



Painting "Silver Perch" by Peggy Rabbit

Murri Network Project News

a project approved for funding under the Australian Government Jobs Fund - Get Communities Working

Welcome to our second edition of Murri Network Project News. It's been a busy couple of months for the project, with some more great results—in fact **26 jobs have been created so far!** The Murri Network Project is a partnership between the Burnett Inland Economic Development Organisation (BIEDO), Silver Lining, Bunya Wakka Wakka Cultural Heritage Organisation, Tarong Energy and the Indigenous Knowledge Centre at Cherbourg State School. It is funded through the Federal Government's "Jobs Fund" and aims to ensure indigenous people in the South Burnett have the skills and confidence to enter and remain in professional employment and/or niche self-employment. It also aims to better prepare regional companies and businesses to engage with, and retain indigenous employees and contractors. The initial program will run for 15 months, but a key intention is to make it sustainable. For further information, please contact Project Coordinator Ray Wilton on 4164 2379, or call BIEDO on 4169 7851.

What have our NRM teams been up to!

One component of the Murri Network project is training for people keen to work in the field of natural resource management. Sixteen people will go through the program based at the Silver Lining Foundation. Their work focuses on rural operations such as fencing, weed control and work in the nursery with the ultimate goal of finding full-time or part-time employment. So far there's been great success! Blake Cowburn is now working full-time at the Tarong Mine and Kingsley Ferris is managing a dairy farm. Three more are working for Silver Lining as "Weed Warriors" and have secured their first spraying contract with Tarong Energy.



Above: The guys proudly show off the ute which will be used by the "Weed Warriors". It's been fully kitted out with all the equipment to help them secure weed spraying contracts.



Above: The team layed a concrete slab for the nursery. They are helping Silver Lining Nursery Manager, Han van Beek (below with William Williamson) propagate thousands of seedlings including ironbarks, lillys, bottle trees and paper barks. 20,000 of the seedlings are already sold.

Danny Hoogstraten, Manager for Silver Lining's Ironbark Ridge Services, says 13 of the guys also completed a three day course with Private Forestry Southern Qld. "They learnt how to identify different tree species and crown development," he said. "Following the course they've been treating 150 hectares on our Silver Lining property at Wondai as part of the Re-Veg Net program. The guys also have a contract to work on Ergon's property at "Ravensbourne" near Crows Nest starting this month. The team will camp a week at a time, travelling home for weekends off," he said.

The goal of the Murri Network Project is to create long term sustainable jobs that will continue long after the project is finished. The target for jobs and businesses is 47 in this financial year.

At left: Alfie Fisher (left) and Victor Watcho, both of Cherbourg, are two of the trainees who began with Silver Lining in August. When we caught up with them, they were working with a team undertaking a private fencing contract. While Alfie has had previous experience such as tordoning and working at the emu farm, this is Victor's first experience with rural operations. He said he's enjoying it, learning new skills such as welding, brushcutting, fencing and spraying.



The Micro-Enterprise initiative

A core aspect of the Murri Network Project is helping indigenous people to achieve self employment through “micro-enterprises”. In late September, a meeting was held with key stakeholders to discuss this part of the Murri Network project. It was also a chance for everyone to meet Jenni Chew, a consultant who’ll be bringing a unique “entrepreneurship” program to the region as part of the project. Jenni’s program will be trialled in Cherbourg State School and Murgon State High School and its hoped will eventually be rolled out to more schools across the region. It will involve “walking alongside” young people to encourage them learn how to think in an entrepreneurial way. The program helps them generate a business idea, set it up and then trial a business start up. In some cases, these small businesses start generating cash flows and provide an excellent business experience for young people. In our next newsletter issue, we’ll bring you more details on the program and how you can be involved.



Above: At the meeting to discuss the upcoming entrepreneurship program were from l to r Linda Silburn (CEO of BIEDO), Robert Barton (Edgeware Indigenous), Phil Harding (SBRC), Zona Hussey-Smith (Wide Bay Burnett Indigenous Enterprise Officer), Ray Wilton (Murri Network Project Coordinator), Jenni Chew (consultant providing the entrepreneur program) and Greg Smith (Principal Murgon SHS). Also at the meeting were Val Sapin (Consultant and BIEDO Business Pilot) and Peter Sansby (Principal Cherbourg SS)

Murri Network to trial first ever Micro-Loan and Micro-Savings in Queensland

The Murri Network project will help trial a unique program offering small, no-interest loans to help indigenous people start or grow a micro-business. It will be the first of its type in Queensland and one of only six other pilots in Australia. The “Murri Network Micro-Loan and Micro-Savings” project is currently being formulated by BIEDO in conjunction with the community. Linda Silburn, CEO of BIEDO says there’s still a lot of consultation to occur before the program begins, but is excited the program will offer a real chance for indigenous people to who are keen to start their own micro-business.

“This type of program has been running for decades in many countries overseas with great results. Our **Micro-Loan** project will offer small loans up to a maximum of \$2,000. Applicants will have to show a capacity to pay the loan back within two years. This ensures the money remains available for others in their community. The idea is to maintain a healthy Micro-Loan pool for many years as the pool of funds keeps replenishing itself. A long term Micro-Loan pool can continue to support individual business start-ups, as well as community business ventures where a percentage of profit is re-invested back into community projects,” she said.

The second part of the project will be the **Micro-Savings** program which will allow small groups of 3-8 people to set aside money in a communal savings account. The group will agree on a set amount of money to be deposited and how frequently this occurs. Then, at certain agreed times, one member from the group will be able to draw down on the savings to help purchase items they need to kick-start or grow their small business. “This is another grassroots way for people to create seed capital for businesses,” Linda said. “The Micro-Savings project will run alongside the Micro-Loan project. Both rely on a high level of trust and reciprocity. These systems have worked really well, with an amazingly low default rate, for more than 40yrs in other countries. They’ve made an incredible difference to local economies and to the ability of individuals to become financially independent,” she said.

BIEDO Business Pilot and consultant, Val Sapin, will be helping to formulate the Micro-Loan and Micro-Savings programs. Val has many years experience in this field and has worked on similar project in both South East Asia and Africa.

Community discussion and consultation about the Micro-Loan and Micro-Savings program will be taking place throughout October and November. It is hoped the program will begin in late 2010 or early in 2011. If you are interested in providing feedback or being involved in the community discussions, please contact BIEDO on 4169 7851. More on this topic next issue!



Australian Government

The Dept of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations, along with the Dept of Environment, Water, Heritage & the Arts and the Dept of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Local Government collectively administers the Australian Government Jobs Fund. The Jobs Fund is a discretionary grants program which provides funding to support the delivery of innovative, social or infrastructure projects which create jobs and employment opportunities in communities affected by economic downturn. Under the Get Communities Working stream, grants are available for self sustaining projects which create and provide activities and services to improve community amenity.

Murri Network Partners...



The Winifred Fisher Indigenous Knowledge Centre



Nanango, Kingaroy, Wondai, Preston, Murgon, Cherbourg, Goomeri, Kilkivan, Biggenden, Mt Perry, Gayndah, Mundubbera, Eidsvold, Monto, and towns & districts