

**Philanthropy for
Indigenous Causes:
More than a ‘cup of tea’?**

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Sue Smyllie and Wendy Scaife

**The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies
Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane, Australia**

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GPO Box 2434
BRISBANE QLD 4001
Phone: 07 3138 1020
Fax: 07 3138 9131
Email: cpns@qut.edu.au
<http://cpns.bus.qut.edu.au>
CRICOS code: 00213J



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1.0 Executive Summary

In the face of improved First Nation outcomes in many western nations, Australia is still dealing with a seemingly intractable gap between the quality of life of its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of working do not sit easily in the highly structured and time limited programs often typical of bureaucratic funding systems. The philanthropic community espouses a greater tolerance for risk than many government programs and often supports the innovative approaches necessary to address 'wicked problems'.

However, philanthropy in Australia provides a smaller proportion of funding for community projects than is the case in other countries and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes have been significantly under-represented as recipients. There is very little Australian research in this important field. This paper reports on a qualitative study aimed at understanding the issues affecting the decisions and actions of grantmaking organisations and individuals who wish to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes in the current Australian context.

The study revealed a dynamic system. In 2005, the philanthropic sector and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector were emerging from a largely independent existence. Through a process of 'learning by doing' a new way of working has begun to take shape, one that has begun to explore a postcolonial stance by challenging the unequal relations of power, seen when dominant groups assume control over meanings and social structures.

The interaction between this Indigenous cause - philanthropy system and the wider geo-political landscape is limited by a lack of capacity, a degree of distrust, uncertainty and a lack of clarity of the respective roles of philanthropy and government and how they might best work together to improve wellbeing in the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The government, perceived as output driven, inflexible and dogmatic - 'a cup of tea mob' - by participants, is only relatively recently engaged in collaborative, cross-sector efforts and this at local rather than strategic levels.

From the point of view of contextual impacts, success criteria, barriers, structural imposts and emotional involvement, the practical experience in grantmaking for Indigenous causes of participants in this study reflects that found elsewhere. Particulars coincide with those identified in the academic literature and informed comment from grantseekers and grantmakers in those countries with similar history and cultural demographics such as the United States, New Zealand and Canada – a knowledge base the Australian sector acknowledges in this study that it rarely accesses.

An encouraging picture of the state of philanthropy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes in Australia has been painted by participants in this study. However, the focus of many grantmakers on organisational rather than community capacity and the potentially elitist emphasis on established relationships continues to hamper Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to philanthropic funding in Australia. This belies the emphatic cry of 'risk taker and innovator' from the sector. Further, if the strategic changes currently visible in the sector are unsupported by a depth of policy and a proactive transfer and distribution of skill and knowledge, they may be unsustainable. The philanthropic sector's capacity to impact Indigenous causes is patchy and by no means formally measured. There is no assessment from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective. More encouraging is the goodwill across the sector and the evident courage to improve in what is a different grantmaking environment for most.

2.0 Background

The world's 350 million Indigenous people are spread across 90 countries and contribute largely to the globe's cultural and environmental diversity with some 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity to be found within their lands (International Funders for Indigenous Peoples 2006; Funders Network 2006). Though different in so many ways, Indigenous peoples share entrenched disadvantage expressed in political, economic and social contexts worldwide.

Of the total Australian population, 2.5% identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). While many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians shared in the prosperity of the 90s and the New Millennium, a concerning proportion has worse than average health, education and economic status. The disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia is expressed particularly in life expectancy. While significant gains in life expectancy by Native Americans and Canadians and the Maori have been made in recent decades, Australia's advances have been much more modest. The difference in life expectancy between Indigenous people and other citizens is around seven years in North America and New Zealand. In Australia, the gap is almost two and a half times as great (Australian Government Productivity Commission & Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2007).

The persistence of these and other negative outcomes has brought about a momentous shift in the attitudes of the Australian community to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues (Calma, unpublished; Davis, 2008). A national apology by the incumbent Prime Minister (Rudd, 2008) is supported by a new raft of policy designed to support transformative action (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2008). To articulate their intent, Australians also added their voice to the 144 signatory countries to the United Nations Declaration the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2008) in 2009.

Is philanthropy improving the scene? Internationally, Indigenous causes are described as badly neglected in philanthropic terms (Environmental Grant-makers Association [EGA], 2003, Horton Smith, 2000). Vanderpuye (2003) comments that funding trends are dismal for marginalized groups and grassroots community causes. Arguably, Indigenous causes mostly fit within both categories. Vanderpuye (2003) highlights that in the US foundation giving scene, 'civil rights and social action, including human rights accounts for only 1.3% of Foundation giving and grassroots groups are specifically short-changed in attracting general operating support'. Less than one-twentieth of one percent of funding from US nonprofit foundations is earmarked for Indigenous development efforts (EGA, 2003).

Over three billion AUD, (a little over 1% of the total budget) will be spent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes by the Australian Federal government in the 2009-10 financial year (Australian Government, 2009). Philanthropy's acceptance of some responsibility in improving the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is voiced consistently across the sector (Addis and Brown, 2008). However, just as Indigenous causes attract very little in terms of foundation funding internationally (Horton Smith, 2000), the philanthropic financial resources that underpin the established goodwill in Australia are limited. Compared with the 15% in a 38 country average identified by Salamon, non-profit organisations in Australia only receive 10% of their funding from philanthropic sources (Salamon, 2008). Of the estimated 600,000 nonprofit organisations in Australia, less than 1% are involved in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Hunt and Schwab, 2007; Lyons and Hocking, 2000). There has not been a study of philanthropic foundation input in financial terms in Australia. However, of the estimated 2,000 such foundations in Australia, only 61 are identified as focusing on or accepting applications for Indigenous projects by Australia's national peak body for philanthropy (Philanthropy Australia, 2010).

Growth in giving in Australia has far exceeded inflation (McGregor-Lowndes and Newton, 2009). Recent positive changes to the Australian taxation system have supported philanthropy (McGregor-Lowndes and Newton, 2006) and increasing interest in the financial advisers industry in supporting client financial decision making around a philanthropic commitment has been empirically noted (Madden, 2009). However, tax and charitable donor status do not provide stable incentives for philanthropic investment in remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia (Hill et al., 2008).

Academic literature on philanthropy to Indigenous causes is rare and does not exist as a standalone body of knowledge. The ubiquitous contextualising of Indigenous issues within a social justice framework would indicate that the social change philanthropy literature could be used to inform theoretical and practical investigations into philanthropy for Indigenous causes. Social change philanthropy emerged early in the 20th century. Prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s in the civil rights and peace movements, social change philanthropy has focused on community development and organisational capacity building more than the program funding common in mainstream grant-making. Emphasis is on systemic, structural change as critical to answering real causes rather than just the symptoms of social ills.

Vanderpuye (2003) differentiates social change philanthropists in that they ‘seek the empowerment of marginalized and resource-poor communities’. Intrinsic to this philanthropic philosophy is measuring success by program outcomes and by the *process* through which funding is given. Grant-makers Without Borders (2006) identify value-based practices inherent in social change philanthropy that respect the wisdom and experience of local communities and prioritise service to those most acutely affected by injustice. In the most vaunted forms of social change philanthropy, decisions about funds use are strongly guided or owned by the end users or their representatives (see for example Vanderpuye’s 2003 model on the interactive dynamics of social change philanthropy, Silver, 1998 and Civicus, 2001). Similarly, Ostrander (1995) highlights that true social change philanthropists not only give away money, but also the power to decide where it goes. Ostrander speaks of democratised philanthropy, participatory processes rather than those defined by apposing recipients and beneficiaries. Bailin (2003) challenges foundation funding to ‘build the field, not just the organisation’.

A 2001 Canadian Civicus symposium on social change philanthropy concluded that while the concept was invaluable, no ‘cookie cutter approach would work’ because each culture and context differs, needing local development, adaptation and experimentation. More recently, an increasing but still marginal trend within social justice philanthropy has been towards a human rights based approach (Foundation Centre, 2009). A human rights approach is seen as more easily conceptualising and supporting cross-sector thinking and organizing than the civil rights approach.

The concepts and themes that emerge from the social change philanthropy literature find their mirror image in the body of knowledge about the contextual issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and the practice frameworks needed to address them. Australian studies (Hunt, 2008, Taylor, 2008) reflect the global knowledge (United Nations, 2008) that has identified the social injustice, disadvantage and social exclusion impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and supports capacity building and community development approaches in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arena.

Against this backdrop of sprawling need, dawning community awareness, improving economic policy support and a sector wide social change discourse, what role is philanthropy playing? How has best practice in supporting Indigenous causes been applied in Australia and what themes emerge from philanthropic activists here that reinforce, challenge or extend world practice in this area?

This paper reports on a qualitative study aimed at understanding the issues affecting the decisions and actions of philanthropic/grantmaking organisations and individuals who wish to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes in the current Australian context. The aims were to build on the limited research in this arena, add to the future research agenda and contribute to practice and policy

insights for Australia and beyond. This study has not set out to include the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about philanthropy that supports their priorities. Its scope is, at this stage, the experiences of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grantmakers. However, it is clearly imperative that future studies research the picture from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewpoint and this need is reinforced as part of the research agenda.

3.0 Methodology

The ethics-approved study was conducted in 2009 and was based on preliminary findings from a 2005 study.

3.1 2005 Study

The initial study involved the purposeful selection of a focus group of grantmakers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes and in-depth interviews with three experienced practitioners in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander funding. The 1.5 hour focus group included a mix of family, Prescribed Private Fund (now Prescribed Ancillary Funds) and corporate foundation members of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grantmakers affinity group associated with Philanthropy Australia. Philanthropy Australia, the national peak body for philanthropy, is a not-for-profit membership organisation. The in-depth interviews were with key informants from other government, philanthropic and corporate sources. Participants represented a range of foundation types, gender, age and experience levels. The targeted expert informants were approached to pinpoint information specific to the small population of grantmakers involved in this area. Some grantmakers present had been involved in the area for more than a decade while others had undertaken only a single project to date. The group mostly knew one another well and some had collaborated on grantmaking to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes.

Both the interviews and focus groups were based on a semi-structured set of questions developed for this aspect of the Giving Australia study (Lyons *et al.*, 2006) but the main approach was to allow participants to identify important issues from their perspective. Analysis of the focus group and interview data to determine commonalities in data patterns was undertaken by the two key qualitative researchers. The researchers debriefed immediately following the session to consult on key themes and implications. This top of mind analysis was then further refined by listening to the tape and adding substance and example quotes to illustrate various points. A similar dual person analysis process was adopted for the interviews although the actual interviews were conducted by a single researcher.

The traditional advantage of focus group method of collecting data from a range of people in a short time was achieved as was the ability of group members to hear and challenge diverse views. As Beyea and Nicoll (2000) say, 'by bringing the right individuals together to discuss a certain topic, a great deal of information can be obtained easily and quickly'. It is said that in qualitative research, 'what counts is what cannot be counted and that means asking questions that access feelings' (Henderson, 2005).

As outlined above, although a semi-structured question set was developed prior to guide the focus group flow and access grantmaker attitudes most of the questions were answered organically as the group progressed. This was partly due to the existing trust and rapport amongst most group members and their prior knowledge of one another's programs. The follow-up use of in-depth interviews with experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander funders from a range of sources extended the focus group data and offered an opportunity to reinforce and challenge its themes for verification.

3.2 2009 Study

The second study involved 19 indepth interviews with participants invited through Philanthropy Australia. The interview schedule adopted a semi-structured format where the questions ranged from eliciting an opinion about the current state of the grantmaking system in Australia to personal experiences and information about grantmaking processes in the organisation to which they belonged, learning issues and knowledge flow. Partial transcripts (interviewer voice excluded) were generated from audio recordings. Data was coded and themed using qualitative data analysis software QSR NVivo version 8.

Participants included representatives from grantmakers distributing less than \$100,000 each year to those making millions of dollars of grant funds available annually. Foundations, Trusts, Prescribed Private Funds and/or individual philanthropists from four of the eight Australian States and Territories were involved. Some participants represented grantmaking institutions that had only recently begun funding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes; others have been funding these needs for many decades.

3.3 Analytical Method

The approach to analysing the 2009 study's empirical data was strongly influenced by the approach used by Wade (2009) who adapts Strauss and Corbin's (1998) techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. The three-stage process works from the comparison, conceptualisation and categorisation of raw data, followed by the linkage of researcher specified categories that seek to explain related ideas, through to selective coding, where major categories are integrated and refined to create a larger theoretical scheme.

Soon after each interview was conducted, the digital recordings were transcribed into an electronic text file. Complete verbatim transcripts of interviews were not generated. Consequently data reduction occurred before the formal coding process had begun. The opportunity to reflect on experience, which interviews present, creates a 'reality' which may subsequently be altered by the experience. Participants had the opportunity to critique preliminary data analysis (Lee and Roth, 2004).

Data was transcribed into a table under headings which corresponded to the questions used to guide the structured dialogue at interview (see attachment 1). As interviewees often wandered across subjects, the data progressed as per the interview, rather than being assigned to what might be the appropriate question box. Before analysis, the table was converted to text with the questions removed, identifying headers were removed and each record given a number to preserve confidentiality. The text files were then entered into a QSR NVivo8 database, which was the technology used in this study to store, manage, code and scrutinise the empirical data (see note)¹.

¹ **These notes are reproduced from Wade, 2009.** 'QSR NVivo is a software tool for managing qualitative data and facilitating its coding and analysis. Details of the software can be obtained from <http://www.qsrinternational.com>. See also Richards(1999) or Gibbs (2002). In NVivo, a set is a named collection of documents or nodes that NVivo handles as a unity for the purpose of data management and analysis (Richards, 1999, p. 213). As sets are virtual collections, consisting of pointers to the actual documents and nodes, it is possible for one document or node to be a member of many sets. A node is an object that represents an idea, theory, dimension, characteristic etc of the data (Richards, 1999, p. 210).'

3.4 The data coding process and its resulting themes

Analysis of the study's empirical data began with an open coding phase, involving an intensive, iterative search for concepts that suggested themselves from the text. As each concept was identified the passages of text were coded to a unique identifier, expressed in the QSR NVivo software as a 'node'. These nodes were progressively augmented, refined and redefined as the study progressed. Coding passages to nodes ensured that each idea was understood and analysed in context.

Table 1 lists the 44 individual nodes, resulting from the first-stage, iterative, coding process.

Idea	Idea	Idea	Idea
Community values	Funding processes	Relationships	Personal research resources
Contextual complexity	Evaluation of programs	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community skills	
Global financial crisis	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership	Personal experiences
Government	Cultural issues	Philanthropic community skills and knowledge	networks
Role of philanthropy	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander politics	Philanthropic leadership	Funding amount
Innovation	Partnerships	Organisational leadership	Marketing
What's different about Australia	Time lines	Australian international learning	Emotional involvement
Community capacity	Grant size	Learning from case studies	Community big picture
Leadership	Grantseeker attributes	mentoring	Learning by doing
Learning	Organisation big picture	training	The importance of the individual
Transferability	Outcome priority areas	Australian contribution to international practice	Ways of working

Table 1: First stage coding

The second stage of coding identified a set of 15 categories into which these concepts could plausibly be collected (see below).

1. Community attitudes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes
2. Participants beliefs about the complexity of factors impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes including history, culture etc
3. Issues related to the global financial crisis
4. The roles and responsibilities of government
5. The roles and responsibilities of the philanthropic sector
6. The attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes of the philanthropic sector as a whole
7. Attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes of individual philanthropic organisations
8. The financial resources available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes across the sector

9. Issues that affect and drive the grantmaking processes including priorities, formal and informal eligibility criteria, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement, the impact of cultural issues and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander politics, evaluation, partnerships, time lines and grant sizes
10. The role of the individual in grantmaking to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes including emotional involvement, leadership, networks and the importance of relationships
11. The type and levels of skills and knowledge in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
12. The type and level of skill and knowledge in the philanthropic sector
13. Interactive transfer of skill and knowledge including formal and informal mentoring, formal training and learning by doing
14. Resource knowledge transfer such as reviewing case studies, evaluations and national and international research and narrative and
15. Knowledge transfer by transferring lessons between contexts or colonisation.

The third stage of coding was aimed at associating these various categories with themes. Data analysis was conducted by a researcher whose theoretical interests include complex adaptive systems and whose practical expertise lies in community development. Complex adaptive systems theory recognises semi-autonomous agents impacting on and being impacted by each other and their environment. The themes and the linkages between them were interpreted through the lens of complex adaptive systems to make sense of emergent themes within a known theoretical base (Wade, 2009).

Three major themes emerged from the third stage of data analysis i.e. community wide factors, funding system factors and human factor(s). Community wide factors are elements that are perceived to have an impact on philanthropy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes, which are outside or under limited control of either the grantmakers or grantseekers. These factors include community values, environmental and social factors unique to the Australian context, the practical roles of government and the philanthropic sector in addressing community issues and the global financial crisis.

Funding system factors are structural elements that relate to the design and implementation of the philanthropic funding system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes and that affect either grantseekers and / or grantmakers. These factors include philanthropic sector wide and organisational attitudes and beliefs relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes and effective granting models, funding infrastructure [including grantmaker priority areas, funding levels, decision making processes and application processes] and grantseeker attributes.

Human factors are those elements that relate to the agency of individuals in both the philanthropic and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the infrastructure which supports this agency. (In other words, things that determine an individual's ability to cause change and the relationships and resources that support their actions.) These factors include the importance of the individual (including leadership, attitudes and emotional involvement), relationships and networks, skills and knowledge (including skill and knowledge transfer processes). Participants identified a wide range of methods by which knowledge and skills are transferred between individuals, organisations and sectors. Methods could be described as:

- Interactive (where exchange occurs through person to person contact such as formal training, formal mentoring, informal mentoring, learning by doing and personal experience)
- Learning by the lighthouse (where exchange occurs through reports such as case studies, program evaluations, international narratives, marketing, literature searches and resource development)

- Colonisation (where exchange occurs when programs are transferred from one setting to another)

3.5 Comparing 2005 and 2009

While the synthesis of qualitative studies is an emergent and contested field, there is significant scholarly acceptance that contrasting, comparing and aggregating data across studies is possible and indeed useful (Cochrane Collaboration, 2009). For these studies, the structured dialogue questions in 2009 were based on the results of the 2005 study. The data generated covered basically the same issues at the second time point with the added dimension of exploring change over time. Although some of the informants were different, many had been active in either the philanthropic sector and/ or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cause area over the time period in question. Of the three research analysts involved in 2005 and 2009, one was common to both studies. It seems reasonable to suggest that the comparison and contrasting of these studies would be valid.

4.0 Results

4.1 Reflections of Community Wide Factors

In 2009, participants painted a picture of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cause philanthropy impacted by a vast and inhospitable geography and a complex historical and distrustful relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. Some believed this to be unique in the world. Many participants said that the geography had transcended its 'space' and become the hallmark of a community belief that "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" and "rural and remote" were synonymous. This was despite a clear majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in urban areas.

The negative impressions of community empathy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues expressed by participants in 2005 were reflected by some in 2009.

In 2009 however, for some, the political agenda was seen to have evolved, bringing with it a general increase in awareness, goodwill and empathy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues within the wider community – even to the point of it becoming a 'trendy' issue.

For others, there had been no practical outcome for all the expressions of goodwill and symbolic events.

While in 2005, the negative community values base was laid at the feet of an unsympathetic media, by 2009 opinion was divided as to the real impact of the media in the Australian scene with some saying there was no impact and others still attributing a negative one.

The global financial crisis, which had begun in 2008, was having an impact on grantmaking in Australia in 2009.

While some participants deemed the effect of the crisis to be less severe in Australia compared to the United States for example, many participants reported decreasing incomes, established forward commitments and consequently decreased 'new' money.

For some, the expected decrease in resources was anticipated to flow through in the next financial year. Others laid the shrinking funding pool at the feet of a local natural disaster and policy reviews.

[People think you] may as well throw money out the window [as fund in this area]- 2005

There is zero interest in good Indigenous stories.- 2005

I think that since the Apology, it's become front of mind for most Australians. There is a quiet confidence growing, the more good stories we hear...[there was] definitely a jump in interest [donors ticking the 'to fund Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projects' box]. 2009

Our income for next year is down 30-50%. We know a few trusts and foundations who've cancelled rounds for next year. 2009

Some foundations have made forward commitments so there is little new money. It will probably have a detrimental effect on Indigenous causes. 2009

There hasn't really been an impact - this year we are expecting outcomes to be similar..next year a drop then a flattening...so we are expecting a softening in the income...we don't see it as a major concern. 2009

We've seen a reduction in donation across the board for the last year. A particular dip around the bush fires, 2-3 months of lower donations. 2009

4.2 Reflections of Funding System Factors

The comparative roles of government and philanthropy in addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues were discussed in 2005. Government programs were perceived as fragmented, silo-like, risk-averse and off-putting to those who needed help the most. While still evident in some quarters, this approach had begun to soften in 2009, with some participants displaying a growing awareness of the difficulties government programs had faced and the effort that had been applied.

By 2009, the 2005 view that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes were a government problem had evolved into a complimentary view for many. That is, while not wishing to fund things like large health and education programs - not 'letting them off the hook' - some participants saw a need for philanthropy to work in the spaces, leveraging funding and others had progressed to building partnerships with government at a local level - although strategic political alliances were not on the horizon.

The role of philanthropy in addressing community issues was consistently described as that of risk taker and innovator. By 2009, some participants had begun to identify a strategic change agent role for philanthropy and an expectation that success would mean government funding in the long run.

While others said 'you don't want the government involved in everything'.

In 2005, many participants had identified an attitudinal preference for philanthropy to play a social change role and were prepared for a long term commitment over a

symptomatic or alms approach. By 2009, this idea had become more of a reality with some participants reporting changes in the strategic direction of their granting programs towards sustainable, capacity building efforts.

For some participants this strategic evolution had become threatened by the global financial crisis. The decreased availability of funding was expected to create an increased competitiveness in the grantseeking environment which may express itself in an expectation for high quality applications, evaluation, a focus on existing programs and

The government is a 'cup of tea mob'. They come in have a cup of tea ask you a few questions go way and do what they were going to do anyway. Then it would fail because it wasn't locally driven - then blame the 'blackfellas'. That's an accurate way - of [describing] what's happened over the last 200 years. 2009

I do think the federal government is working hard. 2009

I think government has changed fundamentally in that respect [working with communities]. 2009

That relationship between government and philanthropy is a very interesting space and a lot more work could be done on that. It's hard to know whose going to do the work. You have all these little trusts and foundations with 1 or 2 staff - and that type of work takes a lot of time - relationships building and building partnerships. There's a lot of work to be done in there really. 2009

Philanthropy funding it - by evaluating - it does work... it is significant - and then leaning on the government to take over. 2009

Now- things like capacity building-we are very clear now what's a capacity building grant and what's a program grant-we spend a lot of time thinking about and doing capacity building -In fact we used to have a requirement that the amount of overhead would be as small as possible - that will be removed. It no longer reflects our thinking. 2009

Our strategy is not to fund any new projects for a year but will work intensely with the organisations we are already working with.

There will be greater competition for limited funds. The quality of programs will be under greater scrutiny and comparison. The [Indigenous] ones may not have the detail compared with others so they may suffer from that. 2009

a possible skew towards welfare and crisis need.

For others a clear decision (based on organisational values) had been made to maintain their strategic intent.

Most participants identified an attitude of goodwill and interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes across the sector though some said this was not followed up in practice.

Lack of confidence and skills inhibited entry into what was perceived as the complex area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cause grantmaking in 2005. While still in evidence to an extent, it had evolved for many to more of a 'learn as we go' approach in 2009.

Information concerning sector attitudes to effective granting models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes was available in 2005 and 2009. In 2005, important processional concepts including the need for cultural sensitivity, the active participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives in decision making and the inappropriateness of business-like or conventional assessment in this complex, multi-cultural environment were highlighted. Flexible, time-rich approaches were understood to deliver better outcomes.

When choosing what to fund, grantmakers looked for quality outcomes and quality grantseekers. As there are many critical needs, participants tried to fund across a wide spectrum, though Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health was seen as especially important. Grantmakers identified four priority interventions to effect sustainable change. These were: developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, supporting the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as change agents, developing employment skills and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. Additionally, infrastructure funding was reported as an almost mandatory form of capacity building and potentially a problem for funders whose Trust guidelines precluded it.

Quality grantseeking required demonstrated leadership especially organisational skills, experience in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, well prepared and considered applications which included contingency plans, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in decision making and relevant community support for the project team.

These attitudes and preferences were echoed by many participants in 2009. For some participants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in decision-making had evolved to the development of formal roles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on Boards and grantmaking committees and formal advisory processes for application review. For others, informal advisory roles were identified while for some, there was still no involvement in grantmaking decisions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. All participants had spoken about the imperative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement at least at the local level.

We have had the Board look and talk about 'do we preserve and conserve or do we still innovate and create' and the approach has been - we need to be true to our strategy. Yes we may need to meet some more immediate need. We are in a unique position, we can fund for community benefit without any restrictions. We have a higher risk appetite - we still need to fund these things as they wouldn't get funded otherwise. 2009

There's a difference between the theory and the reality. In theory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can apply for most programs and there are some special ones just for them. The reality - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities struggle to access mainstream philanthropy. 2009

You can't be too tight in processes, it takes latitude. 2005

Maybe in 10 years my... funding will bear fruit. 2005

For some, the rich diversity of philanthropic styles, outcome areas and funding levels ensured a greater likelihood of finding a match with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations at varying capacity.

Indeed, the diversity of the sector was clearly reflected in participants' reports of organisational perspectives on what constituted large and small grants and long and short time frames.

Participants reported a range from very small to up to 30% of their funding going to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes. Some participants reported that their funding records were not sufficiently rigorous to be able to identify how much funding went to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes.

Grant sizes ranged from very small (<\$1000) to very large (\$60million). Again, the perception of what was large and what was small varied considerably. Some participants reported strategically leveraging their available funding by forming partnerships with government and collaborative funding initiatives with other philanthropic organisations. In some cases, these collaborative ventures had been either abandoned or enhanced by the change in financial conditions occasioned by the global financial crisis.

In 2009, for some participants, the expectation of quality applications and high capacity organisations had given way to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in grantmaking decisions from needs identification and preparedness to fund capacity building programs.

We need a mix of different styles of funding...if we all went to big grants and... multiyear agreements it would mean that these smaller organisations that are often doing the most innovative work they would never get any of that base seed funding to even get one project up that can then grow into another. 2009

I encourage people to invite me out to where the project was going to take place - sit down and talk about the project and we wrote up the application together. Some of the worst applications have turned out to be the best projects. You're not funding them to be good at writing project applications - you're funding them to be working in their community doing what they do. 2009

While the emphasis on high quality applications had softened for some in 2009, most participants still required grantseeking organisations to have DGR status although one preferred it but did not require it and some said they were prepared to support auspicing arrangements. Many participants said that this requirement was often difficult for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly those not providing services, to achieve.

In terms of outcome priorities, the emphasis on education and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership development identified in 2005 had persisted to 2009. In 2009, only one participant had heard of a 'women as change agents' program though many recognised that it was often the women in communities who played a leading role in program delivery.

4.3 Reflections of the Human Factor(s)

The importance of the skills, knowledge and leadership of individuals in both the philanthropic and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector and the relationships between them were emphasised repeatedly both in 2005 and 2009. At both time points, funding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes was perceived as a personal and relational effort. Getting to know the groups or communities and the people within them, especially the leaders, was seen as vital in order to fund effectively.

Participants repeatedly mentioned relationships as the driving force in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the philanthropic sector and often behind the award of funding.

Different participants said that cross-sector relationship skills were lacking in both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector.

In 2009, grantmakers often spoke in 'passionate' terms and were searching for an answering passion in the grantseeker.

For many, the strategic move towards social change philanthropy and an emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes or capacity building by their philanthropic organisation had been an expression of leadership by an individual.

Perceptions of a lack of governance and management skill in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector and a lack of culturally sensitive community development skills in the philanthropic sector, identified in 2005, had persisted into 2009.

Some participants reported a perceived increase in skill levels in both sectors due to concerted effort by sector leaders. In 2005, grantmakers saw the beginnings of a critical mass of funders who had a leadership role to play in developing the sector. Active champions, proactive communication and high-profile collaborative ventures were seen as important strategies to address the perceived lack of confidence in funding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes, to build on existing goodwill and to overcome the inertia that was hampering effective grantmaking in this important area. By 2009, four to five particular leaders were either self or collectively identified across the philanthropic sector.

You have to assess the person running it.2005

[Funds should] not be siphoned off into some 'whitefella's' organisation 2005

He got introduced through a friend of one of the Directors. Almost all of our projects come through word of mouth from somebody who's known to us. In the smaller philanthropics that's very common. 2009

We tend to fund people (legally and procedurally we fund organisations). If we find someone with an idea that lights us up and promises to make some big transformative change - we fund the person with the heart and soul and the heart connection to what they're doing and the capacity to be able to make it succeed and the passion to make it happen. We fund those Indigenous people who are doing something we can see is going to work. 2009

There was a woman. Every good invention has been done by a woman. It was a personality. A female Board member and me - and she was tough and she just had it and I could ride on her coattails. 2009

They say, 'as a white person I have no idea'. 2005

So many are worried about offending Indigenous people.2005

Some participants recognized their organisations' role as a leader in the philanthropic sector and felt a responsibility to develop sector-wide skills and knowledge through example and active sector capacity building. Some participants were actively engaged in leadership activities such as mentoring others, sharing models and developing collaborative efforts. Most of these participants did not actively promote themselves as leaders but saw their efforts as a way to extend their own programs. In a number of cases, representatives of other philanthropic organisations had sought out assistance from these 'quiet leaders' independently.

4.3.1 Knowledge Transfer Methods

Three types of knowledge transfer methods were identifiable from participants' description across the philanthropy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes system. Methods could be described as:

- Interactive (where exchange occurs through person to person contact such as formal training, formal mentoring, informal mentoring, learning by doing and personal experience)
- Learning by the lighthouse (where exchange occurs through reports such as case studies, program evaluations, international narratives, marketing, literature searches and resource development)
- Colonisation (where exchange occurs when programs are transferred from one setting to another)

Formal training directed towards grant application skills for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, begun by 2005, persisted in 2009 although the recognition of the importance of relationships had superseded this in many instances. Formal training had become much more a two-way process. No participants mentioned standalone formal training for philanthropic sector personnel.

Site visits and cultural exposure 'tours' for philanthropic personnel had begun in 2005. In 2009, many participants said they had begun their learning journey by having a personal experience or interaction with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. This often took the form of a visit to country or a personal 'aha' moment.

Formal mentoring was identified as important at both time points.

In 2005, participants called for increased linkages between established and potential grantmakers. By 2009, informal mentoring was identified most often as the way philanthropists had learned about how to best to go about funding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes. Of particular importance were the network groups. Some participants reported not getting much from meetings

Anyone who hasn't had any form of direct contact is necessarily ignorant. I went through 6 or 7 iterations of feeling. From total helplessness to anger, 'Indigenous people are not helping themselves' - to outrage 'why would you bother when there is so much money they waste'. When I pulled all those onion skins off all that I was left with was a deep compassion - you can't help but want to help.

We've either got to get serious about this or stop pretending. I was going along to the ... group thinking 'I'm completely fraudulent here'. We go about saying we're concerned about reconciliation; actually there are structural barriers that stop us doing it. We either get serious or we stop.

We sometimes need to send in people to back up or train others in the short term. 2005

We can second staff to go and work with an organisation for 6 months - anything from a business continuity plan to mentoring - how to approach other corporates - talking about potential linkages and supporting them in other ways. It's very tailored to what the needs of the organisation are. 2009

while others found them very valuable. As one participant said, the group was only *as knowledgeable as the people who went to it*.

Resource development was still in its infancy in 2009. The Directory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Grantmakers, which had been hoped by some participants in 2005 to offer the solution for increasing awareness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector was by 2009 described as largely forgotten and unused. Some participants said there were: *Too many organisations, too much competition, no real picture about who's doing what and what's working and not -* and called for a resource to gather and display sector learnings.

In 2009, along with developmental application and granting processes, program evaluation was seen by many participants to have evolved to a collaborative model in recent years. Some participants said that the increasing emphasis on evaluating programs was a good way of learning and sharing information not only for their own purposes but with the wider sector as well.

In 2005, the multi-tribal environment and the diversity of languages and cultures within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population were seen as barriers to the automatic translation of programs from area to area. The dangers inherent in colonising or assuming transferability were again identified in 2009. However, some participants preferred to develop models and then to roll that model out to other communities. Some participants said that only parts of models are transferable. Some participants said that each community needs to be involved from the ground up.

In 2009, specific questions about the impact of international research and knowledge of the Australian scene and what Australia may have to teach the rest of the world were asked.

Most participants did not recall using international experience, research or narrative to develop their skills and knowledge about grantmaking to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes. One participant thought this was because people were so overwhelmed with dealing with the 'here and now' that this was only going to further complicate an already complicated issue.

It would be good to say (given that there must be an absolute plethora of Indigenous programs) have a resource - well here are the initiatives dealing with education, health etc. It would be nice to examine them in a format where you didn't have to dig through, or Google your head off. Even just a pooling. One site that had lots of different links, research papers, that would help you decide. 2009

It was - a collaborative effort. They understood from a funding point of view, we needed to be able to measure the outcomes, otherwise the likelihood of recurring funding was greatly...diminished...We worked with them and linked them up with the researchers. [if we gave them the money and asked them to do it themselves] it's not their bread and butter, it's not what they're wanting to do - it really imposes our own needs on their project. 2009

We've supported [a program] that stated in another community and gone to another so we have had good experience with that [Generalisability]. Communities need their own tailored response to address what's appropriate for them. We like to fund programs that do have an idea or a model that you can replicate and pick up the themes and replicate. Even in non-Indigenous programs we do know that the transferability is only going to be at a particular level. There will always be the community's own flavour through it. You can't just pick up one thing from a community and expect it to work. 2009

Not in any formal or orderly way (international input). I think you see the Aboriginal issue is so huge and complex it's just very daunting to bring another element in. 2009

A couple of participants had actively called on international expertise and research to guide the development of their programs.

These participants were often (though not in every case), individuals identified by others as leaders in the sector. Some participants had found visits by international grantmakers useful for sharing information and stimulating discussion and thought.

However, most had not acted on this in practice.

Most participants had felt that Australian practice in this area had little to teach the rest of the world. Some participants felt Australia did not *recognise its own heroes*.

Some programs we fund have a profile internationally. They've got more of a profile internationally rather than locally. 2009

Participants identified the United States and New Zealand as being further advanced in practice. This was thought to be due to longer histories and scale in the case of the US and a more integrated community in New Zealand. Some participants were actively using Australian experience to inform organisational practice across the world.

One participant felt that the most would be gained if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were supported to share knowledge across the world rather than philanthropists.

When taken as a whole the results suggest a picture of a learning system. The agents in this system, that is the people involved, are semi-autonomous. They both affect and are affected by community cultural mores. Community attitude towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is increasingly changing to a level of deeper concern and an expectation of action.

Figure 1: Evolution of Philanthropy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Causes System..... 27

5.0 Discussion

In 2005, the philanthropic sector and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector were emerging from a largely independent existence. Interaction between them was most often expressed through a grantmaking system that had evolved to meet the needs of the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Early interactions supported an unequal power balance. The grantmaking system was largely impervious to cultural differences and was a barrier to the delivery of outcomes.

Through a process of learning by doing, and leadership from some in the philanthropic sector who were either engaged with international best practice or had personal experience, a new way of working began to take shape. While not universal, a semi-porous grantmaking system is more likely to be seen where both groups are learning from each other and the system both develops and supports extended relationships.

The interaction between this system and the wider geo-political landscape is limited by a lack of capacity, a degree of distrust and uncertainty and a lack of clarity of the respective roles of philanthropy and government and how they might best work together to improve wellbeing in the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

In most particulars the experience of participants in this study reflects that identified both in the academic literature and informed comment from grantseekers and grantmakers in those countries with a similar history and cultural demographic.

Four of the top five most unequal countries in the developed world, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the UK are either the product of colonisation of an Indigenous people or the coloniser itself (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Research shows that health and social problems are worse in more unequal societies. The socio-economic gradient, previously considered the indicator of Indigenous disadvantage is now revealed as the cause. Interestingly, the persistent inequality of these communities sits within a cultural myth of post materialist values (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). This global dissonance between values and action is reflected in the results of this study.

Participant perception that there was public apathy towards Aboriginal issues is supported by the findings of Chris's analysis of public opinion polls conducted in the late 1990's (Chris, 2007). That this attitude has evolved towards an increased awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues in the wider community, attributed by participants to the national Apology, is also reflected in other studies. Research conducted in 2008 by Reconciliation Australia showed that the Apology was important for the reconciliation process (Reconciliation Australia, 2008).

The views of some participants that the rhetoric has not been matched with action is reflected in the persistence of a gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes identified by the latest 'Overcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disadvantage' report produced by the Australian Government (Productivity Commission, 2009). While disappointing, this is by no means unique. Canada's continued quest to address Indigenous issues, notwithstanding a similar apology to their Aboriginal peoples (Canadian Government, 2008), has been similarly slow to produce results (United Nations Children's Fund, 2009) and remains the subject of a human rights action (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, 2009)

Participant concern regarding the geographical delineation of Aboriginality as 'rural' is reflected in the literature (Carter and Hollingsworth, 2009). The population of Canada (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996) labours under similar misconceptions. The terms 'rural' when used to describe Aboriginal populations has both limited and illuminated grantmaking and engagement practices in participant organisations and the philanthropic sector generally. 'Urban blindness' or a failure to see and address areas of disadvantage in urban centres is counterbalanced by a 'noble

savage' attitude which can direct more resources to rural areas while maintaining a neo-colonial perspective.

The impact of geography on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage perceived by participants has also been reported elsewhere. Research suggests that while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in city areas are doing quite well on average relative to their remote counterparts, disadvantage could be more usefully thought of as locationally associated - with some particular 'hot spots' such as particular city suburbs, regional towns, town camps, remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander towns, and outstations (Biddle, 2009).

The role philanthropy may play in addressing Aboriginal disadvantage in Australia is currently 'under construction'. The existence of tax relief for philanthropic effort identifies philanthropy in Australia as a 'common good'. Australian philanthropy is in a very different space to that of much of the rest of the world. A shorter history, fewer dollars and a more collaborative viewpoint necessitated by the size of the 'market' and its geographic variance puts Australia in a unique position.

Internationally, the role of philanthropy in supporting the civic sector and helping it to change the profit and public sectors is well established as the quid pro quo relationship between philanthropy and government (Fleishman, 2007 and Payton et al 2008). Participants in this study expressed a much more tenuous view of the relationship between them. The government, perceived as output driven, inflexible and dogmatic - 'a cup of tea mob' - is only relatively recently being engaged in collaborative efforts by the sector and this at local rather than strategic levels.

Participants are concerned that government may co-opt philanthropic intent, to serve government purpose. Some participants are also at pains to discourage nonprofit dependence on their funding. The diversity of the philanthropic sector in Australia and the complexity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes can provide the opportunity for the development of new ways of working to deliver public goods. An extended relationship with government could be forged through the implementation of new policy aimed at establishing principles to underpin accountability between government and the third sector (Australian Government, 2009).

In Australia, this small, highly specialised and comparatively underdeveloped part of the third sector is distinguished by secretiveness forged by a fear of inundation and a national culture which discourages displays of great wealth (Lyons M, 2001). Participants reinforced this view. It is not only hard to form a reliable view of the sector but almost impossible to determine the resources it has mobilised for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander benefit. As participants report, this last is also due to the limitations of record keeping systems.

While some participants reported as much as 30% of their total funding going to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes, few believed their investment to be significant or sufficient. The impact of the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC) on the philanthropic sector in Australia identified by participants (expressed in reduced available funding, contraction to established relationships and increasing quality markers across the system), is similar to that identified by other authors in the UK (Wales, 2009, The Charity Commission, 2009), the US (Harris, 2009, Foundations, 2009) and New Zealand (Philanthropy New Zealand, 2009). And while long term funding has begun to mean decades for some participants, for many more it remains in the realm of 2-3 years - well short of the type of sustainable commitment identified as best practice in Indigenous circles (United Nations, 2008). In an era of decreased funds due to the global financial crisis this perspective is particularly concerning.

Notwithstanding these resource constraints, participants see the Australian philanthropic sector as capable of going beyond the government 'cup of tea' approach, addressing the complex Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'problem' with more innovative and independent thinking, flexibility, long term commitment, collaborative and cross-sector funding and a willingness to adopt different benchmarks than might be found in bureaucracy or even more traditional philanthropy. Such an attitude supports the reflections of a number of researchers and a growing practice change across the globe (Anheier and Leat, 2006, Acheson, 2002, Melville, 2001, Milofsky, 2002, Bailin, 2003,

Ostrander, 1995, Vanderpuye, 2003, Silver, 1998 and CIVICUS 2001). Also in line with international experience (Bishop and Green, 2008) some participants are evaluating program impact and outcomes in explicit ways. This enthusiasm for a 'new way of working' mirrors the 'renewed optimism' for social justice philanthropy identified in the US (Foundation Centre, 2009). In both Australia and the US, the contemporary change in the political environment has been cited as conducive to developing a supportive environment for rights based philanthropy.

There was little difference between the activities associated with best practice by these Australian participants to those identified by leading social justice funders and practitioners in the US (The Foundation Centre, 2009). Taken together, the perceived importance of the change in political environment on reinvigorating the practice and discussion of social change philanthropy on both sides of the Pacific cannot be underestimated.

However, there is a dynamic tension between this strategic shift in philanthropic attitude and the systems that underpin it. Although some philanthropy in Australia is developing governance protocols that support key decision making roles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in grantmaking decisions and project design and implementation on their territory, in many cases the practicalities do not match the values based rhetoric. Governance protocols guide implementation of funding programs and will ultimately determine the way actions play out on the ground. The persistent emphasis from many grantmakers on DGR status and written applications continues to hamper Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to philanthropic funding in Australia and belies the emphatic cry of 'risk taker and innovator' from the sector.

Similarly the emphasis on passion, personal and individual networks, reputation and established trust can be potentially elitist, denying those without existing relationships the ability to be heard in the grantseeking arena. More importantly it undervalues the real state of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership as outlined by Smith and Hunt (1999).

To outsiders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and their leaders are often the most visible expression of governance in communities. But 'community governance' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is in fact a form of multi-networked, nodal governance that includes not only organisations, but also wider networks of leaders, families and communities.

By engaging with this model of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, the perceived lack of 'suitable' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders expressed by some participants could be addressed.

The coupling between leadership preferences and organisational behaviours in the philanthropic sector identified by some participants reflects an established academic debate. Recent research (Wasserman et al, 2001) calls the accepted importance of organisational leadership into question. Their research suggests that the situations in which CEOs have the most significant impact on performance are those where opportunities are scarce or where CEOs have slack resources. Both criteria could arguably be applied to the philanthropic sector. If this is so, strategic changes currently visible in the sector, unsupported by a depth of policy and a distribution of skill and knowledge may be unsustainable.

The initial impetus for a focus on skills and knowledge development in this system was a perceived lack of the ability by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, to meet philanthropic application and governance standards. In order to address this perceived lack, some philanthropic organisations developed 'capacity building' programs based on this deficit view. Formal training was thought to be necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but informal networking and experiential knowledge transfer was the preferred way of building skill in the philanthropic sector. Politely accepted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, these opportunities became instead, a vehicle by which the barriers between the two worlds began to be broken down. During these interactions it became obvious to leaders within the philanthropic community that learning needed to be bi-directional. Coupled with the growing number of personal 'aha' moments among

philanthropic personnel, the system has begun to explore a postcolonial stance, challenging the unequal relations of power seen when dominant groups assume control over meanings and social structures (Anderson et al. as cited in Smith et al., 2008).

Some participants have identified a need to know about, understand and exploit the learnings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs active in the philanthropic sector. While most have not investigated international practice in Indigenous cause grantmaking, the practice principles identified by First Peoples Worldwide (2006) are similar to those emerging from the Australian system. Similarly, the idea of transferring programs from one community to another, recognised as problematic but desirable by a number of participants, finds contemporary discussion in international literature (Posner, 2009). Issues here include paying attention to the idea of propagation rather than replication and the lack of capacity of an originating organisation to support program roll out. Posner argues that the idea of propagation recognises that though the complex human, organisational and context-specific issues that make a program successful in one area cannot be replicated in another, the principles can be applied with a local focus. He says that propagation could be a useful role for funders as nonprofits themselves may not have the capacity to do it. In order for a program to be able to be propagated, there must be elements of evaluation and organisational self awareness built in and an implicit responsibility to share, collaborate and lead by example (Posner, 2009). Such an approach is highly compatible with the attention being paid to capacity building processes by some participants and their funding organisations.

Participants frequently used the term 'capacity building' when discussing 'new' ways of working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Whether participants used the term in relation to organisations or communities was not always clear. The definition of the term and its relationship or otherwise to community development and community capacity building remains academically problematic (Lyons and Remier, 2006). Lyons and Reimer identify six features that could be used to compare capacity frameworks i.e. 1) whether capacity is understood as a condition or a process, 2) the outcomes considered, 3) the measurement of capacity, 4) whether it is understood to exist within communities (endogenous) or outside of communities (exogenous), 5) what levels of analysis are used, and 6) whether capacity outcomes are understood as inherently positive.

In practice though, there are a plethora of guides and models available. From the 3 C's (community, context and change) culturally competent capacity building principles of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management (2005) to the multi-level assessment grid designed by McKinsey and Company for Venture Philanthropy Partners (2001) capacity building is practised and evaluated in innumerable ways. At this stage, the evaluation of capacity is currently focussed on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector, mirroring the deficit approach that led to the current situation. Awareness of the philanthropic sector's capacity to impact Indigenous causes is patchy and by no means formally measured. There is no assessment of the resources available, the skills and knowledge levels, the efficacy of networks or the strength of policy and program infrastructure of the philanthropic sector from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective. Some authors caution that measurement and assessment may be to the detriment of the emergence of creative and innovative foundations (Anheier and Leat, 2002). However, so little is known in this case that building the case for and guiding the direction of, improvement is a maze of Minosian proportions.

While an encouraging picture of the state of philanthropy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander causes in Australia has been painted by participants in this study and it may be that Australian philanthropy has moved beyond the 'cup of tea', in some cases the invitation list is exclusive, the choice of biscuits is small and the conversation is still limited. More encouraging is the conscious awareness of gaps in knowledge across the sector with the goodwill and the courage to improve.

6.0 Recommendations for future research

Analysis of this study, the limited available academic literature and informed comment suggests answering the following research questions will strategically contribute to increasing the applied and theoretical knowledge base on the issue, both in the Australian and global scene.

1. What is the capacity of the philanthropic sector to address Indigenous causes in Australia?

Organisational capacity has aspects of individual skills and knowledge, culture and practice, systems and services. At present philanthropic accountability systems do not consistently record or identify funding or other resources dedicated to Indigenous causes. There is no knowledge of the cultural competency of either Boards or personnel. As the sector embraces the ‘new ‘ philanthropy of capacity building there is no available evidence to suggest whether it either is or is not capable of or serious about delivering outcomes.

2. What evidence is there to uphold the view that philanthropy is a change agent - specifically in relation to seeding government programs or changing government policy?

There is abundant qualitative evidence that philanthropic funding and project development has been instrumental in seeding government programs and many philanthropic organisations identify such an outcome as indicating success for investment. There is no information about the extent or depth of this in any quantitative sense. Such information would strengthen the development of relationships between the sectors -a relationship made necessary by the size and intractability of the problem.

3. What view does the government sector hold in relation to the role and impact of philanthropy for Indigenous causes in Australia?

Sector concerns over the role and intent of government programs and policy is real and somewhat justified given what some would acknowledge as governments’ historical exploitation of the community sector. There are relationships between philanthropy and government developing at strategic and local levels. The National Compact may well inform and support ongoing relationships. However, no academic studies as to the political and systemic view of philanthropy from a government perspective exists in the Australian context. Such an independent view may identify opportunities for both relational and structural development.

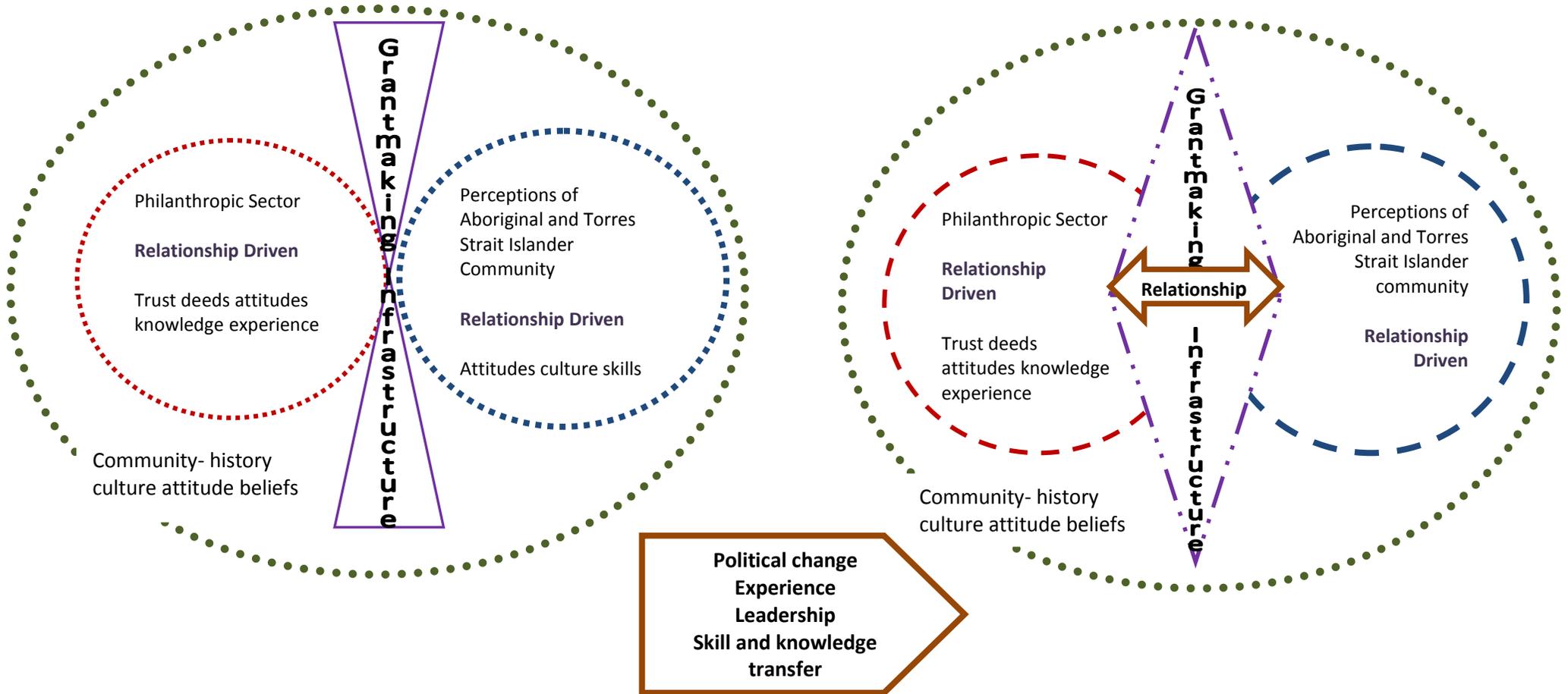
4. What evidence is there, that measured against academic definitions of innovation and risk aversion, the philanthropic sector is more innovative and less risk averse than the government sector in Australia?

The current information on this claim is largely opinion based and has begun to take on the aura of an urban myth. Evidence of the truth or otherwise of this belief would assist strategic sector development but supporting targeted and realistic program and process design.

5. What is the level of nonprofit service delivery or support per person for the Indigenous population in Australia compared to the non-Indigenous population?

Very little quantifiable information is available to assess the real input and impact of nonprofit service to Indigenous causes in Australia. A recent Canadian study of the child welfare system identified that contrary to community belief and obvious need, Indigenous children got almost negligible service from the nonprofit sector compared to non-Indigenous children. Given other similarities between the demographics and history of Canada and Australia such an outcome may also be possible here. By measuring service delivery by nonprofits to Indigenous Australians the sector will be able to make better informed resource allocation decisions.

Figure 1: Evolution of Philanthropy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Causes System



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