

**Supplementary
Submission
No 31a**

**INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN
ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES**

Organisation: Indigenous Land Corporation

Date received: 14/04/2016

Merriman Shearing School

Merriman Station, a 16,000 ha sheep property on the outskirts of Brewarrina in North West New South Wales, is the venue for an Indigenous shearing school operated by the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) that trains young Indigenous people for paid jobs in the wool industry.

Merriman Shearing School hosts a three-week pre-vocational course followed by a 13-week practical training programme covering shearing skills, workplace safety, wool handling, animal husbandry, fencing and life skills.

The programmes are underpinned by strong industry partners. Bateman Shearing, an Indigenous shearing contractor, provides training and mentoring and MEGT provides employment services and accredited training for the school. In addition, an agreement with a local grazer ensures a supply of up to 8,000 sheep and an income source to assist in meeting training costs for the school each year.

For the duration of the 16 week course the trainees are expected to work industry hours and are paid wages under the national training award. By the end of their time at Merriman, trainees are expected to be able to shear the industry minimum of 80 sheep per day. In addition, the trainees gain other rural industry skills and complete a nationally accredited *Certificate II in Rural Operations* (Shearing and Wool handling).

During each 16-week school, participants receive the opportunity to attend and compete in shearing and wool handling competitions at agricultural shows and events, both in NSW, and interstate in QLD.

Project Highlights

- **Since 2010, the ILC has successfully delivered two 16 week courses each year.**
- **130 graduates of the Merriman program since 2010.**
- **75% completion rate.**
- **Over 50% of graduates are placed into ongoing employment immediately upon completion.**

Success Factors

- Strong focus on face to face interviews during trainee recruitment (where possible).
- Strong relationships with the wool industry including industry groups, graziers, and shearing contractors
- Experienced training staff with a high level of personal engagement with the training program and active participation in the wool industry.

- Two – three week prevocational course which allows trainees the opportunity to sample life at Merriman.
- Creation of an enjoyable living, working, and learning environment.
- Strong support from local government and the local community.
- Merriman Shearing School website to provide information to trainees and other stakeholders and to facilitate trainee applications.

Major Challenges

- A training model that produces successful outcomes but no longer fits Commonwealth employment and training funding models.
- Drought impacts on post-completion employment placements and on sheep availability for training.
- Maintaining contact with trainees post-completion to track employment outcomes.

Merriman School – Annual Budget (2 schools)

Expenditure	Calculation	Total (GST excl)
Trainees wages	30 x \$ 12,918	\$ 387,540
Annual leave	30 x \$ 993.70	\$ 29,812
Training Team	5 people	\$ 291,384
Training cost misc' (supplies, vehicle)		\$ 40,000
Electricity, Misc costs		\$ 12,264
Food		\$ 51,000
Total Annual Cost		\$ 812,000

ILC Funding (43.4%)	Calculation	Total (GST excl)
Program funding plus income offsets generated from agistment and shearing activities on property	\$11,730 x 30 (flat per participant ILC investment)	\$ 351,920
Sub-Total		\$ 351,920
Other (13.2%)	Calculation	Total (GST excl)
Australian Wool Innovation		\$ 60,000
Food Re-imburement	(\$122pp x 15 x 13wks)x 2	\$ 47,580
Sub-Total		\$ 107,580
PM&C Funding (43.4%) (Predominately Outcome Based Only)	Calculation	Total (GST excl)
Previous PM&C Funding (JLEP Funding Agreement)	\$11,750 x 30	\$352,500
Sub-Total		\$ 352,500
TOTAL		\$ 812,000