting of 25 different species are now being cultivated within participating communities. Communities are able to own and create enterprises. They utilise CDEP labour and incorporate TAFE training. The size of plots and number of species harvested depends on the vision and commitment of communities. Plants are selected that will provide crop output within one growing season, providing produce and income for communities soon after the project commences. Where possible, a broad base of species is grown to allow for ongoing diversification of production in the long term.

## **Exploring the Future Through Enterprise – Indigenous Australians Embarking on the Enterprise Journey**

A wide range of diverse Indigenous groups and communities are currently involved in the project, including:

- Tangglun Piltengi Yunti – Murray Bridge;
- Meningie CDEP;
- Bookyana – Port Victoria;
- Burrendies – Mt Gambier;
- Nepabunna – North Flinders;
- Myrtle Springs – North Flinders;
- Dinahline – Ceduna;
- Tangentyere Council – Alice Springs;
- Transitional Accommodation Facility – Ceduna;
- Kooniba – Ceduna;
- Yappala – Flinders;
- Mimili CDEP – Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands;
- Warrena, NSW; and
- Adelaide CDEP.

The project has been designed as a stepping stone for enterprise development in a relatively low financial risk, low cost area. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been formed between each community and Reedy Creek Nursery which guarantees continued mentoring and produce purchase for up to five years. The MOU also ensures continued support and development and a continued supply of plants. A commitment has been made through the *Outback Pride* programme to provide plants and research and share intellectual property only with Indigenous communities.

The *Outback Pride* programme guarantees purchase of 100% of all quality produce. The project also provides communities with fresh produce for their own consumption.

## **Exploring the Future Through Enterprise – Indigenous Australians Embarking on the Enterprise Journey**

Gayle Quarmby explains Reedy Creek's relationship with the project - *'it's a very important point that the ownership and the intellectual knowledge of the project is with the communities that we are working with. They must know and feel that it is their knowledge that is driving the project. Mike and I are just bringing our expertise in partnership on an equal footing with the communities that we are working with'*.

Produce is currently value-added by being manufactured into 42 different products, which are subsequently sold to the domestic and overseas market. The produce is brought by restaurants, selected retail outlets and is now being sold in Harrods in London. *Outback Pride* products include such delicacies as –

- kutjera sauce;
- quandong and chilli sauce;
- dessert passion syrup;
- kutjera relish;
- muntries in apple sauce; and
- a wide variety of dried herbs.

*Outback Pride* is evolving with the stated objective of eventual full Indigenous ownership. The original aim saw this goal within five years, although training issues have slowed the project's potential. Mike and Gayle Quarmby are working with Indigenous Business Australia to facilitate improvements to achieve the ownership goal.

The commitment by the Quarmbys' has driven the project. As CDEP National News reported – *'All time and effort put into this project by Mike and Gayle, together with the use of facilities and staff at Reedy Creek Nursery...has fast tracked the development of the project to date'*.

## Critical Issues to Achieving Business Sustainability

The *Outback Pride* programme faces four critical challenges to achieve project sustainability.

### ***Community Ownership and Engagement***

The success of the project is dependent on the motivation, ownership and engagement of the community. Projects are labour intensive and require commitment from the community to have produce planted, harvested and maintained

regularly. Best results have occurred within communities where the community has actively sought involvement following extensive consultation. Mike Quarmby explains ‘...*the project must be entirely wanted by community members, the attitude must be ‘yes we want to do this’. It is not a short term project. In fact we’re looking at maybe... generations before it comes an integral part of the community life’.*

#### **Critical Sustainability Issues**

- Community Ownership and Engagement
- Leadership & Supervision
- Training
- Expansion of Production Levels

### ***Leadership and Supervision***

It is essential that supervisors of the project, whether they are community leaders or CDEP managers, have the leadership capacity to produce practical outcomes. Leaders involved in the project need to be “*hands on*” and be able to motivate community members to achieve production levels.

## **Exploring the Future Through Enterprise – Indigenous Australians Embarking on the Enterprise Journey**

### ***Training***

Training is a critical issue in the development of the *Outback Pride* programme. Wherever possible, *Outback Pride* has formed partnerships with TAFE to facilitate appropriate training, although this has been a slow process that has caused many delays in the expansion of the project.

*Outback Pride* has recently received funding for the expansion of accommodation and training rooms at Reedy Creek in South Australia. This facility will be used in conjunction with TAFE to train in areas such as horticulture and food manufacturing.

### ***Expansion of Production Levels***

Business growth is dependent on the amount of produce cultivated within Indigenous communities. Simply, the more communities can produce, the greater the amount of manufactured goods that can be produced for sale. Currently, the supply of produce is not meeting market demand. An increase in production levels and the expansion of crops under production is a goal for existing and future growing communities. Increased production levels within communities will facilitate a sustainable income that will generate real employment options.

## **For Further Information**

Mike and Gayle Quarmby  
Co-ordinators  
Outback Pride  
Princess Hwy  
Reedy Creek, SA, 5275  
Phone: (08) 8768 7220  
Fax: (08) 8768 7209  
e-mail: [reedycreeknursery@bigpond.com](mailto:reedycreeknursery@bigpond.com)