Designing and Developing
Aboriginal Service Organisations

A Journey of Consciousness

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B Soc Sc (Social Welfare)
M App Sc (Social Ecology – Organisational Development) (Distinction)

This thesis fulfils the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2006

University of Western Sydney, Australia
Certificate of Authorship, Originality and Copyright

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other institution. I also certify that this thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and in the preparation of the thesis has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. Research participants’ quotes included in this thesis generally have been cited verbatim, subject to minor editing for clarity and to conceal and protect the identity of the participants.

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Signature of Candidate                Date

........................................     ........................................

Kel Knox

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This thesis is for those people who dream of Aboriginal emancipation in Australia, and who are willing to be radical and transform hope into action and design organisations that respond to Aboriginal communities with respect, commitment and empowerment.

There are powerful lessons to be learnt for those people who listen to the ‘past and present voices’ that speak in and through this thesis. Perhaps this thesis is a ‘meta-voice’ of those Aboriginal people who have been and continue to be ‘homeless’ in their own land. I believe that the inspiration for this ‘voice’ has come from these people and places.

As a non-Aboriginal researcher, I have been given a gift and privileged place in an Aboriginal community and organisation. I was invited by some Aboriginal people to conduct this doctoral research with and for them, as they design and develop the Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (HAYS). In 2004, at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Conference in Canberra, an Aboriginal woman reminded me that my legitimacy and acceptance had been established through this invitation.

I wish to express my indebtedness to Winsome Matthews. We have shared the journey together in my role as researcher and her role as the HAYS Project Manager. Winsome, my Sister, you have been an inspirational teacher and mentor. I acknowledge the other Aboriginal people who encouraged me and willingly contributed their time and views in this research, particularly the young people. Evan Yana Muru took me on a modern-day ‘walkabout’ that significantly helped me to grasp the ‘lived experience’ of his people.

Ultimately, this thesis is for Aboriginal people and their organisations. I seek to contribute to the discourse on contemporary self-organisation and self-determination of these people. The thesis ideas, struggles, mistakes, findings and propositions have been experienced and forged in this real and applied research with Aboriginal people. The details have been honed in and by the reality of their stories of oppression, hope and liberation.
Associate Professor Frances Parker originally encouraged me to apply for a doctoral candidature. Frances, I am deeply grateful for your belief in my work and support in your role as a supervisor. Dr Lesley Kuhn joined my supervision panel during the conduct of the research and has provided helpful insights and sound critique. Dr Robert Woog, my principal supervisor, has been outstanding. Robert, from the moment we first met to discuss my research to its finishing stages, your wisdom, ideas, guidance and support have always proved to be beneficial.

Other people who should be mentioned include: Dr Vladimir Dimitrov from the University of Western Sydney (UWS) for his intellectualism which has inspired me; Fr Graham Jackson and Br Geoff Kelly from Marist Youth Care sanctioned my work; officers from the Department of Community Services; Jack Gibson from Butucarbin Aboriginal Corporation provided thoughtful ideas and feedback on my musings; Shelley Hamilton for her transcription and typing support; all those behind the scenes UWS administration people who make it possible for candidates to undertake research; and, my supportive post-graduate research colleagues at UWS, particularly Ngaire McCubben.

At a personal level, John Fox shared my journey over many bushwalks on Dharug land (in the Blue Mountains) where we deeply traversed and conversed in this most beautiful part of Creation. Thanks to my wife and children for their patience and love. Dorothy mostly smiled when I ‘cornered’ her with one of my latest theoretical dissertations or illuminating ideas. My daughters were often concerned that I get a real job to use their expression – perhaps I can do this now!

I acknowledge that my research and work is a journey of consciousness. As such, there are moments of perception, awareness and realisation that I have experienced along the journey. Hopefully, this thesis will be received as part of an ‘Australian map of consciousness’ – a reference point in the Australian landscape of contemporary Aboriginal organisational design and development. There is still much traversing and conversing in this country to be done on this topic.

Finally, it is impossible to research, think and write without taking risks and making mistakes in interpretation, analysis and representation of findings. My apologies for any omissions or mistakes and to anyone I have missed along the journey.
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Abstract

Aboriginal young people are exposed to the impact of colonisation in Australia. They are at risk of becoming alienated from their homelands, cultures, communities and families. Some have become alienated, joining one of the most marginalised groups in Australian society – homeless people. Aboriginal young people, many of whom are already marginalised because of their indigeneity, join a group that can be described as further marginalised – that is, Aboriginal and homeless. In essence, Aboriginal homelessness can be seen and described as a loss of sovereignty.

The Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (HAYS) is an organisation that is responding to the phenomenon of Aboriginal youth homelessness. HAYS is located in Mount Druitt, New South Wales, Australia and operates in a complex setting of historical and contemporary circumstances. HAYS is funded and operates under a joint Australian Federal, State and Territory government programmatic response that assists people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Research on and responses to Aboriginal homelessness in Australia tend to concentrate on definitional, categorisation, enumeration and service delivery activities, rather than with recourse to traditional (pre-European contact) Aboriginal notions of home.

This thesis reviews the design and development of HAYS as an Aboriginal service organisation. The central thesis research question is: How should a service for homeless Aboriginal youth be designed and developed? In addressing this question, a case study methodology is utilised which is capable of facilitating research in contemporary organisational settings, such as in HAYS where its design participants operate around specific visions and goals. Such an approach brings together the dynamic inter-relationships between the participants and their settings, and observable organisational and individual responses for study, sense-making and theory generation.

The research findings indicate that HAYS should become a ‘modern-day tribal ground’ in the form of the Mount Druitt Aboriginal Homeland Centre (MDAHC). In order to progress this model, a substantive theory of coherent dialogue is presented containing five critical design and development propositions educed from the
research. The theory contains lessons for the design and development of urban Aboriginal community service organisations.

This thesis concludes with a plea for consciousness-raising between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people involved in the design and development of Aboriginal community service organisations – a move towards the development of a critical consciousness for a better world through coherent dialogue.
Prologue

Black, what is it?
Is it the colour of my skin or the person I am?
Is it the history of Australia or of a ‘White’ interpretation of me because I’m ‘Black’ and proud to be.
Will I ever feel free, free from all racist remarks and comments from, not only ‘White’ Australia, but from my own people?
My own people with nothing but greed and hostility towards their own kind taught by ‘White’ Australia.
Are my people going blind?
Blinded by the light of money and their own egos.
Blinded by the alcohol and drug intake produced to kill my people by ‘White’ Australia.
Will my people ever see that by bringing back old ways of learning and tradition – this will help us get back on track?
Help us overcome the perils and the destruction of what ‘White’ Australia is doing to my people.

Our people, Your people, Black people.¹

¹ This poem was read to me during the conduct of the research interviewing. Its author, an Aboriginal participant in this research, has granted permission for its inclusion and use by me and is subject to the copyright clause outlined in this thesis.
Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 A Contemporary Message Stick

Our Aboriginal guide, Evan Yana Muru, departs from the gravel road and commences the ‘walkabout’.1 Within a few minutes he has stopped the group of nine men (six Australians, of which I am one, and three Europeans) to impart his first piece of knowledge. Sometimes women take the journey, but today it just happens to be men on this walk. While he is speaking, we are encouraged to crush gum (*Eucalyptus*) leaves and smell the eucalyptus oil within. The oil, as in the past, acts as a medicine for colds and sore throats. It is the oil that makes the Blue Mountains appear blue. Some of us leave the crushed leaves up our nostrils to take in the scent of the leaves.

The guide goes on to explain that the Dharug2 people have lived in the Blue Mountains and Nepean region of New South Wales, possibly up to 45,000 years. However, by the late 1800s all ‘full blood’ Aborigines were lost, a significant proportion to diseases such as smallpox; others were simply shot. Yet the legacy of their culture lived on through the descendants of the Dharug people, and importantly, through traditional engravings, art and ceremonial sites. Ceremony is a significant part of Aboriginal culture, and importantly, the engravings that we are to see on the walkabout signify special places: places of sacredness, knowledge and ceremony.

The walk continues and we briefly pause to pick and suck on Sarsaparilla (*Smilax glyciphylla*) leaves, which will also later be used to brew hot, sweet tea. Almost immediately, several beautiful vibrant red Waratahs (*Telopea speciosissima*) in flower are sighted. Other plants, such as Mountain Devils (*Lambertia formosa*), are also in flower. Along the path, Smooth-barked Apple trees (*Angophora costata*) grip and encompass rocks and boulders with their visible root systems. We emerge onto a

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1 The guide explained that a ‘walkabout’ is personal journey of self-fulfilment that leads to new knowledge – a new way of knowing. It is part of traditional Aboriginal life incorporating staged initiation ceremonies to acquire knowledge. The guide edited a draft of this story and granted permission for its inclusion in the thesis. According to Delbridge, Bernard, Blair, Butler and Yallop (2001), in post-contact with ‘white’ society, some Aborigines may go on a ‘walkabout’ seeking spiritual replenishment from (and to) their traditional way of life.

2 Our guide indicated that ‘Dharug’ is the word for ‘yam eaters’ (also see, e.g., Kohen 1993). Aboriginal place names in this thesis have generally been taken from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) map of Aboriginal Australia (Horton 2000).
small rock platform that is part of a creek. The water is flowing well from recent heavy rainfalls. Immediately apparent are engravings (petroglyphs) on the platform. The guide tells a story of how an Aboriginal Elder would explain to his clan the significance of the engravings: it is a Creation account including Baiami, the Rainbow Serpent, a wallaby and its joey, and axe-grinding grooves.\(^3\) After a short climb above the platform, we sit down to receive more information from the guide. He explains that each Aboriginal person has a totem, which is given after conception, but before a person’s birth.\(^4\)

The tour continues until we reach a large cave carved out over thousands of years, probably by wind erosion. The sandstone cave is colourful, with honey-combed walls. Refreshments are taken before we return to and descend the creek. The creek continues, but we take a turn along a soft leafy track, walking through a closed forest of trees such as Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*), Sassafras (*Doryphora sassafras*) and Turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*). Under this rainforest canopy on the ground are ferns, mosses and assorted flora. A lyrebird is spotted scratching around – it proceeds with its business seemingly undisturbed by the close presence of humans. Soon after, we are led along another creek.

Without any apparent visual indication of a vegetation transition, we step out into a grotto-like area. There is a sandy beach and a pool that still provides a home for aquatic animals like freshwater yabbies, eels and small fish, fed by another creek flowing over a waterfall. It is a beautiful area. The guide announces that lunch will be taken. Over lunch a range of conversations are held and topographic maps are produced – stories of past treks in the area are re-lived by some of the local bush-walkers in our group. Then some members pick up strips of bark, collected earlier, and begin to paint imagined Aboriginal symbols using ochres. Perhaps the lunch-time

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\(^3\) The Creation account or Dreaming is the eternal traditional Aboriginal time of past, present and future. In essence, it is the sacred narrative of how the universe, humans, animals and plants were created. The Dreaming contains an account of how the universe became an ordered system and lays down how Aboriginal peoples are to live their lives (the Law). In south-eastern Aboriginal Australia (which includes the Dharug people), Baiami (Creator) and the Rainbow Serpent (earth and water) are spiritual beings involved in Aboriginal cosmology. For more information on the complex topic of the Dreamtime, see for example, Elkin (1979); Berndt and Berndt (1988); Stockton (1993, 1995); DAA (2006).

\(^4\) The guide indicated that a totem is a natural phenomenon or animal assumed as the emblem of a person, clan or group that reinforces Aborigines bond with the land and animals. For an individual, it signifies a ‘spirit’, that in essence, he/she really is. See, for example, Kohen (1993) for more information on Dharug totemism.
talk and activity is reminiscent of what Dharug people would have done in such places.

Following lunch, the guide leads us up and above the waterfall, heading to a ridge. A small pause and a couple of us are encouraged to chew on and taste the base of the narrow leaf of the Grass Tree (Xanthorrhoea media). The stems of these plants once provided spears for the Dharug people. Next, a member sights a beautiful Waratah in flower, where we pause again to take photos. Along the climb up to the ridge, we stop to paint symbols in white clay on ourselves, from a small site just above a creek bed being traversed. At this stop, an axe-grinding groove points the way – the direction that generations of Dharug people followed.

We arrive at what, at first sight, appears to be a rock cairn. The guide explains that this rock structure would have indicated to the Dharug people to pause here for a specified period, before continuing their journey to the ceremonial ground on the ridge above. The guide goes on to explain, drawing in the sand, a story of the Dreamtime; a story that would have been handed-down through the ages. The walkabout continues toward the ridge.

On the rock plateau, as part of the ridge, the guide points out an engraving of a kangaroo kill and its significance. We then move to a natural, circular rock formation where Elders once sat and conducted tribal affairs. Next, we are taken to a corroboree ground. Then, to an initiation site where boys became men. The last traditional initiation at this site is believed to have been conducted about 150 years ago. At each site on the plateau, the guide provides a rich story of Dharug spirituality, law, culture and ceremony experienced on such a walkabout that the traditional people undertook. Some of the story included information about:

- the engraving of Daramulan’s footprint
- the engraving of a partial kangaroo, speared by Daramulan
- the spot where Elders would gather in a circle to discuss their business
- the corroboree ground, on the tessellated rock platform, believed to be like the Rainbow Serpent’s scales

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5 The guide indicated that Daramulan (Emu-man) is a spiritual being as part of the local Dreaming. See, for example, Kohen (1993) and Stockton (1993, 1995) for more information on Daramulan.

6 A corroboree (as passed into English language) refers to the gathering of Aboriginal people to conduct sacred, ceremonial or ritual song, dance and story-telling (see, e.g., Elkin 1979; Berndt and Berndt 1988).
• the Bora ground, on the tessellated rock platform, in the shape of a womb or possibly a serpent’s body.\footnote{A ‘Bora ground’ is an initiation site as part of Aboriginal boys becoming men and acquiring sacred knowledge of the local tribe (see, e.g., Kohen 1993; Stockton 1993, 1995). For an informative account of typical initiation stages see, for example, Elkin (1979).}

The journey continues down a spur, to a cave where we take in more information from the guide about the Dharug people. Continuing, we are welcomed by a beautiful garden of Grass Trees, appearing like a special entrance to another community of flora. Another half-hour along and up a shaded valley, we find the next art site. On the rear sandstone wall of a cave white hand stencils can be sighted. The guide says that the stencil paint is a mixture of ochre and goanna fat.

Above the cave on a rock platform, we are encouraged to lie down while the guide recites a poem he has written called “Interrupted”. The poem speaks of: the Dharug people’s Dreaming; their life through flood, fires and drought over thousands of years; the protocols they observed in sharing the resources of the land; their love, joy and ceremony expressed in song and dance; their knowledge, wisdom and responsibility systems; their spirituality; and, their sense of respect for each other and the land.

Unfortunately, the poet goes on to describe how this seemingly beautiful existence is suddenly interrupted by invasions, by plagues, by destructive substances like alcohol, and by theft and greed. Their culture and their language are suppressed and replaced under colonisation. The poem then expresses a plea for self-respect, for respect of other people and respect for the land. It encourages us all to be ready in our hearts to receive the ‘message stick’\footnote{The guide indicated that ‘a message stick’ is a stick engraved with symbols to remind the messenger of the important points of the message being transmitted. For example, it was used to broadcast and inform local groups and neighbouring tribes when an initiation ceremony was going to be held.} of a spiritual awakening and a new ‘song-line’.\footnote{A ‘song-line’ is ‘a path made by the ancestors in the Dreaming and recorded in the songs of the Aboriginal tribes living along its sometimes very great length; dreaming track’ (Delbridge et al 2001:1793). A song-line may be a record of the ‘travels, experiences and actions of heroes, ancestors, founders [and] explorers’ (Elkin 1979:303).}

And so the modern-day walkabout comes to a close. It was a journey of discovery, ambiguity, beauty, pain and shame – but it was also a journey of hope. A journey of past, present and future. A journey into another way of knowing and being that has profound lessons for contemporary Australia. A journey into a people’s resilience that speaks to us today. This story, in some ways, is a contemporary...
message stick for it carries current and important symbols of hope. My thesis, in some ways, is a contemporary message stick. I now hand the message stick over to you to carry during the reading of this thesis.

1.2 Research Terrain

This thesis continues my journey into ‘ways of knowing’. I literally and metaphorically cross the terrain of pre-colonial Aboriginal Australia and its symbolic messages for the design and development of contemporary urban Aboriginal community service organisations. It is a complex epistemic journey that goes on to traverse the colonisation of Australia, which commenced 217 years ago and has had a profound effect on Aboriginal peoples and their descendants.10 Today, Aboriginal people are exposed to the impact of colonisation, which has led to community implosion, family break-down and personal problems. Aboriginal peoples are at risk of becoming physically and metaphysically alienated from their lands, cultures, communities and families. Some have become alienated, joining one of the most marginalised groups in Australian society – homeless people (Commonwealth Government 1994).

Aboriginal young people, many of whom are already marginalised because of their indigeneity, join a group that can be described as further marginalised – that is, Aboriginal and homeless. What happens to those Aboriginal young people who have experienced the alienating consequences of colonisation? Some stay at their family place, as they have nowhere else to go. Some may leave their family and move from place to place, staying with their friends or relatives or ‘live rough on the streets’. Some may move from their remote communities into urban centres. Others may find temporary shelter and support in government-funded youth services.

The Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (HAYS), the site of focus for this doctoral research,11 is being designed and developed to respond to the phenomenon of

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10 Generally, the term ‘Aboriginal’ will be used throughout this thesis in preference to ‘Indigenous’ for two main reasons. First, it is the preferred title of the Aboriginal people who participated in this research project. Second, the term ‘Aboriginal’ refers to the first known (original) inhabitants of a country (Delbridge et al 2001). Whereas the term ‘Indigenous’ refers to a more generic concept of being born or natural to a particular country (ibid), which could include a number of cultural groups.

11 Generally, the term ‘research’ will be used throughout this thesis as referring to my doctoral inquiry. On occasions, the term ‘inquiry’ will be used as a substitute for ‘research’ to promote readability or to cite referenced literature.
Aboriginal youth homelessness. HAYS is situated in Hebersham, a suburb within the urban setting of Mount Druitt, in the Blacktown City Local Government Area (LGA) of western Sydney. Blacktown is the most populous LGA in NSW and the third largest in Australia. Blacktown’s population is culturally and linguistically diverse with over fifty countries and sixty-three languages represented in its multi-cultural communities, containing the largest Indigenous population in NSW. The urban population is young: 42% of Blacktown residents are under the age of 25 years. Of the Indigenous community, 29.9% were aged 5-14 years and 17.7% were aged 14-25 years (in the 2001 census), clearly indicating a dominant youthful Indigenous population. The median individual income for Blacktown LGA was slightly higher than the Australian poverty line.  

12 As a community service organisation, HAYS is funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), a joint Australian Federal, State and Territory government response to assist people who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness (Commonwealth Government 1994). Under this initiative, organisations and stakeholders such as government bodies, community services’ agencies (such as HAYS), peak advocacy bodies, researchers and consultants provide services intended to improve the well-being of homeless people.

SAAP recognises and provides services to homeless men, women, women escaping domestic violence, young people and children. The overall aim of SAAP is to provide supported accommodation and related support services to help people who are at risk of becoming homeless or who are actually experiencing homelessness to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence. Key practice values called for by governments, in agencies delivering SAAP services, are respect and sensitivity of homeless people’s beliefs and social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Of particular relevance to this research, SAAP recognises the vulnerability of Indigenous peoples in Australia and specifies that services will be provided to meet their particular needs (ibid).

SAAP is primarily implemented through five-year agreements between the Australian, State and Territory governments. The State and Territory governments mainly have the responsibility of administering and allocating funding to non-

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12 This brief profile of Blacktown, including its Indigenous community, has been sourced from Blacktown City Council’s Our City and Social Plan (2006a&b On-line 25 January).
government agencies to offer and deliver SAAP related services. These agencies are organisationally configured in various forms. Their design, structure, governance and management depend on their auspice arrangements. For example, SAAP funded agencies may be corporative or small community-based entities, both religious and non-religious.

HAYS, at present, is temporarily being auspiced by Marist Youth Care (MYC), which is the social welfare agency of the Sydney Province of the Marist Brothers, a worldwide Institute of religious men in the Catholic Church (MYC 2000). MYC has the responsibility to collaboratively design and develop HAYS in partnership with the local Aboriginal community and the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS). The overall aim of this partnership is to develop HAYS to become an Aboriginal self-determined and community managed youth SAAP organisation.

Having been invited to research HAYS’s design and development by members of this partnership group, this thesis is primarily about organisational design and development of an Aboriginal community service agency. In addressing this topic, I have designed the doctoral research project to engage with the HAYS design and development stakeholders. The stakeholders include members of Mount Druitt Aboriginal communities, government departments, and non-government community service providers. Importantly, the research includes the views of some Aboriginal young people. Throughout the research, I observed and participated in HAYS’s activities to immerse myself in its emerging development. I have also examined traditional Aboriginal occupation sites for physical traces of past Aboriginal life to elicit lessons of relevance for a contemporary Aboriginal setting.

1.3 Aim of the Research

The research, focusing on HAYS as a unique case study, explores the process of organisational design and development in addressing the issue of Aboriginal youth homelessness. I am particularly interested in stimulating a review of past Aboriginal organisational life to provide lessons for contemporary service organisations, leading to the provision of more humane, responsive and effective services for Aboriginal peoples. I believe that such a review is crucial for the well-being of urban Aboriginal people who receive support from community service organisations, both Aboriginal
and non-Aboriginal in governance and management. I passionately believe and propose that there is a need for a new paradigm for the design and development of such organisations.\textsuperscript{13} Therefore, this research seeks to add ‘rich ideas’ in the contemporary discourse of Aboriginal organisational design and development theory and practice.

If we are to (re)design and (re)develop a service for homeless Aboriginal youth we need to know what home and homelessness means to them, as well as what they believe are the causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness. We also need to know how and what their wider community members think about these phenomena. Similarly, the designers, developers and service providers should have the opportunity to engage with and ponder the same questions, not just impose SAAP \textit{a priori} constructs on the design and development process.

My initial suggestion is that effective conversations need to take place between the various HAYS stakeholders, understanding that each may hold a different epistemic position, to generate mutual awareness of the impact of homelessness on Aboriginal young people. I suggest that the efficacy of sustainable and appropriate responses to homeless Aboriginal youth would be based on a high level of open coherence between stakeholders. The research will provide a platform for part of this dialogue to take place where research participants\textsuperscript{14} can make visible their aspirations for considered inclusion into HAYS’s design and development processes.

The multiple research views and impressions gained will be harvested with the aim of producing trustworthy research outcomes. It is anticipated that the lessons learnt will have the capacity to inform the configuration and development of HAYS as a service organisation. Concomitantly, it is anticipated that these lessons will have the potential to inform the design and development of other Aboriginal service organisations and organisational initiatives. In summary, the anticipated research outcomes include new ways of thinking about and conceptualising Aboriginal youth

\textsuperscript{13} I acknowledge that these beliefs are partly influenced by my knowledge and experience of the SAAP sector. Since 1996, I have held various roles in the SAAP sector including membership of advisory committees to government bodies, board member of peak advocacy bodies and service delivery organisations, manager of SAAP services, consultant, and researcher.

\textsuperscript{14} Generally, I will use the terms ‘participant/participants’ throughout this thesis to refer to those people who have been recruited to participate in my doctoral inquiry. On occasions, the terms ‘respondent/respondents’ will be used as a substitute for ‘participant/participants’ to promote readability or cite referenced literature.
Introduction

homelessness, the development of knowledge to inform SAAP policy and practice, and a substantive theory of organisational design and development.

1.4 Research Questions

What would the young Aboriginal people’s communities and service organisations look like if homelessness did not exist? What essential characteristics are needed to foster communities and organisations that aim to counter homelessness and promote the well-being of Aboriginal youth? Is a SAAP service the most appropriate response to at risk and homeless Aboriginal youth? How relevant is such a service to their needs? Similarly, how relevant is such a service to the local Aboriginal community? How do the HAYS design and development stakeholders know that a SAAP agency is in the interests of Aboriginal youth, and their families and communities? What would be an exemplar model of efficacious support to Aboriginal youth?

This thesis touches on such questions utilising HAYS as a case study. However, the important question is: How can we design Aboriginal organisations to generate successful service outcomes? More poignantly, the central research question – as one Aboriginal research participant subsequently suggested it should be – in this thesis is: How should a service for homeless Aboriginal youth be designed and developed?15

In asking this central question, I believe that insights will emerge for shared moral decision-making and action-taking, having the potential to address the above questions. It is a hope that is grounded in creating a better place – both physical and metaphysical – for homeless Aboriginal youth, and their families and communities. Exploring this question may also lead to finding ways of making a better society (Prozesky 2003) for all Australians. In this project of finding a better place, we respectfully need to consider how Aboriginal peoples wish to contribute, participate and configure the organisations that serve their communities.

15 In this thesis, a ‘service’ will generally be defined as the organised system of apparatus (organisation), with its structure, processes and people, involved in the provision of helpful activities to homeless youth (definitions adapted from the Macquarie Dictionary, Delbridge et al 2001). By ‘design’, I am referring to the process of conceptualising, creating and then preparing and planning for a project to be executed with its end intention/purpose in view (ibid). By ‘development’, I am referring to the process of actually bringing the project into being and activity; then to gradually build on and expand it towards its intention/purpose (ibid).
In addressing the central question in this thesis, I use a series of sub-questions that contribute to the construction of the substantive design and development theory, as follows:

a. What is the meaning of ‘home’?

b. What is the meaning of ‘homelessness’?

c. What are the causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness?

d. How are stakeholders responding to Aboriginal youth homelessness?\(^{16}\)

e. What is HAYS trying to achieve?

The central research question and sub-questions are strategic in nature. My research seeks to engage primarily with Aboriginal people and contribute to their heightened consciousness by asking strategic questions that promote reflection on their thoughts and feelings about how their organisations should be designed and developed. The aim is to promote and create the development of new information, uncovering ‘deep desires of the heart rather than [just having them] communicating information already known’ (Peavey 2001:1).

Thus, strategic questions move beyond ‘present reality’ into ‘what could be’. Although such questioning does recognise the past and present reality of participants, it seeks to draw them into envisaging their aspirational future realities. The questions are also thematic, seeking ‘to discover generative themes and to stimulate people’s awareness in regard to these themes’ (Freire 1970:96-7). That is, in a conversational process, the research seeks to make visible the participants’ views to themselves, HAYS stakeholders and me. Their views, realities and experiences are part of the objects of investigation, and thus emerge for shared consideration, analysis, and response. The research comprises the meaning, causation and implication frontiers of Aboriginal youth homelessness with the aim of developing a shared stakeholders’ consciousness of this phenomenon for consideration and action.

Analysis of the generative themes reveals the central or general theme(s) of importance and relevance to the research participants. Potentially, within these themes are the fragments of response similarity that resonate between Aboriginal people at

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\(^{16}\) Stakeholders include the local Aboriginal community, government departments, community service providers, peak bodies, and workers involved in the HAYS project. A phenomenon, such as homelessness, will mean an occurrence or circumstance as it appears to, and is constructed by, people as distinguished from a thing itself (Delbridge et al 2001), as in constructionism (see Chapter 3).
individual, family, community and national scales. For example, concerns about the modern Aboriginal epoch following colonisation, which is characterised by domination, displacement, cultural disintegration and identity diffusion. On the other hand, there may be fragments of difference within the Aboriginal society. For instance, the meaning and construct of ‘home’ or ‘homelessness’ may vary. Alternatively, the differences may actually be of a general nature so as to constitute a theme. Further, it may be the case that some people may not have consciously considered the aetiology of Aboriginal youth homelessness. For instance, their traditional orbit, that is life around their homelands, has been profoundly changed in some communities to the point that some Aboriginal peoples may have no physical connection with or awareness of their homelands. However, each theme or fragment is part of a greater ‘whole’ of Aborigines’ experience, whether traditionally or contemporaneously oriented.

Theoretically, these general patterns of similarity or difference emerge for consideration. If so, what are the inferences for how service organisations should be designed and developed? Strategic questioning has the potential to construct a ‘total picture’. It is a picture that includes similarities and differences contained within the generalisations and details – ‘a sense of the whole’ – of the present reality of Aboriginal peoples. Eliciting this knowledge is essential for organisational design and development research, theorising and activity – the design and development praxis.

1.5  **Boundaries of the Research**

I am aware that there are other non-SAAP programmatic responses that could be considered as a research setting for exploring Aboriginal youth homelessness and organisational design and development. For example, legal, juvenile justice, health, disability, counselling, housing, employment, income support or educational support services provided by government, government funded community agencies, and private agencies. As noted above, I have been invited to conduct my doctoral research at the request of some HAYS stakeholders, which includes Aboriginal people. I seek to honour this privilege, and will accordingly focus on their organisation, the Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service, that is set within the context of SAAP.
However, due to the exploratory and inductive nature of the research, it is possible that the central research question may transmute during the inquiry. As Eisenhardt (2002) argues, initial research questions and constructs (e.g., level of stakeholder coherence) are tentative in case studies that seek to build theory. Therefore, setting prescriptive boundaries may truncate emergent issues of significance in the process of theory building from the HAYS case. Accordingly, boundary latitude in exploring and traversing complex issues is required, due to the importance and potential value of this research.

1.6 Rhetorical Form of the Thesis

This thesis utilises a literary form of language drawn from the tradition of qualitative research. It is a narrative account of events, experiences, impressions and perspectives written in an evocative and, at times, personal style. The narrative deliberately seeks to transport readers into the ‘world’ of the study to capture their attention, provide them with a vicarious experience, and influence their thoughts and responses. Creswell (1998) suggests that there are two main rhetorical forms: the overall structure – overall organisation of the study; and, the embedded structure – specific narrative techniques and devices used in the study.

Overall, the thesis narrative form is in the genre of case study research. First, an opening poem, from an Aboriginal research participant who calls for a return to traditional ways and learning for existential well-being, powerfully sets the scene for this thesis. Second, an introductory narrative account of a walkabout I undertook speaks of a journey into the past, present and future (the Dreaming) of Aboriginal Australia. This is essentially a descriptive tale encompassing a brief overview of European impact on Aboriginal Australia; a strong reminder that the contemporary issues covered in this thesis have a past. It points the reader to historical issues of relevance in studying contemporary Aboriginal organisations, and hopefully draws the reader into vicariously experiencing a sense of pre- and post-colonial Aboriginal Australia. Third, the ‘voices’ of research participants are conveyed throughout this thesis. Essentially, I seek to reveal their views and needs for consideration as part of developing a substantive theory of how Aboriginal organisations could be designed and developed. Fourth, I reflect on my research journey and make inferences from my
experience and acquired knowledge as an observer, researcher and co-designer of HAYS: my Dreaming. Finally, I include a closing poem from an Aboriginal participant who speaks of the liberatory power of education for all peoples. In particular, how Aboriginal peoples can be empowered and create a better future.

The thesis embedded rhetorical form draws on case study techniques and devices utilised in organisational research. The written expression is at times detailed, factual and objective, and at other times, more personal and meaningful, hopefully heart-felt. However, I also use theoretical concepts and metaphorical language to elicit and convey meaningful and powerful ideas. For example, my academic interests are in the field of organisational design and development, influenced by Complexity Theory (CT), which

refers to a diverse and emerging domain of thinking and research, incorporating and deriving from physics, non-linear mathematics, chemistry, micro-biological sciences, cybernetics, studies of turbulence and systems far from equilibrium. (Woog 2004:2)

Woog goes on to state that:

Complexity as we [UWS academics and students] use it describes a set of interrelated theories that share the view that while certain phenomena appear as chaotic or random, they actually form part of a larger coherent process. Complexity assumes the nature of reality as being adaptive, self-organizing, non-linear, sensitive to initial conditions, influenced by many sets of rules and emergent. (ibid)

This statement powerfully resonates with my growing understanding that Aboriginal people actually form part of a coherent local, yet national, adaptive and self-organising process. CT carries the potential to be a reference point in exploring the diversity and richness of the thesis inquiry phenomena in an environment that contains many agents, variables and processes simultaneously interacting, which may produce unpredictable outcomes. A complexity informed researcher or practitioner is therefore able to ‘see the whole while working with the individual parts’ (Woog 2003:4). Accordingly, at times, I use the language of CT to introduce theoretical and metaphysical concepts to make sense of complex issues, and build a substantive

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17 In this usage, Woog draws on interpretations similar to those made by Kauffman (1995) and Wolfram (2002). For more detailed explanations of CT, as applied in this thesis, also see Stacey (1996, 2003, 2005); Emmeche (1997); Kuhn and Woog (2002); Levick (2002); Dimitrov (2003); Woog and Dimitrov (2004); Stacey and Griffin (2005).
theory of organisational design and development specific to the HAYS case study. For example, the following CT terms will be used (as adapted to this thesis):

**Attractor**

An attractor can be described as a phenomenon or a preferred state that ‘pulls’ or influences the energy of human desire and activity. A ‘state’ refers to the position and/or condition that a system/culture/organisation is drawn and moves to, and will remain in that state if left undisturbed (Stacey 1996; Levick 2002; Dimitrov 2003; Woog 2004). Woog and Dimitrov (2004:253) propose that ‘human systems have been organised around certain attractors, over time’. For example, spirituality (as expressed through the Dreamtime) in traditional Aboriginal communities has been a prime attractor.

**Complex adaptive system**

These systems consist of many interacting agents (and processes) that learn about and adapt to each other, and thus form a system/culture/organisation that adapts to its environment (Stacey 2005). For example, traditional Aboriginal life and grouping around specific and local tracts of land as a human activity system (HAS).

**Communicative connectedness**

Complex systems/cultures/organisations are made up of numerous agents interacting and communicating in non-simple ‘spatial propinquity’ (Emmeche 1997). This proximity or nearness may be simultaneously present in time, place and relationship, and therefore display the properties of communicative connectedness. For example, a local traditional Aboriginal kinship group’s (as a HAS) communicative pattern.

**Coherence**

The degree to which stakeholders in system/culture/organisation ‘perceive their togetherness, interdependence and friendship’ (Dimitrov 1999:2) can be operationally defined as its level of coherence. If the level of coherence is low, power concentration increases. If coherence is high, power concentration decreases. Therefore, the coherence level in a human activity system will influence its stability state and its ability to change or adapt to its environment. For example, it can be seen that traditional local Aboriginal groups’ authoritative and knowledge structures (under
tribal Elders) served to provide a shared sense of purpose, direction, cohesion and interdependence for existence.

**Self-organisation**

This is the process by which people in a system/culture/organisation interact with each other according to their own local rules of behaviour without any overarching plan/model dictating how they are to behave (Stacey 1996). Self-organisation also refers to the ability of a culture/system/organisation to respond, re-organise and adapt to its internal and external operating environment (Levick 2002). For example, the ability of traditional Aboriginal culture and organisation to be maintained or replicated in contemporary settings.

**Fractal/fractality**

The concept of fractality comes from Benoit Mandelbrot’s work in the 1970s and early 1980s. Briefly, Mandelbrot (1983) theorised that Nature contains many patterns/shapes that are irregular and fragmented, exhibiting complexity. Further, the number of distinct scales of natural patterns is infinite. He developed a new nature of geometry, describing the irregular patterns around us as a family of shapes called *fractals*. Fractals also demonstrate regularity, and the degree of pattern fragmentation is identical at all scales of focus. In other words, fractals’ characteristics are simultaneously apparent at many scales of focus – that is, as pattern repetition (also see, e.g., Levick 2002; Woog 2004). Whereas fractality is a mental (mind) construct, it can be seen in the complexity of human experience and organisation. For example, the human individual as a fractal is a living and dynamic entity. Similarly, a group of individuals can be seen to be a living and dynamic entity. Moving to a wider scale of focus a local, state or national population can be seen in a fractal construct or picture. In some way each one of us simultaneously belongs to, or is a member of, these populations. Thinking fractally allows us to see that we are part of groups, cultures or larger systems. Whereas we may be seen as individuals, we are still part of, reflect and are influenced by patterns and characteristics at local, state, national and even global levels. For example, the concept and practice of local Aboriginal kinship which is replicated across the whole of Australia, albeit with some variation.
Vorticity/vortical
A situation where there are radically different dynamics occurring, giving rise to unpredictable or unexpected emergent outcomes (Kuhn and Woog 2002), but the different dynamics are marshalled to provide a unifying effect; an amplification. For example, the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples under the amalgamation of invasive forces.

Emergence
Emergence refers to the unknown or unexpected outcomes (Levick 2002) of adaptive responses by complex systems to their environments. It may also refer to the outcomes of imposed intervention or externally forced changes in a system. Therefore, emergence may have positive or negative consequences, and may consequently influence a system in a profound way. For example, the consequences of European cultures’ influence on Aboriginal peoples.

1.7 Outline of the Thesis
This introductory chapter opened with a narrative of my modern-day walkabout, followed by an outline of the research terrain, aims, questions and boundaries. Next, the rhetorical form of this thesis is presented as a narrative incorporating context, questions, description, analysis, findings and discussion that builds a substantive theory of organisational design and development.

Chapter 2 critically reviews and discusses the complex social issue of Aboriginal youth homelessness. The historical and present context of Aboriginal youth homelessness will be reviewed. Definitions of ‘home’ and ‘homelessness’ will be investigated and documented. The demographics of the homeless youth population will be discussed. A description of the various organisational responses (such as government and service providers, within SAAP) will be presented. The review will thus reveal existing knowledge on Aboriginal youth homelessness. It is anticipated that this process will make visible information gaps and serve as a platform to consider important issues in the development of the substantive theory of this thesis.

The research philosophy, Chapter 3, outlines the paradigm that will guide the thesis inquiry. A rationale for selecting a qualitative research approach is provided. In
addition, I ‘situate the researcher’ (myself) in this section of the thesis, as well as considering the question: Who controls the research process? The pertinent ontological, epistemological, axiological, theoretical and methodological research perspectives will be discussed. Ethical protocols and issues are also outlined. An integrated research approach will be presented.

Chapter 4 outlines the case study research methods and fieldwork (drawn from the research philosophy), which include participant observation, data collection, analysis, interpretation and representation of multiple views from participants, examinations of traditional Aboriginal sites (physical traces) and records of relevance to the research. As indicated above, the thesis rhetorical form is essentially narrative in style, and is augmented with matrices that summarise, tabulate and aggregate data, evidence and findings to produce and make visible complex research concepts and constructs, as part of the substantive theory-building process. Verification techniques used during the research in the process of building a substantive theory of organisational design and development in an urban Aboriginal setting are outlined.

Chapter 5 is a description of the Mount Druitt Aboriginal youth SAAP service research case – presently, in the form of Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service. This section of the thesis will outline the development of HAYS and situate it in its context, bound within the timeframe of this research. As the case, HAYS can be defined as the emerging organised system of apparatus, processes, programs, employees, outputs and outcomes simultaneously interacting to produce services to meet the needs of its target group. HAYS’s uniqueness as a complex system of agents interacting to nudge it towards its anticipated goal of becoming an Aboriginal self-determined agency will be revealed. In doing this, intrinsic and instrumental lessons will be evident as data for the design and development of HAYS as the case, as well as other Aboriginal service organisations.

The stories and statements of research participants are documented and analysed in Chapter 6. The stories and statements will be integrated, highlighting similarities and differences relative to the research focus. The participants’ constructs of home and homelessness followed by the participants’ perceived causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness are outlined. Next, the design and development findings are outlined followed by HAYS’s governance and management ideas emerging from the data.
findings. This section of the thesis, in keeping with the research methodology, includes participants’ quotes to evoke the essence of the research, particularly allowing the ‘voices’ of Aboriginal people to be heard. This intentional process provides a unique ‘richness’ to the thesis, creating a simultaneous awareness of individuality and diversity, and yet a shared or collective sense of what is happening and being yearned for at and from HAYS. In addition, this chapter outlines the research findings drawn from the examination of past physical traces of traditional Aboriginal occupation sites.

Chapter 7 integrates the lessons learnt from the review of Aboriginal youth homelessness (Chapter 2), the analysis of the HAYS case (Chapter 5), and the fieldwork observations and findings related to the case study (Chapter 6). As stated above, the essential aim of this thesis is to generate a substantive theory derived from data systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. This approach integrates the findings, placing importance on the participants’ (stakeholders) views of how a service should be designed and developed. An idealistic vision of an Aboriginal youth service model is revealed in this section of the thesis, providing a framework to guide further discussion and action in responding to the phenomenon of Aboriginal youth homelessness. In conclusion, an emergent substantive theory of coherent dialogue is outlined, containing five critical design and development propositions.

In Chapter 8, I reflect on my research journey and dream of a better world, advocating for the development of more humane responses to Aboriginal peoples through the process of coherent dialogue and action. I suggest that a shared (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) critical consciousness is required to examine our beliefs, motives and expectations in designing and developing Aboriginal service organisations.

An evocative poem, from the ‘voice’ of an Aboriginal research participant, is provided as the thesis epilogue. A bibliography and appendices are included at the end of this thesis.
Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Youth Homelessness

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews and discusses the issue of Aboriginal youth homelessness, and responses to this phenomenon, at an overarching level within an historical and contemporary landscape. This introductory discourse, in keeping with the constructed research questions (Chapter 1) and research philosophy (Chapter 3), seeks to contextualise the research issues as a platform for theory development. As such, the organisational design and development theory emerges (in Chapter 7) from a synthesis of the critical reflections derived from this chapter and the research data in the following chapters, which include the ‘voices’ of Aboriginal research participants.

During the research, the history of Aboriginal homelessness has been examined through recourse to anthropological and archaeological literature. It was found that extensive information exists on the lives of Aboriginal people, mostly from the researcher’s or researchers’ perspective(s). As Muecke (2005) confirms:

> Europeans in Australia have made three well-worn tracks in their discourses on Aborigines. They are the anthropological, the romantic and the racist. These tracks sometimes cross each other, sometimes double back on themselves, and sometimes even Aborigines use them. (p21)

Muecke does not claim that these are the only discourses, but are probably the most popular ones. Without diminishing the value of such discourse, one wonders if such similar trekking energy was put into journeying with and listening to Aboriginal peoples what would be the effect on, for example, the Aboriginal reconciliation process in Australia. Further, it is questionable that such discourse has really made a positive difference and contribution in reducing Aboriginal homelessness.

Contemporary Aboriginal homelessness literature, albeit limited, tends to be drawn from research on SAAP. As SAAP is the national programmatic response to homelessness in Australia, in which HAYS is situated, this review will primarily focus on extant literature pertaining to this programmatic initiative. Another primary reference source is the journal *Parity*, published by the Council to Homeless Persons, which contains a range of extant articles from leading academics, researchers and
service providers that contribute to the homelessness discourse in Australia. It is from such literature together with SAAP documents, including the SAAP Act and homelessness inquiries, that a discussion of Aboriginal youth homelessness is drawn in this research.

The discourse in this chapter is not presented as exhaustive, rather it is indicative of the issues relevant to the research topic. Further, the review and discussion has not, in detail, analysed the cultural life of Australian Aborigines. This chapter, instead, sets out the most salient reference points, including definitions, context, demographics and responses to the phenomenon of Aboriginal youth homelessness. Further relevant literature has been pragmatically selected, reviewed, cited and contrasted with emerging ideas, participants’ views, and propositions in the following chapters of this thesis, focusing on organisational design and development of a community service organisation in an urban Aboriginal setting.

2.2 Exploring Homelessness

2.2.1 What is ‘homelessness’?

Describing the definition of ‘homelessness’ is a critical political, research and response issue. A review of literature reveals that there are numerous mainstream (Western) definitions of ‘homelessness’. For example, the following representative table lists a number of authors and their definitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Government (Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994)</td>
<td>‘A person is homeless if, and only if, he or she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing’ (p4). The Act goes on to specify what inadequate housing is, which includes SAAP accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Youth Coalition for Housing (cited in Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1998)</td>
<td>NYCH’s definition is similar to that of the Act (above). However, NYCH stresses that the absence of secure, adequate and satisfactory shelter is as perceived by the young person for homelessness to exist (p18).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1998, 2002)</td>
<td>These authors suggest that homelessness is a cultural construct. It is a ‘relative concept that acquires meaning in relation to the housing conventions of a particular culture’ (1998:19). For example, in Australia, the minimum housing standard might be a small rented flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Continued)</td>
<td>A model of homelessness levels is proposed by the authors, as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Primary homelessness – for example, people living on the streets, in parks, in cars, in derelict buildings and so on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Secondary homelessness – for example, people who move around from temporary shelter to another, including: young people in refuges, (like SAAP), people accessing emergency accommodation, and so on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tertiary homelessness – people living in single rooms such as boarding houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Marginally housed – people living in accommodation that is just below the minimum community standard such as a rented caravan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamberlain and MacKenzie</td>
<td>Also suggest that homelessness is a process. For example, they have developed the concept of the ‘homeless career’, drawing ‘attention to the fact that young people go through various stages before they develop a self-identity as a homeless person’ (2002:5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pe-Pua (1996)</td>
<td>This author suggests the majority of literature tends to ‘equate homelessness with the lack of physical housing or accommodation’ (p6). Pe-Pua cites Snow and Anderson’s (1993) description of this as ‘literal homelessness’ and that there are two other dimensions to homelessness (for young people): ‘the presence or absence of familial support, and the degree of dignity and moral worth associated with homelessness’ (p6). Pe-Pua suggests these concepts provide a more comprehensive definitional framework for understanding homelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks and Quinn (2000)</td>
<td>A straight-forward definition is offered: ‘homelessness is the failure to provide housing and shelter for the population’ (p10). The authors make this statement in the context of social inequality being experienced by Australian families, particularly since the early 1990s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of main relevance to this thesis is the above SAAP definition of homelessness, as it influences the activities of HAYS. The definition is based on ‘objective’ criteria related to a person’s specified lack of safe and secure housing, and mainly elicits numerical data. This is a limited definitional construct, as it ignores the subjective

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1 The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has based its definitions of homelessness in both the 1996 and 2001 Census on Chamberlain and MacKenzie’s primary, secondary and tertiary definitional work.
element of homelessness. That is, a classified ‘homeless’ person’s or group’s own view of their situation. Indeed, can there be true objectivity in definitional work given that concepts are constructed by people’s observations and perceptions emanating from their particular ontological, epistemological and/or ideological standpoints? Similarly, how can a SAAP practitioner objectively assess whether a person (potential client) is homeless or not? Obviously they will be bound by the specified SAAP criteria, which may not concur with the client’s perspective. Memmott, Long and Chambers (2003) argue that definitions constructed with relation to housing, accommodation and service delivery fail to fully recognise the complex, multi-layered and multi-dimensional nature of homelessness, particularly in Indigenous settings. Further, they suggest it may mean that some people, under a broader sense of homelessness, therefore become ineligible to receive support from a SAAP service.

2.2.2 Perception, construct and process

Another critical issue in the homelessness discourse is raised by Johnston (2002:7) when he reflects on: ‘what happens to people experiencing homelessness over time’. Johnston argues that a significant body of research has emerged since the 1970s, which has focused on descriptive ‘accounts of [the] homeless population’ (ibid:7). However, as he points out, there has been a ‘lack of attention to the temporal dimension of homelessness’ (ibid:7). Temporal analysis examines the constructs of homelessness vulnerability. For example: episode duration, the reasons for single or multiple episodes, and exit/re-entry patterns within the homeless population. Adding these constructs of vulnerability to the characteristics of who is and how many people are homeless for analysis therefore has the potential to elicit richer and more meaningful correlated data. However, such findings are still based on a standard operational definition, such as the SAAP definition cited above, which is primarily related to the absence of secure and stable shelter.

Pe-Pua’s (1996) definitional work (from Snow and Anderson in Table 2.1) begins to move beyond the physical and process constructs of homelessness to consider its metaphysical characteristics. First, Pe-Pua notes that the presence or absence of familial support raises questions of a person’s sense of connectedness and/or belonging. Second, she notes the degree of dignity and moral worth raise
notions of one’s self-respect and self-esteem in experiencing homelessness. In other words, while homelessness may be operationally defined for the purposes of research, social and economic policy or a programmatic response, those people categorised as being homeless may have a different perception of their lived experience. Therefore, as Pe-Pua shows, there are various beliefs and assumptions to be considered in any discourse and analysis of the definition, construct and process of homelessness.

Accordingly, homelessness is not an easy phenomenon to define and measure. The question of what homelessness means to: those who are homeless, those who set policy on homelessness responses, and those who design services for the homeless, is likely to vary. Johnston (2002:7) suggests ‘that part of the reason homelessness remains a slippery concept is [due to] a lack of theoretical attention to the notion of home’. Johnson goes on to identify ‘two significant developments that shed new light on this enduring problematic’ (ibid:7). First, that homelessness may be recognised as a cultural construct. Second, that homelessness may be a process. These two constructs are in line with Chamberlain and McKenzie’s (1998, 2002) definitional work cited in Table 2.1 above.

In agreement with Johnston, if we are to deal with homelessness, we must first consider the meaning of ‘home’. If we have a fixed definition of what homelessness is, without recourse to what the notion of home means to people, particularly those who are homeless, we may fall into the trap of ‘forced welfare’ where government and society impose a ‘fix’ (e.g., SAAP) on those who are homeless. If ‘homelessness’ is a cultural construct, then it can be similarly posited that so is ‘home’. This thesis inquiry has sought to elicit the views of research participants on their meanings and constructs of home and homelessness (see Chapter 6).

In contrast, I suggest that definitions and constructs of home and homelessness have come from the particular beliefs and assumptions of those people who develop policy and programmatic responses to homelessness. As a practitioner and researcher in the homelessness support sector since 1996, I cannot recall reading many (if any) reports that explicitly declared the author’s ontological and epistemological position – it is apparent that they are either assumed or implied or, at worst, a case of epistemic unawareness. Declared belief systems and attendant knowledge construction, which
significantly influence research findings, are lacking in the literature, as apparent in the sample definitions of homelessness cited above in Table 2.1.

A further criticism of homelessness research and reports is of a methodological nature. Rarely do the reports contain the author’s declared methodology and underpinning theoretical and ideological stand-points. However when used, the term methodology is often conceptualised and applied inappropriately, being confused with research methods. For example, researchers (and consultants) often claim their methodology to be focus groups, interviews or literature reviews and so on. These are specific research techniques derived from a methodology. Methodology is actually the science or study of methods (which will be demonstrated and further discussed in Chapter 3).

Without labouring this point, it is important for researchers to be aware of these paradigmatic issues, as they shape the way knowledge is produced from research projects. As Martin (2005:13) points out, ‘we must consider what guides us in knowing what are valid research topics, what constitutes valid methods and what comprise valid research outcomes’. Martin indicates that the concepts of values, positioning (identity) and experience, that guide the contracting and conduct of research projects, are often ignored in the Australian homelessness discourse. She therefore calls for these concepts to be made visible in homelessness research projects to ‘unsettle’ any taken-for-granted knowledge and constructs of ‘truth’.

Like Martin, I believe it is important to make visible our stand-points and perceptions of the ‘world’ as researchers. These paradigmatic issues are more than matters of perception. Defining, researching and measuring homelessness is a political process. Research findings have the power to significantly influence government policy, legislative deliberations, the allocation of resources, and community attitudes. Research also has the power to raise people’s moral consciousness.

2.2.3 Causes, implications and remedies

However homelessness is defined, it is nonetheless considered to be a social and economic problem (see, e.g., Bourke 2002; Crinall 2002; Fopp 2002). How it is perceived and defined, whether individually or structurally,
significantly shapes the range of social responses to the problem. Most social problems, including homelessness, involve a degree of social stigma. Community values and political agendas also condition the nature and limitations of policy and programs. Different weighting may be given to factors such as poverty, appropriate and affordable housing, unemployment, family discord and breakdown and individual deficiencies. Thus, the concept of homelessness is not a fixed idea but something that changes over time and may vary from one culture to another. The way homelessness is defined will determine how policy is formed and what is being done to help homeless people and, to some extent, how that help is delivered. (Berry, MacKenzie, Briskman and Ngwenya 2001:6)

Taking Berry et al’s insight seriously, it can be argued that policy preferences and proclivities will significantly influence how Aboriginal SAAP service agencies are structured (designed, developed, governed and managed), both culturally and organisationally; an area that homelessness discourse is mostly silent on. Further, if the nature of homelessness changes over time, it could be argued that SAAP service agencies will need to be flexible, and possibly reform to respond to diversity and change; again an area the SAAP discourse lacks coherent research on, except the mostly imposed programmatic themes emerging from each five-year SAAP agreement. Designers of SAAP organisations, such as HAYS, would need to have, or at least develop, a critical awareness of the causes and implications of Aboriginal homelessness.

As indicated, perceptions will influence the aetiology of homelessness and subsequent ameliorative responses. For example, from a conservative ideological perspective people may be considered to become homeless due to their inability (e.g., poor skills) to access employment and therefore have a low income level that may diminish their capacity to ‘stay in the home/housing market’, particularly within Australian cities. In this view, their unemployment or under-employment is seen as contributing to their homelessness, rather than wider problems with industrial relations or fiscal policy. On the other hand, from a more socialist or critical ideology, it could be argued that due to inequality, marginalisation and so on, people have limited opportunity to compete and access the ‘free market’. Further, from a worldwide Indigenous peoples perspective the aetiology of their ‘homelessness’ may have its roots in the act of colonisation.
Regardless of these ideological perspectives, and their ameliorative remedies, a large number of diverse peoples continue to experience homelessness with, at times, devastating impacts and consequences. Homelessness is much more complex than a focus on structural or individual causes would suggest. It is a phenomenon that affects people in diverse ways. For instance, in the case of homeless young people, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s (HREOC 1989) findings, in its Report of the National Inquiry into Homeless Children, state that young homeless people might resort to criminal activity or prostitution for survival. Secondly, they may become violent, addicted to substances or display other self-destructive behaviour. Third, some may become permanently detached from their families, and perhaps go on to experience a profound alienation from their communities of belonging. Of additional concern is that HREOC’s (1989) inquiry found that many of these young people would become homeless adults. Aboriginal youths were reported as being ‘disproportionately represented among the homeless’ (ibid:129), and there was a noticeable trend of young people ‘from the more far-flung traditionally-oriented [Aboriginal] communities … becoming homeless when they move into towns and cities to continue schooling or training or to search for work and, possibly, other diversion’ (ibid:134).

Fopp (2003) reviewed the HREOC (1989) inquiry findings and comments on reactions to it, and judges its overall impact and subsequent developments. First, Fopp notes that there was an enormous reaction from the media particularly in response to the report’s estimation of there being 20,000 to 25,000 homeless youth in Australia. My analysis of this estimation is that counting the homeless in Australia is problematic as it is driven by operational definitions of what constitutes homelessness as previously discussed. Regardless of the estimates, the Report raised substantive issues that remain relevant. For instance, a lack of affordable and sustainable public housing and exit points from SAAP support services, which I concur with based on my experience of the SAAP sector. Second, HREOC pointed to a lack of adequate resources and as Fopp (2003:14) indicates, the Report ‘packed a punch and, soon afterwards, the dollars were flowing’, but some of the Report’s major recommendations have not been implemented. Third, by 2003, Fopp suggests the discourse of homelessness may have actually been oppressing homeless people. For
example, he suggests that the terms of homelessness ‘process’, ‘career’ and ‘pathway’, may mask the traumatic realities of being homeless under such neutral language.

The HREOC (1989) Report actually included statements from homeless young people, which had the effect of grounding the inquiry discourse in the real and lived experiences of these people. However, the neutral language referred to above masks the structural and causal drivers of homelessness. For example, Fopp (2002:15) argues that much of the homelessness discourse confuses symptoms and causes, and asserts that: ‘This means that the causes of homelessness are attributed to individual characteristics and other possible causes are not properly investigated’. For instance, returning to the earlier example of unemployment contributing to homelessness, Fopp (ibid) points out that if this is the case, then the rate of homelessness should decrease as unemployment rates decrease, but as evidence indicated at the time such had not been the case. Despite the conservative ideology influencing Australian politics over the last decade – the ‘free market’ as panacea for unemployment and other social problems – Erebus Consulting Partners (ECP) (2004a:4) point out from their analysis that ‘it is apparent that the total number of homeless people in Australia has remained fairly consistent for most of the past ten years’.

In countering this finding, a conservative perspective might suggest that as the homeless population has not increased, this is a sign that economic policy is therefore limiting the potential increase in the incidence of homelessness. However, it remains that conservative economic market policy appears not to be reducing the incidence of homelessness. Therefore, programs such as SAAP will apparently continue to primarily deal with the crises of homeless people. Continuing with a conservative treatment-like program such as SAAP has its place, but in my view it will never adequately address the structural causes of homelessness. SAAP is configured to deal with the effects of homelessness, not necessarily its causation. Interestingly, it appears that the Australian Government will persist with a conservative SAAP approach to Indigenous homelessness, as its National Homelessness Strategy includes a plan to develop a ‘framework for effective holistic models of service delivery for the future’ (FaCS 2005:3).

Wider structural analysis and policy reform in, for example, the areas of human rights, the economy, social housing, education, employment and community health are
recognised by some writers as being needed to address the problem of Aboriginal homelessness (see, e.g., Tsorbaris 2003a). Creating a fairer and more equitable society for all people has been on the agenda of national peak advocacy bodies such as the Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations (AFHO 2002). In my experience of attending numerous national and state homelessness forums concerned academics, activists and SAAP workers have called on governments to address the structural causes of homelessness. Crinall (2002:6) indicates, however, that the need to listen ‘has been stated and restated’. Nevertheless, I argue that it needs to be permanently on the agenda of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)\(^2\) as an entity that could be taking a leadership role in addressing the structural causes of homelessness.

Crinall (2002:6) questions if there really is a cause ‘or should we just focus on homelessness as a cause’. She suggests that perhaps we are overly concerned with defining the causes of homelessness. For instance,

> if we can find the origin, or fundamental elements of a thing or event, we can not only comprehend and know it, we can change and adjust it, exert our power over it. This is how we tend to treat the problem of homelessness, and perhaps this an error. (ibid:6)

Crinall seems to be implying that homelessness is a complex issue that defies reductionist like analysis of its aetiology. Targeting its causes, as if it is a matter of an individual’s dysfunction, may serve to mask deeper, embedded problems – social and economic inequalities. Crinall concludes by stating: ‘Homelessness exists because we let it happen’ (ibid:6). It is not clear who is the ‘we’ is in this statement, but it appears that Crinall is referring to society. On the other hand, this statement could imply that the homeless have the ability and power to address and overcome their circumstance. This assumes that these people have access to – or can at least (re)gain access to – certain resources (e.g., housing, employment, education) and the determination to overcome their homelessness. It could also be interpreted to imply that homeless people should comply with and engage with the processes of modern Western employment and education, and seek to obtain or at least live in a ‘home’.

\(^2\) COAG is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia comprising the Prime Minister, Premiers (States), Chief Ministers (Territories) and the President of the Australian Local Government Association. Its role is to initiate, develop and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that require co-operative action by Australian Governments (FaCS 2005:21).
Aboriginal people traditionally (pre-colonial) had a ‘home’ (which will be further discussed below in Section 2.3) and were gainfully employed spiritually, culturally, socially and economically. For example, Hunter (2005) describes the Dharug people’s ancestors’ traditional notions of home and identity as being related to their community and tribal homeland within a particular language area. There were strong kinship bonds that generally determined how such a group existed in apparent equality – poverty was unknown as the material wealth of the community was shared (ibid). This changed with the arrival of the first Fleet in Sydney Cove in 1788. Since then Aboriginal groups, such as the Dharug people and their descendants, may have been separated from the fabric of their traditional existence. It could be posited that Dharug descendants have been forced to live a ‘vortical homeless existence’.

Should we continue to impose Western notions of how Aboriginal peoples must organise themselves to live? Or should we explore with them possible homelessness remedies; perhaps a reversion to their ancestors’ ‘sense of home’ that served them well through the generations? This is a question that drives me as I explore the physical traces of past traditional sites (Aboriginal ‘homes’) and ask the research participants about their constructs of home, homelessness and the causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness (in Chapter 6). In doing this, I am not seeking so much as to find the answers to overcoming homelessness; rather I am hoping to elicit information about their views of home, as well as what organisational configurations and responses they desire in HAYS. However, at this stage in the thesis, I explore the notion of Aboriginal homelessness.

### 2.3 Aboriginal Homelessness

#### 2.3.1 A loss of sovereignty

Traditionally, homelessness in a physical and/or metaphysical sense was arguably non-existent in pre-colonial Australia. Aboriginal people were intimately connected to and aware of their ‘homes’ as defined by tribal spirituality, laws, customs and boundaries (see, e.g., Elkin 1979; Berndt and Berndt 1988). The Western term of

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3 HAYS is situated on the land of the Dharug people.

4 Though Elkin (1979:78) indicates that at times of ceremony, hunting and food gathering, groups combined ‘without much concern for clan or tribal boundaries’. Nonetheless they were still aware of boundaries, as certain protocols were to be observed before access permissions were granted.
'mother' is perhaps one metaphor to describe this bond and relationship (Stockton 1995); the notions of, for instance, provision, safety, security, love and connectedness that can be assigned to ‘mother’. What is more, Stockton (1995:84) says, ‘the individual has an unbreakable tie, not to the whole of Australia, nor to any bush setting, but to a specific ‘country’’. The Aboriginal notion of ‘home’ incorporates a significant traditional religious component and did not separate ‘spirituality’ from the land, fauna, flora and human-beings; rather these elements were seen as an ‘integrated whole’.

If a person breached a tribal custom, then the punishment may have been banishment from the individual’s tribal land and community. For example, Howitt (cited in Malinowski 1963:15) indicates that ‘transgression of the mother-in-law taboo seems to be punished by expulsion from the local group’. In such instances, persons may be considered to be homeless, as they would no longer have access to their ancestral homelands. Further, when a person was banished from his/her ‘land’, it was not just a physical separation, but also that of a metaphysical and cultural disconnection following ‘banishment from the corporate life of the tribe’ (Elkin 1979:144). Therefore, it can be speculated that a banished person suffered a deeply humiliating and devastating disconnection: a complete sense of homelessness.

Hunter (2005:11) asserts that prior to colonisation Aboriginal homelessness was unknown, and therefore it is really a modern construct that ‘needs to be understood in a contemporary context’. Hunter makes this statement as his traditional knowledge is that, ‘a person was always connected to their homeland in a spiritual sense through their totemic identity that was always centred in the landscape’ (ibid:14). Home would have been a deeply experienced sense of ‘place’ or ‘places’. Presumably then the only true disconnection from ‘place’ would be on a person’s death. However, this too is a matter of spirituality, as Hunter notes that Aboriginal religion held that a deceased person’s spirit might occupy a certain location within what was once his/her physical homeland. Based on the propositions of Stockton and Hunter, it can be interpreted that whereas Aboriginal people in pre-colonial Australia may have been physically separated from their tribal lands, they never experienced a spiritual separation.

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5 The taboo of a male having sexual relations with his mother-in-law.
Around 217 years ago the experience of Aboriginal ‘homelessness’ became an externally imposed and Australia-wide alienating process under European colonisation. Gradually, a large number of Aboriginal people became separated from their lands and families. As Stockton (1995:84) points out: ‘For most Aborigines, that tie [to a particular tract of land] has been torn. A large number now live in the built up environments of the city, though remembering the country from which they have come.’ Indeed the ‘countries’ they came from may not have been distant from where they now live, but may now be built-over with bitumen, concrete, bricks, metals and introduced flora, as in the case along the Australian coastline. Instead of relatively free access to their ancestral community land, Aboriginal people may be barred access to traditional lands under an imposed Western private property regime and notion of ownership; a shift from custodianship (traditional Aboriginal) to ownership (modern Western). Custodianship implies a more harmonious existence with the land, and ownership a more Western, aggressive exploitation of the land.

Stanner (1968) evocatively described the process of forced movement of Aboriginal peoples into ‘settlements and institutions as substitute homes’, stating:

*When we took what we [colonisers] call ‘land’ we took what to them [Aboriginal peoples] meant hearth, home, the source and locus of life, and everlastingness of spirit. At the same time it left each local band bereft of an essential constant that made their plan and code of living intelligible. Particular pieces of territory, each a home-land, formed part of a set of constants without which no affiliation of any person to any other person, no link in the whole network of relationships, no part of the complex structure of social groups any longer had all its co-ordinates. What I described as ‘homelessness’, then, means that the Aborigines faced a kind of vertigo in living. They had no stable base of life; every personal affiliation was lamed; every group structure was pulled out of kilter; no social network had a point of fixture left. (p45-6)*

The traditional lands, constants and structures referred to by Stanner may not have been passed on from pre-colonial Aboriginal people to their post-colonial descendants. Elkin (1979:140) indicates that a serving of traditional culture may lead to a ‘collapse of the local organization itself’ of Aboriginal peoples, placing in jeopardy the continuance and transmission of their existential meaning (e.g., the Dreamtime) to future generations. In my view, this severing of tradition may make it almost impossible for some Aboriginal people to fully (or even partially) enter into an experience of traditional ‘home’, which is inextricably bound up in spirituality, laws,
kinship, languages and cultures. In this sense, they suffer the devastating experience of what I term as being a loss of sovereignty.

2.3.2 Generational homelessness

A second devastating phase of colonial intervention occurred when government authorities removed Aboriginal children from their families. In 1995 the Federal Attorney General established a national inquiry into the effects of the forced removal of Aboriginal children since the early days of European colonisation of Aboriginal Australia – now known as ‘the stolen generation’. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC 1997a) conducted the inquiry and released its report entitled Bringing them Home. The Report found that most Aboriginal families have been affected ‘in one or more generations by the forced removal of one or more children’ between 1910 and 1970. The Report tragically found that numerous children were removed from their ‘home’ in its deepest and fullest sense. In response to this, The Bringing them Home – Community Guide (HEROC 1997b) report concludes by appealing to all Australians to open their hearts and minds and take a journey of reconciliation:

The Inquiry has been of fundamental importance in validating the stories of generations of Indigenous people who until now have carried the burden of one of Australia’s greatest tragedies. The Inquiry understands many children from other cultures have been forcibly removed from their families. We recognise their pain; we urge Australia to undertake the process of healing these broken relationships, where it is possible to do so. Indigenous families and communities have endured gross violations of their human rights. These violations continue to affect Indigenous people’s daily lives. They were an act of genocide, aimed at wiping out Indigenous families, communities and cultures, vital to the precious and inalienable heritage of Australia. The Inquiry’s recommendations are directed to healing and reconciliation for the benefit of all Australians. A commitment to the implementation of both the spirit and letter of these recommendations is essential to the future unity, justice and peace of the nation. The process of telling and listening has only begun. The process will not be easy; it will not go away. It is for all of us to make the journey of reconciliation, and with open hearts and minds it is possible for us to begin ‘bringing them home’. (HREOC On-line 24 May 2005)

What does it mean to ‘bring them home’? In a sense they are already ‘home’, together with all other Aboriginal peoples: Australia is their physical, metaphysical and cultural ‘home’. However, the generational homelessness of some Aboriginal
people may be so profound as to completely inhibit a reversion to their traditional home. The effects of child removal are cross-generational and people/families with an experience of removal often suffer from, for example, shame, poor self-esteem, substance abuse and violence. Hunter (2005:21) notes that such problems may be passed on due to the ‘the dysfunction from the ‘training’ or abuses imposed upon mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers who suffered in the homes and institutions’ that once housed them under the ‘well-intentioned’ removal policy. In this sense, they suffer what I term as being the existence and experience of generational homelessness.

### 2.3.3 Contemporary homelessness

There is no doubt that the unique cultures of Aboriginal peoples in Australia have experienced enormous mutative pressures under the dominance of European exploitation and interests. As a result, Aboriginal people have become disproportionately homeless relative to the non-Indigenous population (see, e.g., Memmott et al 2003; FaCS 2005), and in reality this is describing that they may be ‘landless’ and/or ‘familyless’. In an analysis of 1991 Australian Census data, Stracey (2003:5) found that ‘Indigenous families are approximately 16 times more likely than other Australian families to be homeless’ and that it is likely the data underestimates the level of housing stress in the Indigenous community.

It is now 2005 and a large number of Aboriginal peoples can be seen to be still living a ‘vortical existence of homelessness’; a state of affairs including all forms of social peril, dispossession, alienation and dependency. The ABS and AIHW (2005) in their report, *The Health and Welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, found that Indigenous people continue to suffer disproportionately in comparison with the rest of Australia’s population from some of the effects of colonisation, in conditions of social and economic disadvantage. Their ‘traditional attractors’ (land, spirituality and culture) may have been forcibly replaced with ‘contemporary attractors’ (e.g., artificial environments, remnant/shallow spirituality, fragmented cultures and individualism). Some Aboriginal peoples have been removed from their traditions and homelands and scattered amongst the colonisers’ cultures and
properties – the Aboriginal Diaspora. I use the term contemporary homelessness to describe this situation.

Of all the literature accessed and reviewed, the macro effects of colonisation, governmental policies and practices, racism, marginalisation, and so on are well documented (see, e.g., Stanner 1968; Behrendt 2003). These macro effects are repeatedly portrayed as significantly contributing to contemporary Aboriginal homelessness. The impacts and implications are a matter of documented record, but alarmingly have continued to have significant effects on contemporary Aboriginal Australians and therefore the way these peoples organise themselves spiritually, culturally, structurally, economically, socially and individually. For example, literature overwhelmingly points to unresolved issues of cultural fragmentation, dispossession, disempowerment, poverty, substance abuse, violence and family breakdown (see, e.g., Keys Young 1998b).

Stanner (1968:53) drew attention to the long-lasting and repetitive patterns of Aboriginal inequality and disadvantage, and as a consequence there had been a ‘growth in the syndrome of coiled and tangled problems of which homelessness, powerlessness, poverty and confusion are main constituents’. Berry et al (2001) coherently summarise the historical perspective of Aboriginal homelessness as a spiritual issue of separation from home and family, rather than being without a permanent dwelling. Whole communities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been removed from their original homeland or experienced disruption of kinship relations. The cultural significance of ‘home’ in the sense of ‘homeland’ is not intuitively understood by other groups of Australians. (p6)

To reiterate, what really makes an Aborigine’s ‘home’ is the tie ‘to his “country” for it is the home of his spirit’ (Elkin 1979:81) in life and death as noted above.6 Further, as in Western society, ‘the home is based upon, and centres around, the institution of the family, quite apart from tribal, local, historical and religious associations’ (ibid:82). Clearly, any discourse on contemporary Aboriginal homelessness needs to take into

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6 Elkin uses ‘his’ to presumably include ‘her’ as well. He does suggest that the people belong to their land through the ‘male line’, ‘together with their wives who come from other local countries’ (p81). However, this does raise the question about which area is really experienced as a female person’s home: her birth or marital place? Elkin seems to suggest that the female is spiritually connected to her birthplace, as Berndt and Berndt (1988:37-41) also suggest when stating that females do not relinquish their totemic affiliation when moving out of their group for marriage.
account the profound meaning of Aboriginal family, and therefore any forced or natural disconnection from their families and homelands. This is an issue for discussion, development and formation of responsible ameliorative policy with Aboriginal peoples.

Another policy issue to consider is that of Aboriginal mobility. In pre-colonial times, Aboriginal people freely moved around their specific traditional tract of homeland. There may have been visits to other groups. This mobility was considered to be a normal part of Aboriginal life to take advantage of, for example, seasonal variations in whether conditions and sources of food or for ceremonies (see, e.g., Merriman 1993). Berry et al (2001) suggest that the mobility of Aboriginal peoples, which continues in contemporary life, is not well understood by non-Aboriginal communities and that: ‘Cultural practices of Indigenous people, which express comfort using outdoor space, may conflict with the rules and regulations of the mainstream society’ (ibid:4). Choices may be made to sleep outdoors or move between one’s relatives. These are not unusual cultural practices, but under a Western lens may be considered to be illegal or indicate that the person or group is homeless. On the contrary, being mobile or being without ‘fixed’ shelter have not necessarily been considered to be of homelessness characteristics to Aboriginal peoples.

There have been attempts to better understand the nature and implications of modern Aboriginal homelessness. Keys Young (1998a&b) identified five distinct forms of contemporary Indigenous homelessness, as being:

1. *Spiritual* – ‘which relate to separation from traditional land or family’
2. *Overcrowding* – ‘a hidden form of homelessness, which is said to be causing considerable stress and distress’
3. *Relocation and transience* – ‘transient and mobile lifestyles’ which result in ‘temporary, intermittent and often cyclical patterns of homelessness’
4. *Unsafe and unstable homes* – ‘affecting large numbers of Indigenous people, especially women and young people’
5. *‘No where to go’* – ‘lack of access to any stable shelter, accommodation or housing’.

Keys Young’s research is noteworthy for its insights and inclusion of Aboriginal ‘voices’, and has become a key report in the discourse of Indigenous homelessness in Australia. Berry et al (2001) criticise it for failing to include Victorian Indigenous people’s ‘voices’, but acknowledge that the Keys Young report is nonetheless useful.
This group (Berry et al), from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), was consequently engaged by the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria to undertake an Indigenous research project. Firstly, to address specific issues including inadequate housing of Indigenous peoples in Victoria (that had not received sufficient attention by government). Secondly, to make visible the concerns of the Victorian Aboriginal community regarding ‘the implicit assumption underpinning government policy that Aboriginal people in Victoria are an insignificant minority with no distinct Aboriginal cultural life’ (ibid:2).

If such an assumption is underpinning government policy in Victoria and other Australian jurisdictions, then it is reasonable to argue that government entities and administrators may not be taking seriously the need to design and develop culturally appropriate and sensitive Aboriginal service organisations. Further, if this is the case, research in the realm of design and development of Aboriginal organisations is of fundamental importance in promoting the well-being of Aboriginal peoples. My analysis reveals that there is indeed a paucity of robust research and discourse on Aboriginal organisational design and development.

2.3.4 Re-conceptualising homelessness
In terms of Indigenous views of homelessness, Keys Young (1998b:21) concluded that ‘very little Australian research on homelessness has specifically focused on the issue from the perspective of Indigenous people and communities’. Memmott et al (2003) found that there are a number of weaknesses in conceptualising Indigenous homelessness, and therefore policy and organisational responses are failing to embrace the complex nature of the issue. Further, their report pointed out that where policy objectives have been developed they do not always have attendant realistic and practical implementation strategies. At the time of writing this thesis, in 2005, I would say that the situation has not significantly changed since the publication of the Keys Young and Memmott et al reports.

On the other hand, there has been a plethora of SAAP reports, on for example, client satisfaction, client measurement systems’, high and complex needs issues, early intervention, and measurement of client outcomes. Clearly, the focus has primarily been on mainstream policy and service delivery issues, not on the efficacy of the
SAAP system in its ability to appropriately respond to Aboriginal young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Another homelessness discourse focus, in the SAAP context, has been on definitional, categorisation and measurement research. It seems that defining Aboriginal homelessness has become the holy grail of some academics and institutions. For example, Memmott et al (2003:21) conducted a definitional literature review revealing that there have been numerous research projects and reports on categorical constructs. Memmott et al concluded that because it is difficult to define Indigenous homelessness, researchers ‘have difficulty in deciding on a term of collective address’, but like other researchers Memmott et al also offered ‘a useful set’ of categories and, in particular, affirmed Keys Young’s category of ‘spiritual homelessness’ (separation from land and/or kin). Whereas this work is helpful, it does not adequately address the situation of many Aboriginal people living on their traditional place and being unable to conduct their traditional way of life on that land.

In light of these multitudinous attempts at describing and defining Aboriginal homelessness, it appears to me to be most critically depicted as a loss of traditional sovereignty – a loss of a people’s sense of spiritual, custodial, identity, connection and belonging in association with a particular place. This description of homelessness has the power to make (re)visible a traditional Aboriginal sense of home. Utilising such a view would shift the definitional and measurement discourse from dealing with Aboriginal homelessness to exploring what ‘home’ means to the many displaced Aboriginal groups in Australia. Accordingly, I resist the temptation to definitively arrive pre-emptorily at a set of definitional constructs, but rather I primarily seek the views of Aboriginal people who have been cited and who have participated in this thesis on this matter.

2.4 Responses to Aboriginal Youth Homelessness

2.4.1 Needs and issues

Aboriginal young people living in urban areas continue to experience, or are at least exposed to, all forms of personal, family and social problems. They may be seen as the most vulnerable Aboriginal community group, ‘bearing the brunt of the impact of years of oppression and depression, overcrowding, discrimination, family breakdown, poverty and social disadvantage’ (Keys Young 1998b:36). As a result, many young
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people leave home or temporarily seek respite in a relative’s home. Unfortunately, they may face similar issues in their place of temporary shelter, and subsequently move on to unsafe places (e.g., parks) or refuges (such as SAAP). Therefore, the phenomenon of Aboriginal youth homelessness is perhaps well understood if situated in reference to Keys Young’s findings. However, there is a paucity of literature that comprehensively seeks to understand the impact and implications of homelessness from the perspective of youth and their communities.

There have been, however, some inquiries that have considered the needs and issues of homeless Aboriginal youth. For example, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission conducted a significant inquiry on homeless children and youth in Australia. At the time of writing its report, HREOC (1989) concluded that urgent action was required to address the problem of youth homelessness:

Such action cannot be half-hearted or poorly planned. Homeless children and young people are dying in some cases and suffering horrific abuses of their rights in many others. Homelessness itself is a denial of rights theoretically guaranteed to our children and young people by the Commonwealth. This Report must be the catalyst for a serious and sustained response if this nation is to consider itself civilised. (p21)

In regard to the situation of Aboriginal children and young people, the Inquiry found that European colonisation, policies of assimilation and the removal of children from their families have had a profound effect on Aboriginal communities. For example, the causes and nature of Aboriginal homelessness should be seen in an historical context of dispossession and dispersal:

Until 21 years ago [late 1960s], Aborigines were non-citizens in their own country and, until more recently, have been subjected to discriminatory legislation and administration which denied many of their fundamental human rights. (ibid:129)

During the HREOC Inquiry, Aboriginal people stressed that home for them is strongly linked to family and that if a young person is temporarily living with relatives (e.g., an aunt) this should not imply that the person is homeless. HREOC found that this form of Aboriginal social organisation might not be recognised by non-Aboriginal authorities. However, some of the Aboriginal respondents argued that the practice of living with extended family (informal fostering) should not be grounds for governments to forego their responsibilities of providing support and fostering
allowances to the carers. It was also noted by some Aboriginal people that informal fostering can lead to problems such as residential overcrowding and the burden of supporting behaviourally difficult youth. It was apparent from the HREOC Inquiry that the supportive family and community fabric, once prevalent in Aboriginal communities, was breaking down under the pressure of abuse, poverty, alcoholism, racism and so on. These issues have not abated as more recent reports cited in this chapter demonstrate.

Importantly, The HREOC Inquiry also noted that ‘all Aboriginal communities and organisations which gave evidence or presented submissions to the Inquiry agreed that the Aboriginal community itself is the best source of support for Aboriginal children and young people’ (ibid:135). In the 1970s, this view led to the establishment and recognition of the *Aboriginal Child Placement Principle* where, if a child cannot be maintained within his or her family of birth then:

1. Welfare authorities should give preference to placing the young person with extended family.
2. If this is not possible, then a placement with another family in the young person’s community should be considered.
3. Should option 1 and 2 not be possible, then the young person should be placed with another Aboriginal family.
4. If all of the above options were not possible, then the last resort would be to place a young person outside his or her Aboriginal community.

The HREOC Report called for the necessary resources and administrative support, particularly advocating for the development of related community work with Aboriginal peoples, to fully and effectively implement this placement principle.

Allwood (2001) conducted an inquiry to develop a better understanding of Aboriginal youth homelessness in the Adelaide metropolitan area of South Australia. The main aim of the study was to contrast (similarities and differences) Indigenous with non-Indigenous youth homelessness. In summary, she indicated that the consistent messages characterising the homelessness of Aboriginal youth, included:

1. Family break-down and child abuse (the main causes of homelessness). Homelessness was preceded by lengthy periods of mobility, multiple caregivers and abusive relationships.
2. Family of origin disadvantage and minimal capacity to care for their children.
3. Young people had high and complex needs related to inadequate sustenance, housing, support, health and education.
4. Young people indicated that when seeking support from a service, they value relationships with consistent, safe adults, but also require assistance with their immediate practical needs, education and employment.

Allwood found that poor service delivery was characterised by communication problems, inadequate support systems, inflexible case management models and gaps in services. Significantly, she found that her research participants’ future aspirations were similar to other young people: ‘to have good, safe relationships and someone who cared for them; safe and stable accommodation; an education and a job – ie [sic], a decent future’ (ibid:3).

More recently, Hunter (2005), a Kamilaroi (Aboriginal) researcher was engaged by Penrith City Council (NSW) to investigate the character of local Aboriginal homelessness and the risk factors that contribute to Aboriginal people becoming homeless in the Penrith Local Government Area (LGA). Firstly, he found that the character of Indigenous homelessness in Western Sydney is dominated by itinerancy and overcrowding, especially in public housing. At present, the main groups falling through the support system include youth under the age of fifteen, families, single men and women being released from prison. Secondly, that the primary causes of Indigenous homelessness in Western Sydney include family violence, drug and alcohol issues, socio-economic disadvantage, and cycles of incarceration. Thirdly, the above characteristics and causes are related to cross-generational factors imposed upon Indigenous people by colonisation.\(^7\)

In addition, the Australian Government recognises that there remain special needs (as above) of homeless Indigenous youth to be addressed, citing the example of ‘the emerging problem of street gangs’ (FaCS 2005:15). Preliminary findings from a current research project that I am involved in, *Repositioning Aboriginal Young People in a Communicative Landscape* (Kuhn, Woog and Knox, forthcoming), indicate that similar issues and needs of at risk/homeless Aboriginal youth, to that cited in the above literature, are evident in the Mount Druitt area.

Tsorbaris (2003b:3) argues that: ‘Our understanding, our knowledge and appreciation of both the depth and the complexity of the issue of youth homelessness has almost always outstripped the many responses that have been thrown up in the last

\(^7\) John Hunter kindly provided these findings from his draft report to me via email on 9 December 2005.
twenty or so years’. In discussing youth homelessness in the State of Victoria, Tsorbaris suggests that policy makers will have to assess the current and future needs of youth, particularly in relation to their environments and where they dwell. This clearly is a policy issue for other Australian states and youth populations that are concentrated in locations such as Mount Druitt in NSW, which has a relatively high Aboriginal youth population (see, e.g., DoCS 2004; BCC 2006a&b On-line 25 January; DAA 2006 On-line 25 January). In forming such policy, it is important to note that of the estimated 525,000 Indigenous people in Australia (as at mid 2005) 39% are under fifteen years, and the median age of the Indigenous population is 21 years compared to 36 years for the non-Indigenous population (ABS and AIHW 2005).

Giovanetti (2003:4) argues that ‘it is important to recognise that the circumstances and needs of young homeless people in SAAP [vary] across age, gender, cultural background, and State and Territory’. However, Giovanetti does suggest that a typical profile of a ‘young SAAP client can be constructed to gain a general idea of these circumstances and needs’ (ibid:4). The following table aggregates the person’s profile drawn from the 2001-2002 SAAP National Data Collection reports on young homeless people (AIHW 2003).

**Table 2.2: Typical profile of a homeless young person**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>17 or 18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Australian-born, but not Indigenous [i.e., Aboriginal]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for seeking assistance</td>
<td>Family or relationship break-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living situation before seeking assistance</td>
<td>Likely to have been living with at least one of her parents or to have spent a short period of time with relatives or friends where she had not been paying rent or board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Likely that she was receiving Youth Allowance (and continued with this)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/employment</td>
<td>Probably not at school or undertaking any form of post-secondary or employment training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of support</td>
<td>21 days, including a period of accommodation lasting 11 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of service</td>
<td>In addition to accommodation, she would receive general support, advocacy and a referral for financial or employment assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Giovanetti (2003) indicates that the typical young male profile varied in that he was supported for shorter periods and was more likely to have experienced a number of SAAP support periods.

Regarding the profile of Indigenous youth, ‘they are significantly over-represented in the SAAP population relative to the [adult] Indigenous population’ (ibid:4), and nationally ‘16% of clients aged between 12-24 years identified as Indigenous, compared to 3% for the Australian population aged 12-24 years’ (ibid:4). Young Indigenous clients had much shorter periods of support, relative to other cultural groups (median of 3 days). The AIHW (2003:xv-xviii) indicates that:

- 36% of all SAAP clients are under the age of 25 years
- family or relationship breakdown, accommodation problems, domestic violence and eviction were the most common reasons for seeking SAAP assistance
- general support or advocacy was the most common SAAP service provided to young people
- the most common referral services were financial and/or employment, as well as assistance to obtain non-SAAP accommodation
- assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing was the most common unmet need, followed by financial and/or employment services
- following SAAP support, young people were less likely to be living in a car, park, tent, street or squat
- the number of young SAAP clients fell from 36,100 in 1997-98 to 34,100 in 2001-02 (a minor fall of 5.5%).

In the 2001-02 SAAP data collection period, overall, ‘11% of young male clients and 19% of young female clients identified as Indigenous’ (AIHW 2003:13). Significantly, the AIHW (2005) shows that in the 2003-2004 period:

Indigenous Australians were over represented as SAAP clients relative to their population size: 2% of Australians aged 10 years and over were estimated to be

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8 Young people under 18 years assisted by SAAP, while their parent or guardian was also being supported by SAAP (at the same agency) are not included in the analysis (data included in a separate AIHW report).
Indigenous Australians in June 2002, but this group made up around 17% of SAAP clients in 2003-04. (p17)

2.4.2 Government responses
At an overarching national, state and local level, government policy and planning in the areas of cultural heritage, justice, health, housing, families, disabilities, education and employment are relevant to homelessness responses due to the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the phenomenon. That is, responses to homeless people derive from an array of government policies, strategies and funded programs (see, e.g., AFHO 2002; Memmott et al 2003; FaCS 2005). However, as earlier stated, the primary government response to homelessness in Australia is SAAP, and it is within this context that this research has been conducted. An historical overview of the main government funded shelter and support responses to homeless youth follows, drawn from the report: *Our Homeless Children* (HREOC 1989).

Prior to 1970s, assistance for the homeless was mainly provided by private charitable organisations without government funding. In 1974, the Commonwealth Government passed the Homeless Persons’ Assistance Act 1974. The purpose of the Act was to subsidise the construction and/or running of temporary accommodation centres for homeless people, under the auspices of community-based organisations and local government authorities. During 1978, the State Ministers of Welfare urged the Commonwealth Government to provide funding to assist in meeting the increasing demand for emergency accommodation for homeless youth. In response, the Commonwealth Government established the Youth Services Scheme (YSS) for a three year funded pilot commencing 1 July 1979. The aim of the YSS was to provide short-term shelter and support services to assist young people to move into stable environments. At the time, it was perceived that youth homelessness was a temporary crisis.

In 1982, the Senate Standing Committee on Social Welfare, in its report, was critical of the YSS’s focus on the crisis youth refuge model of service provision.

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9 See Memmott et al and FaCS for a more comprehensive summary of national, state and local government ameliorative policies, strategies and initiatives on homelessness.
10 At December 2003 there were 1282 SAAP services in Australia, with 157 (12.25%) being Indigenous specific (FaCS 2005:17). It should be noted that Indigenous people also access mainstream SAAP agencies.
arguing that medium and long-term accommodation would eliminate the need for youth refuges. However, the Committee did recommend that the system of refuges be retained and rationalised by being located in areas of demand. Second, the YSS was also evaluated by a National Committee, a coalition of national and state child and youth jurisdictions. The National Committee’s report revealed that, in most States, 60% of requests for accommodation were not met, but the services were often successful in re-uniting young people with their families. On this basis the Committee recommended that family reconciliation services be provided, and where young people were not able to return home that on-going support be provided to assist them to live independently. Nonetheless, emergency accommodation was also considered an initial step in a range of support services in resolving homelessness situations for youth. Of concern to the HREOC (1989) Inquiry members was that ‘we are making the same observation more than five years later’ (ibid:12). The YSS pilot was extended for a further twelve months during 1983, in which time a further Commonwealth Government review was conducted. It was recommended and decided that the administration of the YSS be shifted to the States under the co-ordination of Commonwealth-State committees (funding was still to be shared at the two government levels).

In 1985 all Commonwealth crisis accommodation programs were incorporated under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1985 (subsequently amended to become the Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994). The current Act specifies that a program, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), will be provided to homeless people in Australia. SAAP recognises and provides services to homeless men, women, women escaping domestic violence, young people and children. The 1994 Act recognises that homeless people ‘form one of the most powerless and marginalised groups in society [and] responses to their needs should aim to empower them and to maximise their independence’ (Commonwealth Government 1994:1). The Act calls for respect and sensitivity of homeless people’s beliefs and social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. In addition, it specifies that homeless people have a right to ‘an equitable share of the community’s resources’ (ibid:2). The object of the Act is to grant financial assistance to Australian States and Territories to administer the implementation of SAAP. The aim of SAAP is to
provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services, in
order to help people who are homeless to achieve the maximum possible degree
of self-reliance and independence. Within this aim the goals are:
(a) to resolve crisis; and
(b) to re-establish family links where appropriate; and
(c) to re-establish a capacity to live independently of SAAP. (ibid:4-5)

Agencies, such as HAYS, funded under SAAP are required to meet these aims
through the provision of services such as assessment and referral, case management,
early intervention and/or re-establishment of family links as contained in their Service
Agreements with the relevant State/Territory funding body. SAAP agencies have the
responsibility of assisting homeless people to access community services such as
housing, employment, education, health, rehabilitation and so on, depending on the
needs of their homeless clients. Of particular relevance to this thesis, the Act specifies
that a national data collection system and national research program be developed to
inform ‘the development of policies relating to people who are homeless’ (ibid:8), and
that services will be provided to meet the special needs of particular groups including
‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ (ibid:8).

SAAP is primarily implemented through five-year agreements between the
Australian Federal, State and Territory governments. The State and Territory
governments, from partial Federal grants, mainly fund non-government agencies to
offer and deliver SAAP related services to people who are homeless or are at risk of
homelessness. The current Agreement is known as SAAP IV\(^\text{11}\) and it is underpinned
by the: Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994; SAAP Memorandum of
Understanding; SAAP Bilateral Agreements; SAAP Accountability Framework; and,
SAAP National Strategic Plan.

These documents provide a description of the environment that the research has
been conducted within. In outline, research into HAYS implicates a broad
environment of responses from: Federal and NSW government bodies; local area non-
government youth SAAP service providers; the Youth Accommodation Association
NSW (YAA) as a NSW youth SAAP peak body; the Youth Accommodation
Interagency Nepean (YAIN) as an interagency of service providers; the SAAP
Resource Worker Project (an activity of YAIN); and, various programs for homeless

\(^{11}\) That is, the relevant Agreement during the conduct of this doctoral research. The SAAP V
Agreement was signed off in late 2005 and has not been analysed as part of this thesis.
young people. A key objective of SAAP IV requires a services’ system response in service provision. That is, individual SAAP agencies are required to network in creating a system of support services. It is also expected that these agencies will network with non-SAAP services such as mental health, community housing, employment and education providers in supporting homeless people.

2.4.3 Services’ system response

This systemic services approach is based on the SAAP IV Agreement (FaCS 2000) priorities and contractual requirements between DoCS and SAAP agencies (DoCS 2000a&b). Under such agreements, funded agencies (such as HAYS) are issued with a set of objectives that they must operationalise and report on at the end of each financial year. Each agency must clearly demonstrate how it will meet the performance indicators attendant upon the objectives, including the development of a regional services’ system. Control, planning and evaluation of the processes and actions taken in designing, implementing and monitoring the system are part of the SAAP accountability framework (FaCS 2000). Inherent in all this, is the main goal of service system improvement/development to more effectively meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Organisational research and development, in systems such as SAAP, has mainly focused on how a system can be controlled and can operate effectively and efficiently (see, e.g., Stacey 1996), rather than how a system can be designed to exhibit creativity, adaptability and responsiveness to complex human issues and needs. Significant challenges still face governments, communities and service providers in dealing with the complexity of homelessness. Firstly, whereas ‘SAAP appears to be increasingly successful in achieving its overall aims for a significant proportion of young people’ (AIHW 2003:1), it is yet to creatively and adequately respond to at risk and homeless Aboriginal youth. Secondly, whereas SAAP has its place in the array of system responses to the homeless, it should not be seen as the homelessness panacea for Aboriginal youth. In the national SAAP IV evaluation conducted by ECP (2004a), it was pointed out that despite SAAP’s achievements it is clear that there are a number of significant challenges that will need to be overcome if further improvements in outcomes for homeless people are to be achieved. The central issue for the future is whether SAAP, on its own, could or
should be expected to achieve these longer-term objectives [e.g., prevention and early intervention]. A comment [by evaluation respondents] made repeatedly during the evaluation was that “SAAP can’t be expected to do it all”. (p5)

I was one of the respondents that made such a statement, stating that homelessness is a complex, multi-faceted issue, which therefore requires a complex ‘whole of government’ and ‘whole of community’ response. As suggested, it is not just a government responsibility, but governments should be taking a lead role in addressing the issue, beyond their conservative programmatic response of SAAP.

Thirdly, at a local level it is questionable as to whether a SAAP agency alone can meet the needs of a community’s problem with its homeless Aboriginal youth. Therefore, in my observation there is a need to review the design and development of local SAAP agencies and service systems that respond to homeless Aboriginal youth.

2.4.4 Organisational responses

As indicated above, government responses to homeless people are primarily delivered through policy, funding, co-ordination and administration. The main organisations that provide direct support services to the homeless are medium to large charitable institutions and small to medium-sized non-profit community-based entities (religious and non-religious). As an indication, HREOC (1989) refer to SAAP evaluation data, at the time, noting that 51% of crisis accommodation services were ‘community managed’, 19% were operated by religious organisations and 14% by collectives and cooperatives. Lyons (2001) indicates that most of these ‘third sector’ organisations are relatively small with less than 100 employees. The ‘first sector’ being government organisations and the ‘second sector’ includes businesses – from large corporations to private sole traders – that seek profit from their activities (Lyons 2001:5) for distribution to owners or shareholders. In contrast, ‘third sector’ organisations are generally non-profit in nature. The majority of SAAP service organisations are small community-based entities governed by volunteers, or possibly workers from other community-based agencies.

The HREOC Inquiry (1989:308) found that these small organisations ‘tend to have relatively weak administrative infrastructures’, relying heavily on volunteer labour. Further, HREOC suggests that they are subject to vulnerability in funding
cutbacks, more so than the larger welfare organisations, and therefore direct service delivery to target recipients may be more easily adversely affected. On the other hand, smaller community-based organisations, if adequately endowed with effective governance, management and staffing systems, are seen as capable of delivering and providing

individually-designed service packages to young people in need, to work closely with them and their families over a prolonged period and to provide services in the local area so that the young person can maintain his or her local network. Such services can also be made flexible enough to offer a wide range of services, thus meeting all or most of the service needs of each client. (ibid:308)

It can therefore be argued that the smaller community-based entity is the best service model for Aboriginal communities. For instance, it has the greatest capacity to meet the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle under an organisational model governed, managed and delivered by the local Aboriginal community where a young person at risk of or experiencing homelessness cannot live with family or extended family. In essence, the service acts as a substitute family and place of temporary shelter. It is envisaged that HAYS will be a small community-based entity (see Chapter 5). Unfortunately, small community-based organisations, in general, have suffered problems with attracting and keeping volunteer committee members. In addition, the skill levels and burdensome legal, financial and supervision responsibilities required of these volunteers may lead to a rotating committee membership, thus promoting unstable governance of the entity (Knox 1999a&b; Lyons 2001).

In a study of Blacktown City Accommodation Co-operative (BCAC)\(^\text{12}\) (Knox 1999b), these problematic governance issues were found to be present. For example, following a major staffing conflict in 1997, BCAC’s Board commenced a review of its governance/management model to determine how it could continue to govern and best meet the needs of its target client group. A consultant was engaged to prepare a report on the entity’s organisational development. On reviewing the consultant’s report, the voluntary directors (BCAC Board) determined that they might not have the time, energy, experience and skills to continue governing the organisation. Why was this

\(^{12}\) A community-based housing co-operative that received SAAP funds to support homeless youth in the Blacktown Local Government Area (LGA) of NSW (which includes the suburb of Hebersham where HAYS is located).
conclusion reached? A review of community sector literature, at the time, indicates that community managed organisations were experiencing tensions. For instance, how should they best be managed: by professionals, volunteers or service users?

In its purest form, community management of an organisation has been defined as involving its services’ recipients or users as the people who also control and direct the organisation. As Nyland (1993:127) states, ‘this could be described as the classic model of community management’. However, the term can be used in a more general way to include the range of representation mixes in services either funded by government or self-funded by local community groups. Alternatively, some organisations may function with the support of government funding and community donations like the large church-based entities with specific representation. It is evident that there is no set form of representative composition within community organisations. Some are made up of service recipients only, others with a mix of recipients and volunteer professionals willing to contribute their skills, and others with non-recipient committees and paid operational staff.

The point being made here is that community management can be a broad term that encompasses different representation mixes and management models. SAAP funded organisations, such as Mundarra Aboriginal Youth Service (MAYS), operate in the context of third sector management, being subject to significant pressures. As Lyons (2001:22) points out, there are challenges in the third sector that are ‘hardly found within the public [first sector] or for-profit sectors [second sector]’. He goes on to say that: ‘They are the centrality of values; complexity of resource generation; reliance on volunteers; difficulties in judging organisational performance; lack of clarity about accountability; and conflict between Board and staff.’ Lyons does not claim that all community-based organisations experience all challenges, ‘rather they all experience some of them’. Lyons is silent on how these entities provide appropriate, sensitive and competent services in a linguistically and culturally diverse Australian society, an issue that would present as another challenge.

Change is another concept and a process that committee members, directors, paid staff, volunteers and service users within the community sector constantly face

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13 The Mount Druitt youth SAAP community-managed entity that was to subsequently become Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (see Chapter 5).
and experience. Farrar and Gain (1991) considered change from the perspective of issues and needs facing community services in the 1990s. A significant issue was the increasing responsibility of management committees to understand and administer, for example, industrial relations’ matters, legalities, accountability and performance standards, and complex program delivery. These demands clearly place pressure on professional players, and certainly on untrained or semi-trained members and directors. Additional training is needed, but are volunteers able to commit extra time and energy? Further, can small service organisations continue to be managed by volunteers and survive in such a context? Onyx (1992, 1996) considered the impact of economic rationalism – that is, the privatisation of public service systems under the ‘panacea’ of managerialism, to promote better organisational effectiveness and efficiency – and she indicates that despite this ideology, most community-based services had been maintained. Yet, there had been a feeling of inadequacy within committee members in meeting the technical skills required to manage their organisations. Many felt overwhelmed and resigned. The door opened for ‘higher skilled’ people or ‘professionals’ to walk through and manage organisations. In such an environment smaller grass-roots organisations were being taken over by larger corporative non-profit or religious groups.

The SAAP funded entity, BCAC, that I studied in 1999 had reached a critical point in its development as an organisation. Participation by the client group, in the direction of the organisation, was virtually non-existent. This was probably due to two main reasons. First, client participation was not embedded nor encouraged within its culture, though clients were consulted on service delivery issues. Second, clients’ stay at the service was usually between six months to two years, which therefore limited participation. In examining participation levels by people from the community as board directors, a high turnover rate is evident. Perhaps community participation in community-based organisations had reached its limit, what Farrar and Gain (1991:73) referred to as ‘the crisis of community management – loss of involvement’. However, as indicated above, community management in its broader definition can involve alternative models of management representation. The BCAC Board seems to have had this in mind when it commenced exploring other governance options. In time, the BCAC entity was wound-up and its small assets, SAAP funding and operations were

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transferred to a national Christian community and youth organisation. In the case of MAYS, it was wound-up after its funding was temporarily suspended and subsequently allocated to a non-Aboriginal medium sized religious-based service provider (as will be outlined and discussed in Chapter 5).

Part of the BCAC consultant’s brief was to investigate the various options for the ongoing management of the organisation and these will now be briefly outlined as possible alternate strategies that may provide lessons for the design and development of HAYS. The first option considered was to maintain the current governance structure. This would probably be the least disruptive to staff and clients, requiring no legal changes, and guaranteeing ongoing autonomy, at least for the time being. However, this strategy does not address the problem of declining interest of people becoming voluntary directors due to the amount of time, energy and skills required.

To overcome this problem, a second option is possible. Volunteer directors could set up a more corporate style of management where they employ a highly skilled manager to carry out governance and operational functions, leading a skilled team of workers to deliver services to the client group. The problem with this model is that it puts a lot of power in the hands of ‘professionals’ and moves further away from local community people and service users actively participating in the life and direction of the entity. Nonetheless, power is not necessarily negative, but voluntary participation would probably continue to be problematic.

Perhaps a more radical strategy such as a collective model could be considered. This third option would involve staff and non-staff directors working together where everyone has equal participation and decision-making rights. The current (at the time) hierarchical structure of BCAC would dissolve, without fixed authority. In theory, community people, staff and service users participate in and share the management of the organisation. Looking at the weaknesses of this model, Kenny (1994) points out problems such as that organisations can become closed, and that underlying power relations still exist or elites can take over. Regardless of the strengths and weaknesses, in becoming a collective, the BCAC entity would still need to be wound-up and register as a collective. Alternatively, BCAC could stay as a co-operative, but operate under collective principles.
There were probably numerous other options, like merging with another co-operative, getting other paid community workers on to the current BCAC Board and reciprocating representation on their Board, or contracting out the major employment and legal responsibilities of the Board to another organisation. Perhaps there is no single appropriate model for organisational governance, just as there is not one management frame that can fully describe the functioning of an organisation. Kenny (1994:146) suggests that ‘most community organisations have a mix of structural arrangements, depending on such factors as on their stage of development, the programs and services they operate, and their objectives’. If the transfer to another organisation did not take place, the SAAP funded BCAC entity was still faced with the dilemma of declining voluntary director participation. However, it is at such times that new ways of thinking can create opportunities. Rather than looking for a new organisation or winding-up, why not look for a new model of participation?

Farrar and Gain’s (1991) suggestion of separating the existing functions of management committees into two main areas: oversight of service delivery, including consumer participation, and secondly financial, legal, industrial and program management functions, was worth considering. Two distinct teams could have been created within the BCAC Board. In turn, two paid leaders could be appointed to operationalise the service delivery and administrative functions. These governance and operational structures would, in theory, reduce the workload of volunteer directors by shifting the functional duties mainly to the paid workers. Directors could maintain their oversight role. Specialist services could be contracted out by the Board under the direct supervision of the paid leaders. This is a conceptual map and would need the details fleshed out. Its viability depends on the commitment of participants, but so does any other strategy or management model. It would mean that the BCAC Directors could have re-examined their values, motives and ability to participate. As Bolman and Deal (1997:34) suggest, ‘the ability to reframe situations is one of the most powerful capacities of great artists’. Such reframing is equally as powerful and could have been possible for the Directors and staff of the BCAC entity (at the time).

These BCAC examples, therefore, provide powerful lessons for the design and development of HAYS.
2.4.5 Resources, commitment and competence

Whatever model of organisational governance is envisaged in responding to a community’s needs, adequate resources including people, funding, equipment and physical assets are fundamental prerequisites of successful endeavours. As HREOC (1989:225) points out, the ‘underlying premise of governments using community-based organisations to deliver community services is that the local community is sufficiently competent, has the requisite resources and can mobilise sufficient commitment’. How does an Aboriginal community, with its own internal difficulties (externally and internally driven) competently deal with its most vulnerable members – homeless children and young people – without additional support from governments and wider society? Second, how can we prevent ‘burnout’ of those Aboriginal people who are already engaged in assisting their communities in a range of ameliorative initiatives and organisations? In part, the answer lies in the shared responsibility of our governments, corporations, communities, social organisations and community service organisations to recognise and fund support services. Further, these entities should be actively involved in the direct running and provision of community services such as those provided by SAAP. This requires commitment.

There is a need to re-configure community services away from (mostly) just treating the symptoms to dealing with the causes of social problems like homelessness. There is a need to stop separating the ‘dysfunctional people’, from the ‘functional people’, and treating them as ‘psychologically impaired clients’, that need ‘repairing’ for participation in ‘normal’ community life. Promoting the well-being of disadvantaged people is of course a noble act, but continuing with individually constructed and targeted service responses, by well-intentioned SAAP professionals, is not dealing with the underlying causes of an individual’s or community’s situation, such as homelessness.

Mostly, the homelessness discourse deals with an individual’s homelessness, rather than the notion of ‘community homelessness’ as evident in Aboriginal settings. Widening the response has us analysing the dynamic context, conditions, structures, processes, forces, and so on, which lead to a person or a community becoming homeless as discussed above. Such a paradigmatic re-think and practice shift requires a de-centralisation of power and control away from Australian and State governments.
to local communities determining and providing local responses. Complete shifting, however, is not being argued for here – there is a need to have some overarching national uniform principles, standards, regulations, guidelines and funding for the competent operation of the SAAP services. What is being argued is that such services could be designed and developed by local people to meet local needs, particularly in the case of Aboriginal communities, the focus of this thesis.

The complex arrangements between the Australian and State governments often militate against such an approach. For example, over the life of the SAAP program since 1985, in my observation each five-year review becomes a governmental inter-jurisdictional contest. The national government announces that it will be continuing to fund SAAP and States/Territories argue that the funding is insufficient or there are inequities in the allocation process. In this context, SAAP community service providers claim that they are experiencing viability issues and cannot continue to provide a range of support services to homeless people without increased funding. For instance, in the evaluation of SAAP IV, homelessness peak bodies and advocacy groups argued that the SAAP services’ sector is experiencing viability issues and therefore requires additional funding. These groups point to evidence that the sector has not received additional funding to meet increased costs of, for example, insurances and salaries for staff (ECP 2004b). Funding is therefore an ongoing contested issue of the program, which deflects a concentration on: What are the causes of homelessness? What can be done to ameliorate the social problem? What wider resources are required? What organisational configurations best respond to homelessness? In other words, we have economic fiscal policy driving the responses, rather than social policy being pre-eminent and economic policy being in the service of social policy.

2.4.6 A partnership response

This critique of homelessness responses is perhaps too harsh, as the national evaluation of SAAP in 2004 indicates that it has evolved and moved towards services that aim to better meet the needs of the homeless population, and as such ‘SAAP is now characterised by diversity of program responses and services provided’ (ECP 2004b:2). Yet, the issue of cultural sensitivity (amongst others) has been repeatedly raised in previous SAAP evaluations, and therefore requires greater attention. That is,
improving culturally sensitive – and I would add competent – SAAP services for Aboriginal peoples. ECP cite the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute’s (AHURI 2003) assertion that the SAAP concepts of ‘home’ and ‘homelessness’ in Australia have strong European foundations. The report concludes that there is sufficient difference in Indigenous cultures’ understanding of home, homelessness and the land to suggest that funds for and handling of Indigenous “homelessness” should be the domain of ATSIS [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services]. (ECP 2004b:170)

ECP indicate, however, that whereas this might be a legitimate view, it was not universally shared in the SAAP IV evaluation. A further issue to be considered was the question of whether there should be a separate Indigenous Homelessness Strategy (from SAAP). If so, who should have the responsibility for its implementation and accountability? ECP recognise this is a difficult issue to resolve and do not make a recommendation on this matter. However, ECP, does suggest that

the only approach likely to successfully address Indigenous “homelessness” is a partnership approach designed to ensure a coordinated response. This requires the engagement of government departments, independent service providers together with ATSIS and local Indigenous community representatives. (ibid:170)

These findings support my previous assertions, but I also argue for the inclusion of homeless people to ensure their ‘voices’ are represented and heard in the partnership group. Importantly, in addition I would include researchers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who are conducting inquiries in the field of Aboriginal issues – and not just on homelessness. ECP, in progressing such a partnership, suggest that a major task-force be formed with a specific responsibility for addressing the complex drivers of Indigenous homelessness. This would approach its task from a highly integrated, coordinated approach based upon the active participation of multiple groups. (ibid:170)

ECP provide a couple of examples where such a model is being implemented in Australia: in the Northern Territory and the state of Western Australia. Notwithstanding the potential of these two collaborative models, there is clearly a need for a nationally designed and developed strategy. This would be a strategy that can be replicated across the nation within local Aboriginal communities and organisations, recognising and accounting for Aboriginal traditions and diversity. This
thesis seeks to build a theory that can inform such a strategy. As stated in Chapter 1, the substantive theory will be drawn from the design and development of HAYS.

2.5 Organisational Design and Development

How can Aboriginal people become involved in and influence a national strategy to alleviate the homelessness of their youth? How can Aboriginal people ‘hold their traditional ways’ in community service (organisational) systems that are largely determined and constructed by non-Aboriginal people? Is it too late to (re)incorporate traditional philosophies and practices into their contemporary organisational systems?

The participation in national policy fora and the cultural translation of traditional practices into modern life and organisations largely remain unresolved issues. The impact of colonisation, with its imposed ideas on how Aboriginal organisations should be configured, will probably continue into the future. However, for the well-being of Aborigines, there must be appropriate recognition that they did (and still do) have highly developed organisational systems. Furthermore, that their traditional self-organisation can be transformed into modern Aboriginal advocacy systems and community services that respond to homelessness, setting aside (temporarily) the powerful lessons Aboriginal practices have for modern Western organisational systems.

Bourke (2002) appropriately questions current Australian responses to homelessness, and argues that instead of trying to understand the contributing manifestation of changing social and economic structures such as the effect of poor health, education and unemployment: ‘We should be trying to understand … the more subtle changes in the values, beliefs and social practices of contemporary Australian society’ (ibid:4). I share this view, and like Bourke, believe the increasing politically driven shift to privatised, marketised and individualistic economic and social structures portend a bleak future for the homeless, particularly Aborigines who are largely excluded from the ‘market’ and national policy decision-making processes.

It appears that economic policy will drive social policy in the foreseeable future under a regime where it is increasingly believed that homelessness is caused by

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14 I am referring to their existential well-being in its fullest sense including spiritual, cultural, social, personal and economic indicators, as Aboriginal peoples choose to define these notions of well-being.
individual dysfunction, rather than that of structural problems and questionable societal ethics and values. I realise the term ‘questionable’ can be a matter of perception. I counter this argument by stating it can hardly be appropriate that Australia continues to ignore the social and economic situation of its first peoples, if their known over-representation in homelessness data is an indicator.

The focus on individualism may serve to further erode and destroy the Aboriginal spiritual, social and economic organisational fabric of localised kinship and community. Insightfully, Elkin (1979:140) argues that traditional local organisation ‘is bound up with the doctrine of pre-existence of spirits, kinship-grouping, mythological history, totemism and the economic life’. Elkin goes on to assert that if such traditional organisational attractors are undermined, then Aboriginal local organisation will be at risk of collapsing which would render a collective and individual sense of existential meaninglessness. Of concern, warnings such as Elkin’s appear to have been ignored in the design and development of Aboriginal organisations.

It is absolutely essential that Aboriginal local self-organisation be understood and maintained if we are to counteract the severing of traditional attractors that give life and meaning to Aboriginal peoples. Berry et al (2001) state that:

Aboriginal organizations play an important role in maintaining Aboriginal cultural values, however, they also must observe the requirements of ‘white’ legal structures and processes, which do not always affirm culturally preferred ways of doing things. Although not all Aboriginal people are active in their community organizations, many are. ... Working together in organizations is important in conserving and creating identity. (p5)

Berry et al acknowledge that Aboriginal culture, like other cultures, evolves and adapts to its context. For example, they point to the changing gender roles where some Aboriginal men are becoming ‘carers’ of their children (traditionally, a primary role for women) and cross-cultural marriages are becoming more common. Another issue to consider, as previously indicated, is the drift of young Aborigines to urban centres, leading to diverse tribal populations being concentrated in suburbs like Mount Druitt, NSW (Bell 2003). One view is that Aboriginal organisations may need to be designed and developed to adapt to such changes.
How should current and future Aboriginal organisations be configured to respond to traditional and contemporary issues and practices? This discussion (chapter) on Aboriginal youth homelessness has revealed that Australian research and policy has essentially focused on definitional and service delivery issues and appears to overlook the critical issue of how Aboriginal support systems, organisations and services should be (re)designed and (re)developed in adapting to the evolving Australian Aboriginal cultures, values and practices. One could reasonably argue, that despite some evidence that points to design and development issues (see, e.g., Keys Young 1998a&b), the SAAP system remains largely inflexible and under-resourced, both conceptually and programmatically, in responding to Aboriginal homelessness.

However, in May 2002, the NSW Supported Accommodation Advisory Council (SAAC), with the support of DoCS, held a state-wide consultation to seek advice on:

- the needs of Aboriginal people who are homeless, SAAP service issues, and
- possible strategies and solutions to resolve such issues.

The consultation was designed to seek feedback from Aboriginal workers and people on their issues and perspectives of the SAAP service system. A draft report, *Aboriginal SAAP Consultation: Issues Impacting on Aboriginal Homelessness*, was compiled (Gibson 2002) and issued to the SAAC for action. Approximately sixty people attended the one-day consultation workshop and their views were recorded. The key findings were that:

1. There was a perceived fit between Aboriginal needs and the SAAP service system (i.e. SAAP could meet some needs).
2. Aboriginal people have little or no control over their access to SAAP services. Factors contributing to this stem from a historical fear of welfare intervention, low self-esteem and embarrassment. It was also noted that engaging the Aboriginal community can be difficult.
3. Limited knowledge of services limits access to available support. Where such knowledge was present, at times, there may not be knowledge about how services actually work.
4. Certain rules, regulations and processes may adversely impact on accessing and maintaining services.
5. There are gaps in service provision and service models may be inflexible and culturally inappropriate.
6. Discrimination and stereotyping play a role in denying Aboriginal people access to services. Youth are particularly subject to these problems – because they are Aboriginal and, secondly, young people.
7. Lack of resources was emphatically stated. It was stated that there are not enough Aboriginal people and organisations to auspice services. In
particular, crisis shelters and affordable housing were cited as being required for interim safety and longer-term stability. Physical ‘space’ for the development of Aboriginal culture was also cited as being needed.

8. It was suggested that services need to be designed appropriately, including physical infrastructure to meet the needs of Aboriginal clients.

9. Governance of Aboriginal organisations was raised as an issue. For example, management committees may not be fully aware of their roles, responsibilities and legal obligations. A critical issue in governance is that of low numbers of people on committees, which may lead to the exploitation of a few.

10. Aboriginal SAAP organisations, like all organisations, are subject to an external environment that influences and shapes their operations. For example, they operate in ideological, political, social and economic environments. Typically, Aboriginal organisations are small and therefore highly ‘sensitive’ to their operating context and conditions, both from within their local community and external operating environment.

These findings can be grouped under ideology, structure and process, requiring a more strategic and co-ordinated response (Gibson 2002). It is apparent that improved national, state and local homelessness research, policy development and service planning in Aboriginal settings are essential. My experience in SAAP forums, at these three structural levels (national, state and local), indicates that the Keys Young recommendations and the issues documented by Gibson continue to be largely unaddressed. Though having said that, I am aware that local Aboriginal people, both in the government and non-government sectors, desire change in a direction reflected in the Keys Young recommendations.

A common expression I hear and read is that Aboriginal homelessness is such a difficult and complex problem to address. Yes, this may be the case until we re-configure SAAP, as well as the political and social structures that either maintain or contribute to Aboriginal youth homelessness. Whereas saying ‘sorry’ is symbolically important, of equal importance is ethical action from and beyond the rhetoric emanating from research and policy; perhaps a political and social praxis, largely informed and driven by Aboriginal peoples. The ethical imperative here is that they be allowed the legitimate ‘space and place’ to do this under the banner of self-organisation and self-determination (as they define these concepts), in all spheres of public, community, organisational and private life in Australia.

Aboriginal people need to be more effectively involved in this dialectical discourse, moving away from an imposed homelessness support system to a
collaborative research informed and led system (re)design process. We need to recognise that such a conversation will be at times discursive and at other times intuitive. We need to develop epistemic awareness – there are different ways of knowing. We need to build relationships of trust, co-operation and good-will (Woog, Levick and Knox 2004), that promote a ‘shared working together’, which leads to the capacity to more effectively research and design successful Aboriginal services’ systems, organisations and programs. This doctoral research seeks to initiate and contribute to such a dialectical process.

2.6 Summary
The material reviewed in this thesis has primarily been drawn from the discourse of homelessness in the context of SAAP. It has been argued that defining Aboriginal homelessness is a political issue, based on mainstream Australian constructs of this phenomenon. Thus, there is a failure to fully recognise the complex, multi-layered and multi-dimensional nature of Aboriginal homelessness.

One of the most critical issues is the lack of theoretical attention to the concept of ‘home’. Prior to the colonisation of Australia, Aboriginal peoples notion and experience of home was related to their family, local community and tribal land within a particular language area. Since colonisation, some Aboriginal people may have been separated from their land, communities and/or families. They may have been separated from the fabric of their traditional existence and been forced to live a ‘vortical homeless existence’; a state of affairs including all forms of social peril, dispossession, alienation and dependency.

This existence has continued to have a significant affect on contemporary Aboriginal Australians’ spiritual, cultural, social and economic organisation. Aboriginal children and youth have been identified as the most vulnerable Aboriginal population group experiencing social and economic disadvantage. Consequently, they are at increased risk of becoming homeless. Research indicates that their communities provide the best source of care and support for these young people. However, if this were not possible then the last resort would be a support placement outside a person’s community. HAYS, the focus of this thesis, is an initiative that is being designed and developed to become a ‘last resort’ support option.
HAYS as a community service organisation operates within the SAAP program, which includes a complex array of policy, planning, funded services, service systems, and agency support responses to homeless Aboriginal youth. The aim of SAAP is to: resolve crisis, re-establish family links, and re-establish the capacity of a homeless person/family to live independently of SAAP. It is questionable that SAAP is capable of adequately responding to homeless Aboriginal youth, particularly if it is perceived as a panacea – SAAP alone cannot be expected to resolve Aboriginal youth homelessness. A ‘whole of government, whole of community’ response is required. However, appropriately designed and resourced community organisations, such as HAYS, are essential in working with homeless Aboriginal youth to promote their well-being.

These organisations require effective governance, management and service delivery programs if homeless Aboriginal youth are to be appropriately supported. Localised and Aboriginal community-based entities are considered to be the best agencies in caring for vulnerable young people. However, this governance model in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal settings is subject to volatility in attracting and keeping experienced and skilled directors/committee members. There does not seem to be a perfect model, but a local community-based and managed organisation with appropriate resources together with skilled and committed people, is arguably the most appropriate for Aboriginal communities. Further, these organisations need to form part of a wider response system embracing a national plan against Aboriginal homelessness in partnership with governments, service providers, businesses and community groups, together with homeless people and researchers.

The involvement of Aboriginal people in national SAAP policy and planning fora, as well as in the design and development of their local organisations (such as a HAYS SAAP initiative), remains a problematical issue. Therefore, participative and consultative mechanisms need to be developed to more effectively involve Aboriginal people in these settings to: plan against homelessness; create support systems; and, design effective service delivery organisations. The local, state and national ‘voices’ of Aboriginal people are vital in this project. Research informed organisational design and development is a key element in such a project.
3.1 Introduction
At a conceptual level, research design is a work of art. It encompasses a broad philosophical canvass of ideas, aesthetics, principles and theories melded together to form an overarching research paradigm. This chapter describes the philosophical platform on which the research was conceptualised and conducted. I acknowledge that the design of the research approach has been a journey of learning. As such, it contains the breadth of my intellectualisation from conceptualisation to application of the declared research influences.

The research is based on an interpretive qualitative approach. The primary sections in this chapter include: the research approach; the rationale for a qualitative approach; situating the researcher and reflexivity; elements of the research paradigm and process; building a substantive theory; and, research ethics. In a practical sense, the research philosophy also informs and guides the research plan, fieldwork and methods of implementation, which will be outlined in the next chapter.

3.2 Research Approach
3.2.1 A qualitative paradigm
It is important to be mindful of what lenses are being selected and applied in the conduct of research projects. We need to be aware of how we are constructing knowledge in order to take further action on a research topic. A paradigm can be described as the set of views, perceptions and propositions that guide a researcher’s actions (see, e.g., Sarantakos 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (2000:19) suggest that a research paradigm is a ‘net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises … or interpretive framework’. I suggest this explanation constitutes a comprehensive framework. However, I include theoretical perspectives that declare how I view, interpret and understand the ‘lived world’ of humans. I also consider that research methods form part of a research paradigm (as does Higgs 1997).
The primary lens chosen for this doctoral inquiry is interpretive qualitative research. Qualitative research is a valid field of social inquiry in its own right (see, e.g., Higgs 1997; Sarantakos 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Writers on this type of research offer their own or borrowed definitions of this investigative process. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to reproduce a range of example definitions. Rather, having reviewed some of the extensive literature that discusses this issue (see, e.g., Higgs 1997; Crotty 1998; Sarantakos 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Huberman and Miles 2002), the following example from Creswell (1998) is offered:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p15)

Creswell emphasises the ‘complex, holistic’ nature of qualitative inquiry, which ‘takes the reader into the multiple dimensions’ (ibid:15) of the issue, thus displaying the complexity of the case.

3.2.2 Rationale for qualitative research

A qualitative research approach, as defined by Creswell, has been chosen to explore, analyse and report on the aspirations, views and concerns of stakeholders (informants and researcher) in the complex setting of Aboriginal youth homelessness. In this process, a range of interpretive research practices is used with the aim of better understanding (Denzin and Lincoln 2000) Aboriginal youth homelessness, in order to consider appropriate organisational responses to this phenomenon. The meanings people construct in response to this phenomenon will be explored. It is anticipated that profound insights will emerge from this process, having the potential to inform organisational design and development actions to address the concerns of individuals, families, communities, service providers and governments.

Qualitative research can move between objectivity and subjectivity, depending on the perspective of researcher(s) and the research context. For example, an interpretive perspective suggests that reality is subjective and people internally construct it; meaning is emphasised. A critical perspective places reality as between subjectivism and objectivism. While objectivity and meaning are not denied, critical theorists may seek to expose and present the structural aetiology and impact of
phenomena such as homelessness for the envisioning of ameliorative action. I am influenced by an interpretive perspective with a critical partiality to interact with research participants and construct shared knowledge for understanding, theory building and subsequent action. The case for selection of a research type is, however, not a matter of right and wrong. I proceeded with qualitative research, acknowledging that the doctoral work may include quantitative principles and methods of research.

Having declared my position, what rationale underpins it? Creswell (1998) provides an eight-step process for determining whether there is a strong rationale for the selection of a qualitative research approach. The following is a summary of findings in applying Creswell’s questions to the thesis research topic:

1. ‘How’ and ‘what’ questions are being asked to describe what’s going on.
2. The topic needs to be explored and knowledge developed as part of responding to a social problem.
3. There is a need to present a ‘close-up’, detailed view of the topic for sense-making.
4. The study will be conducted in a natural environment of the day-to-day experiences of youth SAAP stakeholders, to capture their perspectives, including those of Aboriginal youth.
5. I am bringing myself into the research as a stakeholder/participant who is already responding to Aboriginal youth homelessness.
6. There has generally been time to collect and analyse the necessary data sets.
7. Stakeholders are receptive to qualitative findings.
8. Stakeholders are active learners telling their ‘stories’ in the research. I am not an ‘expert’ passing my judgments on other participants.

Based on the above responses to Creswell’s process, I am satisfied that the rationale for qualitative research in the doctorate is compelling and sound.

### 3.3 Situating the Researcher

#### 3.3.1 Axiology

Our own spirituality, ethics and values also inform how we view and operate within the world. Our personal views may be challenged in the conduct of research with peoples we normally have limited contact with, or perhaps think we ‘know’, but come
to see differently during research activities. I believe it is ethical to: acknowledge the values, beliefs and opinions of others; promote self-determination; provide equitable access to community resources; maintain honest communication; and, include people in decision-making processes that impact on their lives. In research, we should also be cognisant of our own personal and social needs. Foote-Whyte (1943:279) recognised this when he posited that: ‘He [researcher] has a role to play, and he has his own personality needs that must be met in some degree if he is to function successfully’ in the conduct of research projects. Foote-Whyte also suggested that the degree of involvement with the research respondents would influence the degree of role complexity, particularly where a researcher lives with the respondents for an extended period of time. While I did not actually live with the research respondents, nonetheless I spent extensive time at HAYS, both formally and informally, relating to a number of people going about their professional and personal activities.

In a sense, I became an ‘insider’ at HAYS with privileges and insights that a more distant researcher would not normally have access to; indeed I was called a ‘brother’ by some Aboriginal people. Gradually, I felt that in return I could respectfully address some of them as uncle, aunty, sister or brother. There were times when I felt ethically stretched: how do I engage with and treat every participant with equal respect and acceptance? At times, due to my agreed role in providing emerging findings to the research stakeholders, I was asked to comment on particular contentious organisational and operational aspects of the HAYS project. At other times, I experienced people (with a connection to HAYS) being treated in ways I considered to be unfair. Simply, I did my best to conduct the research in a virtuous manner, observing the research ethics protocols and advice from my supervision panel, as well as research participants. And of course, there were my own ‘axiological anchors’ that guided my research activities. Further, there has been pragmatic selectivity in choosing what research sites to focus on, what processes to observe, what documents to analyse, and what data to collect, analyse and report on.

Some of my experiences and observations were purely cerebral; they were not formally recorded. However, they consciously (and perhaps unconsciously) intersected with the more formal data collection, analysis and interpretative research functions. The emergent thesis could therefore be described as being constructed
under the influence of a dynamic environment, at times: chaotic; contentious; deeply disturbing; frustrating; heart-felt; well organised; and so on, but always with a sense of wonder and that the research is worthwhile. Generally, I sought to maintain a reflexive research approach, engaging in an ongoing examination of my declared influences, conscious biases and experiences during the research.

Further to my involvement, there is the intersection of research participants’ various axiological perspectives in the research environment. Qualitative research is rarely conducted in a neutral context and recognises the potential for subjectivity in all stakeholders, both researcher and participants. I recognise that this thesis research may lead to a transformation in, for example, the spiritual, personal, social, organisational and/or governmental views and practices of research participants, as well as mine. It is also recognised that in this process, research stakeholders may influence and shape others’ views.

### 3.3.2 An interpretive bricoleur

Denzin and Lincoln (2000:4) suggest that the researcher ‘may be seen as a bricoleur … as in filmmaking, a person who assembles images on to montages’. A montage is a selection of cinema shots or images superimposed over one another to create a picture. The aim of a montage is to create a ‘sense of urgency and complexity’ (ibid:5) to be experienced by the viewer. The shots/images in this research refer to the multiple research ‘voices’ – together with the traditional physical places inspected – that simultaneously experience and construct some form of meaning related to Aboriginal youth homelessness, and in response are involved in design and development processes. The viewer, of course, is any reader of the thesis. It is hoped that the reader ‘puts the sequences [‘voices’ and images] together into a meaningful emotional whole, as if in a glance, all at once’ (ibid:5). It is intended that such an experience leads to a heart-felt response by all readers. In these moments, profound awareness(es) may emerge on which radical action can be taken to improve individual and organisational responses to homeless Aboriginal youth.

In the early stages of the research, I saw my role as an interpretive (and somewhat critical) bricoleur who is researching and creating a picture for viewing by stakeholders to promote improved responses to homeless Aboriginal youth. The tools
of trade include both theoretical and applied apparatuses such as the selected research paradigm and research methods. Yet, at times, a ‘tool-kit’ may not contain the necessary instruments to undertake a specific task. A *bricoleur* is able to improvise or invent the appropriate tool. Such ingenuity is required in researching people’s values, meaning-making, sense-making and responses in the complex issue of Aboriginal youth homelessness and service design.

**3.3.3 Who controls the research process?**

Who initiated the research project? Who determines the research paradigm? Who decides what questions will be explored? Who determines how the data will be analysed and made public? These are questions that Lincoln and Guba (2000) ask in the context of the *seventh moment* (2000 –) of research history. From this *moment* and into the future, they believe the social sciences and humanities will become ‘sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalisation, freedom, and community’ (ibid:3). Creswell (1998:19) foreshadowed this view when he said that the ‘hallmark of qualitative research today is the deep involvement in issues of gender, culture, and marginalized groups. The topics about which we write are emotion laden, close to the people, and practical.’

This thesis is primarily about organisational design and development in an Aboriginal setting. However, it touches on Aboriginal culture(s), community and freedom. I have been involved in the primary research site since mid 1999 and was invited to conduct my doctoral research by some of the Aboriginal people involved with HAYS. Two other key stakeholders endorsed the invitation: Marist Youth Care and the Department of Community Services. The research questions and design were developed in consultation with these three key groups. This is of importance to post-positivist inquirers who seek to promote an active role of participants in research projects. Such is the aim of this research; it seeks to involve those people who are affected by, experiencing or responding to Aboriginal youth homelessness.
3.4 Interpretive Framework

3.4.1 A ‘scaffold’
Crotty’s (1998) four-element ‘scaffold’ provides a process model for the design of this research. He suggests it is one way ‘to provide researchers with a sense of stability and direction’ (ibid:2) as they move to understand and explain a research process suited to their particular purposes. The model includes four questions:
1. What epistemology informs the theoretical perspective?
2. What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology in question?
3. What methodology governs our choice and use of methods?
4. What methods do I propose to use?

Crotty has omitted the element of ontology – the science and nature of being – from his schema as he considers that our ontological and epistemological perspectives ‘tend to merge together’ (ibid:10), and should be reserved for those occasions when a researcher is actually dealing with the nature of being. As I consider that my research does touch on the being of Aboriginal peoples, an ontological perspective has been included as the foundational element of the research scaffold. As will be demonstrated within this thesis research design, the schematic elements are separate yet connected and integral parts of the whole research process. Each element informs the next element as suggested above in Crotty’s four questions. It is acknowledged that the elements used in this model can be operationally defined in different ways, depending on the perspective of a researcher.

3.4.2 Ontological position
What is the nature of homelessness? Can such a concept as homelessness really exist ‘out there’? Can stakeholders live with different views of what ‘it is’ and what creates ‘it’, and still work together in the design and development of HAYS for the benefit of young people? These questions begin to touch on the ontological realm – the study of being. It is concerned with the nature of existence and the structure of reality (see, e.g., Mautner 1996; Crotty 1998; Bullock and Trombley 1999). For example, Aboriginal people have traditionally believed that there have been supernatural forces at play since the beginning of time; powerful spiritual beings that created land, flora, fauna and humans and who continue to play a role in Aboriginal existence, religion
and affairs (the Dreamtime account). Similarly the dominant religion of the initial European colonisers in Australia, that of Christianity, holds that the heavens, earth, flora and creatures came into existence through the actions of a supreme Creator – that is, God in the Genesis account of Creation in the Holy Bible (IBS 1985). A rupture of such belief may adversely impact on the social cohesion of a culture or community, leading to existential problems.

Therefore, social problems such as homelessness, both in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, may be ultimately assigned to the people’s broken, or at least increasingly tenuous, relationship with such a spiritual entity, manifest in an array of harmful behaviours and practices. If, however, one does not believe in such a Creator, or supernatural beings, other beliefs would account for the structure of being, existence and reality and the assigned reasons for the multitude of social and individual problems that humanity currently experiences. Fundamentally, the existence of a supreme Creator or supernatural beings is either an ontological truth or falsehood; it cannot be both. Yet, epistemologically, the way of believing and knowing such a proposition can be simultaneously real and relative. Interestingly, Broome (2001:19) suggests, that while we will never know for certain, ‘it was unlikely that there were any atheists’ in traditional Aboriginal societies, as all the people were deeply religious.

### 3.4.3 Epistemological position

Epistemology refers to ‘the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology’ (Crotty 1998:3). Basically, it is the nature of what we know or how we know about things. Taking the above ontological examples, Aborigines know of their spiritual entity(s) through the transmission of the Dreamtime story handed down through generations of their peoples and their personal experience of Creation. There is clear evidence that Aboriginal peoples had a belief in a Supreme Creator prior to contact with European missionaries. For example, Baiami

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1 It is acknowledge that traditional and contemporary Aboriginal religion and spirituality are complex subjects. For example, the concept of ‘time’ in the Dreaming is simultaneously past, present and future. This topic, while beyond the scope of this thesis, has been included to illustrate an ‘ontological position’ and remind the thesis reader of a significant feature that figures in the lives of Australian Aborigines (see Chapter 1). For further explanations of this topic see, for example, Elkin (1979); Berndt and Berndt (1988); Stockton (1993, 1995); Hiatt (1996).
of south-eastern Australian Aborigines and Numbakulla of the Arrernte people in central Australia (Elkin 1979; Hiatt 1996). Similarly, Christians experience God through the Bible’s teachings, Creation and a personal relationship with God through the actions of his Son – Jesus Christ (IBS 1985). And of course there are numerous other belief systems such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and so on that present their teachings and ways of knowing.

It is the interplay between ontological and epistemological perspectives that profoundly shape the way in which researchers and respondents engage with the world, and therefore this research project. The ontological and epistemological considerations, assumptions and positions held by stakeholders will have room to emerge in the inquiry process through the ‘voices’ in the thesis. Questions of interest include: What kind of knowledge do I hope to gain through the proposed research? What will be the distinguishing features and qualities of the knowledge produced? How should stakeholders regard the knowledge? These are examples of epistemological questions. Consequently, researchers are involved in creating knowledge and so have a responsibility to explain the selected epistemological stance.

Constructionism is the selected research epistemology. Constructionists claim that knowledge and meaning are constructed by humans as they engage with the world and attempt to make sense of their experience(s) (see, e.g., Crotty 1998; Schwandt 2000). Furthermore, these interpretations are bound within human history and culture, which influence and shape our beliefs, values, thinking, feelings and behaviour. However, this is not to say that everything is relative and objects do not exist; we still have things and phenomena to observe and make sense of within the world. For example, homelessness for some people is a reality (objective) and may be described as the phenomenon of people without appropriate shelter. Though it is also a relative (subjective) term according to the social standards of a given society (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2002), which attribute certain meanings to the phenomenon of homelessness. These meanings and constructs will vary between people and different socio-cultural groups. Constructionism brings together objectivity and subjectivity and there is an interaction between the two (Crotty 1998). Thus, constructionism is simultaneously realist and relativist says Crotty.
Traditionally, Aboriginal people may be seen as being born into a collective and established world of meaning. However, during the process of cultural fragmentation, under colonisation and an increasingly individualistic world, it is probable that the more individualistic meaning-making process has replaced the constructionist perspective. The implications of individualism in Aboriginal settings (and for that matter non-Aboriginal settings) may be adversely affecting an overarching culture that has been noted for its social cohesion and reciprocity. On the other hand, some Aboriginal peoples may seek a cultural revival of their traditional meanings and constructs to invoke a sense of social cohesion. Therefore it is possible that contemporary Aboriginal peoples are in a complex context of multiple epistemologies.

This thesis recognises that knowledge can be collectively constructed or reshaped/changed (Lincoln and Guba 2000). When it is found to be problematic or inadequate in appropriately responding to a social issue (like homelessness), ameliorative action can be taken. I recognise that it is possible to possess and apply diverse ways of knowing. For example, while cultural mores and constructs shape the thinking of the research participants, they will still construct their own views and meanings within the research process. Participants will have an individual and shared reality on which action can be taken. Such recognition allows for an expansion of the research epistemology to be aware of multiple realities.

3.4.4 Theoretical perspective

Theories, according to Sarantakos (1998:10), ‘are a set of logically interrelated propositions, presented in a systematic way, which describe and explain social phenomena’. In research, a theoretical perspective describes how we gain knowledge and refers to the philosophical stance that lies behind and informs the selected methodology (Crotty 1998). In practical terms, it declares researchers’ assumptions that guide their approach to understanding the ‘lived world’ of humans. I have already suggested above that people are born into an established world of meaning. How do people then actually interpret social phenomena when they engage with the world? How do they organise themselves around and respond to phenomena?

Symbolic interactionism, the theoretical perspective influencing the research standpoint, suggests that people construct meaning through symbols (and icons),
particularly through language (Sarantakos 1998) and observations. Blumer (1969) indicates that symbolic interactionism is a perspective that rests on three simple premises:

1. That human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.
2. That the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows.
3. That these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he [or she] encounters.

(p2)

Crotty (1998:63) says the symbolic interactionist’s observed world consists of ‘intersubjectivity, interaction, community and communication, in and out of which we come to be persons and to live as persons’. The nexus of meaning creation with phenomena therefore appears to be through interaction of the individual with their own mind, other people, their culture(s), and their communities. Symbolic interactionism therefore allows a researcher to get a sense of how research participants define themselves, how they construct perceptions of others and how they are affected by the actions of others (Lawler 1998), as they engage with the world and experience phenomena like homelessness. The researcher is therefore entering the world of participants’ beliefs, values, assumptions, perceptions, attitudes, practices and so on. At the heart of symbolic interactionism is ‘the notion of being able to put ourselves in the place of others’ (Crotty 1998:8). Researchers are therefore, not only attempting to ‘hear the other’, but are also seeking to obtain a vicarious experience of ‘being the other’ (recognising this is an interpretive process). In seeking to experience ‘being the other’, I participated in a walkabout and examined traditional Aboriginal occupation sites (this specific research activity will be further discussed in Chapter 4) as previously noted in this thesis.

Blumer’s three premises mainly explain how human beings construct meaning. However, why do people respond to and organise themselves around complex phenomena? Attractor interactionism is a dynamic concept I use to make sense of this question, drawn from the work of Dimitrov (2003). It provides a perspective of how people interact, providing the capacity to explain why people are attracted to a project like HAYS – an ‘attractant’ or ‘attractor’ in Complexity Theory terms. Dimitrov (2003) says:
Various kinds of desires propel our lifelong activities. In the civilised societies people’s desires are usually directed towards the achievement or acquisition of power (in material or other kinds of expression), freedom (to think, express and act) and knowledge, as well as towards experience of pleasures, love, and longevity. (p38)

However, it is not clear as to what Dimitrov means by ‘civilised societies’. In correspondence with him (2005 Email 7 June), he indicates that he shares the views of Whitehead (cited in Lewis 1991) on its definition:

Derived as it is from the cooperative nature of human beings then, a human society comes into existence, is maintained, and continues to develop, insofar as individuals are able to interrelate with one another in ways which are reciprocally sustaining. In this way, social cooperation among human beings brings about the cohesion, and therein the unity, required of a society by interrelating the personal experience of individuals in such a way so as to emotionally bond those individuals together. The composite and relational unity of a civilized society is thus constituted in terms of the mutual immanence of individual human beings related to one another by the ‘sympathetic’ character of their experience. (2005 On-line 7 June)

Though Dimitrov adds a qualifier: ‘But I usually put CIVILISED within quotation marks, that is “civilised”, because the way we behave ecologically (killing nature) and socially (killing each other in wars and bloodshed) shows that we have a distorted realization of what civilised means philosophically’ (Dimitrov 2005 Email 7 June).

I agree with Dimitrov here, adding that there is therefore a profound existential problem in the actions of humanity – historically and presently, it is hardly ‘civilised’. Nonetheless, there is often a ‘seeking to be civilised’ and a dealing with the injustices of destructive actions. I suggest that the essence of this seeking is often found in one’s spiritual beliefs and the expression of these values in, for example, one’s vocation. Dimitrov (2003:38) goes on to say that: ‘Each attractor strongly influences people’s behaviour, thoughts, emotions, moral behaviour, cultural development, and spiritual beliefs’. Dimitrov appears to be taking a humanist epistemological perspective (atheist/agnostic) in the sense that he identifies spiritual beliefs as emanating from an attractor, rather than such belief (monotheistic/polytheistic) as being a prime attractor in itself and thus largely determining, or at least significantly influencing, people’s thoughts, emotions, behaviour, moral behaviour and cultural practices such as in the case of Aborigines. On the other hand, it is recognised that spiritual beliefs are
influenced by epistemological constructs; the point being made is that spiritual beliefs are generally of an ontological nature.

Therefore, an ontological attractor(s) strongly influences one’s beliefs, identity, meaning-making, sense-making, decision-making and action-taking. For instance, people with spiritual beliefs may be drawn to HAYS for reasons such as political activism, social justice, cultural maintenance, ‘good works’ or out of concern for homeless youth. Similarly, humanists may be drawn to HAYS for the same reasons. In a sense, both groups are generally seeking ‘to do good’ in an Aboriginal setting, whether spiritual, non-spiritual, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal peoples. They are ‘giving life’ – belief, meaning and action – to their (conscious/subconscious) desires.

Attractor interactionism as an analytic tool is thus capable of revealing the stakeholder intra- and inter-activity and emergent self-organisation patterns around the design and development process of HAYS. Thus, information is elicited for coherent conversations and more conscious selection of the characteristics that the designers wish to incorporate into the HAYS design and development process; those that nudge the project toward its end purpose. This process is theoretically revealed in the research philosophy, methodology and methods of data analysis, interpretation and representation. One of the most powerful methodologies to situate the researcher in such a complex cultural and organisational human activity context is a case study approach.

3.4.5 Methodology

Essentially, methodology means the science of methods. It is a model of how a piece of research will be done within the context of the selected research paradigm (Sarantakos 1998). It refers to ‘the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and particular methods to the desired outcomes’ (Crotty 1998:3). I have adopted a case study methodological approach in conducting the research. Traditionally, case study research has its theoretical foundations in the domains of anthropology and sociology (Creswell 1998). Sarantakos (1998:192) notes that case studies are considered to be valid forms of social inquiry ‘when the researcher is interested in the structure, process and outcomes of a single unit’ or research site. That is, a case study is capable
of capturing and revealing ‘the complexity of a single case’ (Stake 1995:xii) such as HAYS.

A case study approach may therefore be chosen when a particular unique case as a ‘bounded system’ (i.e., within time and place) such as an event, program or activity is to be examined. Extensive data is collected to provide an ‘in-depth’ analysis for the development of lessons about the selected case (Creswell 1998). The context of the case is usually outlined which may include situating it within its historical, political, cultural, social and economic setting. In examining the case context, Creswell goes on to suggest that there may be an overlap between the utilisation of case study and ethnographic methodologies. The former is more concerned with the study of a bounded system (such as the organisation of HAYS) and the latter with a cultural system (such as Aboriginal culture). However in real-life settings, where there is a dynamic interplay between human beings, the distinction between organisational and cultural activity becomes fuzzy.

I see an ‘in-depth’ case study approach, with an ethnographic influence, as an opportunity to become involved with HAYS and its activities in the research process of ‘an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context’ (Tedlock 2000:455) of the ‘lived organisational world’ of the research participants. Such an approach brings together the interrelationships between HAYS stakeholders and their settings, observable organisational and individual responses, and sense-making for study (Stacey 1996; Kuhn and Woog 2002). As a result, there is space for a more participatory and co-operative inquiry – research ‘with people rather than on people’ (Heron and Reason 2001:179) – leading to the possibility of co-constructed meaning-making and sense-making. Consequently, there is an enhanced opportunity for consensual and shared action-taking in shaping, or indeed re-shaping, responses to homeless Aboriginal youth and organisational design and development functions.

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2 For example, Yin (2003a) cites Street Corner Society by William Foote-White (1943/1955) as being one of the most recommended readings in community sociology. Yin notes that it is a classic single case study of a local neighbourhood (“Cornerville”) that later investigators have repeatedly found remnants of Cornerville in their work, even though they have studied different neighbourhood cases.

3 See, for example, Stake (1995) who draws on ethnographic methodology and methods in the conduct of case studies. For more information on ethnography, I reviewed the work of authors such as: Geertz (1973); Creswell (1998); Sarantakos (1998); Denzin and Lincoln (2000); Huberman and Miles (2002).
In designing the methodology, I was aware of the need to provide a sound articulation with the research methods: the process of collecting, coding, analysing, interpreting and representing the data sets. Creswell (1998:123) indicates that case study methodology ‘involves the widest array of data collection as the researcher attempts to build an in-depth picture of the case’. Huberman and Miles (2002) reminded me, as a researcher, of the importance of both making visible and demonstrating rigour in the research process to produce trustworthy, valid and useful findings. They (ibid:xi) stress that ‘all researchers need to be concerned with describing their procedures’. I acknowledge their concerns, outlining and following what I believe to be a sound methodological approach as above, and including the research methods and extensive fieldwork processes (in Chapter 4 which follows).

3.5 Building a Substantive Theory
The research philosophical framework and process are conceptually outlined above. The initial platform has been erected to construct a substantive theory, which is the eventual aim of this thesis. Contained within this thesis and the emergent theory is an overarching methodology for the design and development of Aboriginal service organisations in contemporary urban settings. Strauss and Corbin (1998:23) describe ‘substantive theory’ as a theory specific to a group of people, place and time. This resonates with the study of a ‘bounded system’ (the HAYS case) described by Stake (1995) as being set within a time and place. Strauss and Corbin’s (1998:15) definition of the term theory is: ‘A set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena’.

The theory is described as being substantive since it has the property of independence, belonging to the nature and essential parts of the case (HAYS). HAYS is responding to the phenomenon of Aboriginal youth homelessness, and the substantive theory under construction it is about how HAYS should be designed and developed. Its contribution to the general study and development of Aboriginal organisations should not be overlooked. Indeed, it is the intention that such substantive theory will contribute to more formal theories, as it is grounded in data from Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) people that are responding to the research
phenomenon. It is considered that this thesis will make a contribution to theorising about Aboriginal organisational development. At the same time, it will offer practical insights into actual events, processes and decisions at play in HAYS; lessons for policy-makers, service designers, service deliverers, and communities. The combination of theorising and recording of actual events, meanings and constructs is seen as a form of praxis in this research.

Eisenhardt (2002:5) states: ‘Development of theory is a central activity in organizational research’ in her paper on building theories from case studies. The paper, originally published in 1989, was concerned with the ‘lack of clarity about the process of actually building theory from cases’ and ‘when this theory-building approach is likely to be fruitful and what its strengths and weaknesses may be’ (ibid:6). However, case study ‘experts’ such as the Stake (1995) and Yin (2003a&b) have refined their methods since 1989, though Yin appears to have paid more attention to theory building. Nonetheless, as Huberman and Miles (2002:2) point out, Eisenhardt ‘provides a cogent rationale for building theory inductively from case study research and reviews the steps involved’. Eisenhardt’s paper guides the overall process of substantive theory development in this thesis. I am particularly influenced by her suggestion to take a less common theory building direction of ‘data to theory’, rather than ‘theory to data’, in conducting the research; a process that allows my research participants ‘voice’ in the research process and which influences the design of HAYS. Appendix 1 summarises in tabular form the key elements of her approach (Eisenhardt 2000:9-27), as adapted to this research.

3.6 Research Ethics
The research involves people who are working and/or participating in the dynamic environment of youth SAAP. Their research participation raises ethical issues. Bouma (2000:190) suggests ‘the key to identifying ethical issues in research is to take the position of a participant in the research you propose’. I adopted such an approach as the key ethical principle during the research. One of the guiding research principles is respect for the welfare, rights, perceptions, views, beliefs, cultures and customs of those participating in the research project. This principle took precedence over their involvement in the project – they could withdraw from the project at any time.
Informed consent is another key principle (refer to Appendix 2 and 3 for the Recruitment and Consent forms used during the research). I am cognisant of research merit and safety issues. I believe the thesis demonstrates that the research is justifiable in terms of its contribution to knowledge. Importantly, it aims to promote an improvement in the responses to and well-being of Aboriginal youth, and together with the research methods, any risks of harm or discomfort are balanced by the anticipated improvement in responses, services and support to Aboriginal youth.

An ethics protocol application has been submitted to and approved by UWS. In the development of the application and observation of ethical conduct during the research, a number of ethics publications relevant to Aboriginal research projects and settings were accessed and utilised (see AIATSIS 2000; Hurley 2003; NHMRC 2003). Advice on intellectual property rights and copyright law was sought from UWS’s Intellectual Property Officer (Kelly 2004 18 May) to ensure that any traditional knowledge, ideas, cultural expressions and cultural materials (AIATSIS 2000) sourced during the conduct of the research would remain with the traditional Aboriginal owners. During the conduct of the research, regular reports on the emerging findings were provided to members of the HAYS Aboriginal Reference Group, both as an ethical and agreed HAYS design and development process.

3.7 Summary
The research design philosophy in this thesis is based on an interpretive qualitative approach that is capable of exploring the phenomenon of Aboriginal youth homelessness and service design and development. The research has been designed to explore past and present Aboriginal organisational life, while providing the researcher with a paradigm to guide the research. As a researcher, I have declared my axiological position of attempting to always conduct the research in a virtuous manner in accordance with my own values and agreed research ethics and protocols.

In conducting the research a philosophical model integrates and guides its implementation. First, my ontological position is that Aboriginal youth homelessness does exist. Second, my declared epistemological position is that ways of knowing are simultaneously real and relative. My stand-point is of constructionism, which suggests that people are initially born into a world of knowledge and meaning. Third, my
Theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism outlines that people interpret knowledge and meaning through language and observation. In exploring why people respond to and organise themselves around complex phenomena such as Aboriginal youth homelessness, I propose that the concept of attractor interactionism explains that people’s spiritual (or non-spiritual) beliefs will significantly determine, or at least influence, their meaning-making, sense-making, decision-making and action taking.

Fourth, I have adopted a case study methodology as the strategy behind the research methods and fieldwork.

This integrated philosophical research model ultimately builds a platform to develop a substantive theory of organisational design and development in a contemporary Aboriginal urban setting, the aim of this thesis. Finally, the research has been designed to conduct the inquiry in an ethical and sensitive manner, recognising the welfare, rights, perceptions, views, beliefs, cultures and customs of research participants. In my view, the most significant ethical principle is recognition that any traditional Aboriginal knowledge, ideas, cultural expressions and cultural materials sourced during the research remain with the traditional Aboriginal owners.
Chapter 4 – Research Methods and Fieldwork

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the data collection, analysis, interpretation, representation and verification techniques used during the research in the process of building a substantive theory of organisational design and development in an urban Aboriginal setting. The actual discussion and integration of emergent findings will be outlined in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis.

The research methods utilised in this research are drawn from and are consistent with the case study methodology outlined in the previous chapter. Methods are the ‘techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis’ (Crotty 1998:3). The specific procedures included: journaling of my research observations, impressions and ideas; interviewing participant stakeholders; recording and transcription of raw data; checking and editing of data; initial coding of participant narratives; the development of constructs and categories, and identification of trends; generalisation of findings, identifying differences and similarities; and, then verification of emergent trends through a review of original data and transcripts (Sarantakos 1998).

To ensure that research inferences drawn were authentic, particularly as the research is grounded within an interpretive paradigm, an assessment framework was implemented based on Stake (1995) and Yin’s (2003a) study review models. A guiding principle when collecting data from people was to ensure collected information directly represented their views and stories. In this process, the aim was to consult with and invite research participants to provide feedback on the emerging trends, themes and generalisations. The emergent interview transcripts and findings were offered to research participants for validation, prior to the finalisation of the thesis.

Fieldwork is the process of preparation, then entering the sites of research and conducting the inquiry in keeping with the selected research methods. During the preparation stage, participants and sites were identified for their potential contribution
to the research. Entering the field involved extended immersion into and observation of the participants’ past and present events, activities and settings. The fieldwork for this thesis informally commenced in mid 1999 when I became involved with the Mount Druitt Aboriginal community. The formal preparation stage of my fieldwork commenced in 2002 when I became a doctoral candidate. I formally entered the field in early 2004, with fieldwork activity diminishing in intensity in the second half of 2005.

This research was primarily conducted with people associated with HAYS in various roles in the Aboriginal youth SAAP environment. There are five main research participant target groups: Aboriginal youth, Aboriginal people, youth SAAP workers, government officers, and specialist workers (e.g., consultants and researchers). These groups are representative of the people who are involved in the policy development, funding and/or support services to homeless Aboriginal youth in the SAAP context. Case study research establishes relationships between the researcher and research participants. In this research, these connections have been relatively close involving prolonged interactions with some HAYS participants, depending on their association with HAYS, in their normal patterns of life.

4.2 Data Collection

4.2.1 Sampling

As indicated above in this thesis (Chapter 1), I was invited to conduct the research into the design and development of HAYS. On invitation acceptance, a critical task was to select related sites, groups and individuals relevant to the study; a process described as ‘purposive sampling’. Creswell (1998:110) says this is in contrast to probability sampling where statistical inferences can be made; ‘rather it is non-probability sampling so that one can best study the problems under examination’. Sarantakos (1998) defines probability and non-probability sampling, describing the latter, as in the case of this research, as being ‘less strict’ than the former, and that it makes no claim for representativeness. It is generally left up to the researcher or the interviewer to decide which sample units should be chosen, and is employed in exploratory research, observational research and qualitative research. (ibid:141)
This research incorporated multiple sites and individuals for what Creswell (1998:120) describes as ‘maximum variation’ to gain multiple perspectives about the case, and to promote sound theory development. Certain key participants were asked to let other potential respondents know about the research so that they could contact me to also participate; the purposive/snowball technique of recruitment. The sites and individuals selected are summarised in the following table.

### Table 4.1: Research sample sites and groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site/group</th>
<th>Location/role</th>
<th>Relevance to inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal young people</td>
<td>Mount Druitt</td>
<td>Those people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, the phenomenon under exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal community</td>
<td>Mount Druitt</td>
<td>Cultural, economic and social context of young people and HAYS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAYS</td>
<td>Service delivery program</td>
<td>The inquiry case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Government</td>
<td>Policy and funding</td>
<td>National programmatic response to homeless people in Australia (SAAP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Government Departments</td>
<td>Policy, funding and</td>
<td>Responsible for the (joint) funding and monitoring of SAAP and housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Dharug (Aboriginal) places</td>
<td>Blue Mountains NSW</td>
<td>A physical traces ‘snapshot’ of a traditional Aboriginal tribe’s ‘homeland’ and activities in convenient, close proximity to the researcher and HAYS; as well as HAYS being situated on Dharug land2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The primary sample populations are those people (in Table 4.1), both of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identity as defined by each participant, who are designing and/or receiving services from HAYS. The following tables outline the collected participant demographic data. It should be noted that certain information has

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1 This is similar to a form of ‘theoretical sampling’ as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) for developing theory (or ‘Grounded Theory’) from the inquiry data. A ‘snowball sampling’ technique was employed in some cases, which also somewhat resembles a theoretical sampling technique in Grounded Theory methodology where 20-30 participants are required to contribute to substantive theory development (see, e.g., Sarantakos 1998; Strauss and Corbin 1998).

2 See, for example, Stockton (1993) who has written extensively on the archaeology of the Blue Mountains and the mountains’ traditional inhabitants: the Dharug and Gundungurra peoples. I conducted the research, in the form of indirect methods as part of this inquiry, on Dharug land, with certain Dharug descendants.
been aggregated to protect the identity of participants. Group participants are those young people under 21 years of age. Individual participants are those people over 21 years, who were individually interviewed.

Table 4.2: Identity of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
<th>Non-Aboriginal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>77.55</td>
<td>22.45</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Sex of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>44.90</td>
<td>55.10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Age of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>16 - 20</th>
<th>21 - 29</th>
<th>30 - 39</th>
<th>40 - 49</th>
<th>50 - 59</th>
<th>60 +</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>59.18</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>14.28</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Participants’ role in relation to HAYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Non-government</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>24.49</td>
<td>65.31</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2 Access to research sites and participants

The primary research site was located at HAYS where most of the observations took place. All of the group interviews were held at HAYS. Some individual interviews

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3 I am using the biological distinction between male and female, as reported by the person, in accordance with the National Community Services Data Dictionary Version 3 (2004).
4 ‘Role’ has been classified under the categories of those who are employed by a government department; those who are employed by a non-government agency; and those who are members of the Mount Druitt Aboriginal community. It should be noted that ‘role’ is somewhat of an artificial construct as a participant may simultaneously be positioned in two of the categories.
were also conducted there. The remaining interviews were conducted at locations convenient to the participants. In all cases, permission was granted to access the sites of inquiry. Of particular importance, the Dharug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation sanctioned my visits to traditional Dharug sites in the Blue Mountains as part of examining physical traces of this tribe’s past occupation, activities and art.

4.2.3 Organising and collecting the data
The data collection and storage system essentially contained:

1. A journal for note taking of observations, ideas, thoughts, reflections, emerging models and informal recordings of research events, and items for action.
2. File folders of relevant literature, articles, papers, hard copies of observation and interview data – all stored in a lockable office at UWS.
3. Electronic (computer) files of observations, interviewing and recordings and transcripts (including transferred data to NVivo qualitative software data base).
4. My professional library of texts, books and reports.

Generally, data for the case study came from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, observation, participant observation and physical artefacts/traces.\(^5\) Utilising a number of data sources maximised the benefits of establishing the validity and reliability of emerging study evidence (Yin 2003a). Further, drawing on Yin’s work, the multiple data collection sources promoted the establishment of a chain of evidence from the initial research questions to the thesis conclusion. In terms of weighting importance of data source types in this research – though somewhat artificial due to the complex, holistic data framework of this research – interviews are considered to be the most important set followed by documents, observations and physical traces.

4.2.4 Observations
The data gathering process began informally in mid 1999 on my first contact with Mundarra Aboriginal Youth Service (MAYS) (see Chapter 5). It is from this time that impressions, interpretations and analyses were forming, though without the awareness

\(^5\) In selecting these sources, I conducted an analysis to determine their strengths and weakness for conscious incorporation into the suite of data collection methods based on Yin’s (2003a:86) Sources of Evidence: Strengths and Weaknesses (Figure 4.1) matrix.
that one day I would be formally studying the Aboriginal youth service. Therefore, many of my initial impressions consciously, and perhaps unconsciously, form part of the data corpus in this research. *Formal observations* commenced early in the research, with the aim of providing me with a ‘greater understanding’ of issues relevant to the case (Stake 1995:60). The observations were recorded on a standardised form (see Appendix 4 – Observation Protocol for Participants and Appendix 5 – Researcher’s Observation Notes). The observation protocol was piloted at a HAYS staff meeting in February 2004. Modifications were made to the protocol. In addition, HAYS staff provided invaluable insights and suggestions when working with Aboriginal people.

The recorded factual observations promoted what Stake (ibid:62) refers to as ‘relatively *incontestable description*’ – that is, information about HAYS that no one could really dispute, for further analysis and ultimate reporting. In this way, a researcher ‘lets the occasion tell its story, the situation, the problem, resolution or the resolution of the problem’ (ibid:62). It is within such a process that the elements of the case study began to take shape for analysis; perhaps some of the individual narratives of HAYS’s collective narrative. Most of the gathered data from observations has been woven into Chapters 5 and 6, where the research findings are outlined. Details of the various observation sites are outlined in the following table.

**Table 4.6: Observation sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site/activity</th>
<th>Observation frequency</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HAYS Reference Group</td>
<td>Monthly as participant observer</td>
<td>These meetings were scheduled to be held monthly, however, for various reasons (see Chapter 5) some meetings were either cancelled or postponed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAYS staff meetings</td>
<td>Attended 3 formal meetings and numerous informal meetings as observer</td>
<td>As above comments, plus observation and participation in informal gatherings of staff where HAYS issues were discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAYS Language and Kinship Program</td>
<td>Attended 3 formal meetings and numerous informal meetings</td>
<td>Attended 2 initial program development meetings and 1 operational meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6 Excludes informal observation prior to commencement of research.
### 4.2.5 Physical data traces

Studies of a people’s past culture and organisation, through indirect examinations of their physical traces, have traditionally been conducted by researchers such as anthropologists as part of their primary (if not only) sources of data collection. According to Sarantakos (1998):

> Physical traces are the products of human activity, and indicate certain social trends, habits, behaviour patterns and cultural configurations of a group of people or a community. Here, social investigators, instead of asking people about their habits and preferences, study their ‘traces’ and make relevant conclusions about the people and their social and cultural life. (p273-4)

This inquiry adopted a modified physical data tracing process at previously occupied traditional sites of Aboriginal spiritual, cultural and social significance in the Blue Mountains of NSW. The aim of this indirect method of data collection was to provide an indicative understanding of where local traditional Aboriginal people once lived and conducted their affairs – their ‘traditional homeland’. Importantly, it is considered

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7 The Enablers Program was facilitated by Chain Reaction Foundation to strengthen the leadership qualities of Mount Druitt community members, to become empowered ‘enablers’ for the Mount Druitt community. The program was conducted at HAYS and included Aboriginal people, but further discussion of this initiative is beyond the scope of this research. See www.chainreaction.org for more details.
that such understanding would provide an indicative contemporary context for the life of Aboriginal people involved at HAYS.

The idea was to seek pattern (fractal) impressions of Aboriginal organisational processes, rather than necessarily drawing conclusions, for comparison with the data emerging from the other research collection methods. It was also to gain personal insight and inspiration from these places; perhaps a vicarious experience of Aboriginal ‘place’. With permission, over seventy (70) sites including open camp sites, occupational shelters/caves, shelters/caves with art, rock platforms with engravings and axe grinding grooves, stone arrangements and ceremonial grounds were visited. The visual inspections, and gained impressions, were then compared with anthropological and archaeological literature. As will be discussed below in this thesis, this indirect method did indeed prove to be inspirational, promoting the potentiality of transferring traditional cultural notions into contemporary organisational programs that support Aboriginal youth.

4.2.6 Documentary data

Documents, papers, reports and file notes gathered prior to the commencement of this research have been included in the data corpus for analysis and interpretation. Yin (2003a:85) suggests that ‘documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study topic’. In observance of this, I continued to formally collect and examine, for relevance, the following documentation:

- letters and memos
- agendas, minutes and handouts from various meetings
- administrative documents such as proposals, plans and progress reports
- HAYS design and development models/diagrams developed with/by HAYS staff and other project stakeholders
- HAYS newsletters
- contextual literature such as SAAP reports.

To enhance my understanding of Aboriginal Australia, as part of the research ‘data saturation’ process, I purchased a copy of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal

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8 See, for example, Elkin (1979) and Berndt & Berndt (1988) for a comprehensive anthropological outline of traditional Aboriginal life in Australia. In particular, see Stockton (1993) for an overview of the archaeology and traditional life of Aboriginal peoples in the Blue Mountains.
and Torres Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Aboriginal Map of Australia (Horton 2000), and accessed visual (e.g., movies, TV programs) and auditory material (e.g., CDs produced by Aboriginal young people). In addition, attendance at the AIATSIS Conference in 2004 and submission of a paper to the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) in 2005, added to my experience of contemporary Aboriginal research and discourse. It is from the above documentary data collection and analysis that, in part, the description of the HAYS case is drawn (see Chapter 5).

4.2.7 Individual interviewing process

Yin (2003a:92) posits that interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most cases are about human affairs. These human affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees, and well informed respondents can provide important insights into a situation. (p92)

Such is the case in this research as it involves the study of human affairs in the process of designing and developing a human activity system – that is, HAYS. Yin (ibid:89) indicates that interviews ‘will appear to be guided by conversations rather than structured questions’. However, Yin is not suggesting that the interview process lacks structure, rather he goes on to stress that the process requires fluidity to engage participants by using ‘a “friendly” and “nonthreatening” questioning style’ (ibid:90).

Fontana and Frey (2000) suggest that:

Interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in interactions with respondents, and interviews are seen as negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place. (p662)

However, it can be argued that the negotiated accomplishment perhaps remains in the interview itself, rather than the analysed and represented findings unless the researcher develops devices to continue the negotiation process. Though such a process has been sought in this research, not all participants were as active as others in this endeavour.

The interviewing process used in this research included a semi-structured (or guided) process based on a set of open-ended questions with reference to the thesis central question (see Appendix 6 – Interview Protocol for Participants and Appendix 7 – Interview Questions for Participants). The purpose of asking each participant the same questions was initially to obtain consistent demographic data. A second aim was
to facilitate a consistent line of inquiry with a diverse group of participants in response
to the topical open-ended questions. That is, theoretically, participants would provide
their views on particular aspects of the case study, promoting the potential of response
similarity or variation for comparative analysis. Particular respondents were sought
based on the view that they are ‘experts’ (see, e.g., Yin 2003a), being capable of
contributing to the design and development inquiry at HAYS.

The interview protocol forms, including research questions, were piloted with a
key Aboriginal participant in March 2004 with the aim of ensuring cultural sensitivity
during the conduct of subsequent interviews. The forms were subsequently modified
at this stage and administered. However, during the course of the interviewing process
some questions were deleted as they appeared to be redundant, and this subsequently
led to a minor modification of some other questions. The appendix forms referred to
above are the final documents used during the research.

The actual process of interviewing included:
1. A formal greeting.
2. Issue and review of the interview protocol with each participant.
3. Permission to conduct the interview (or otherwise).
4. On permission, the interview commenced and prompt questions were put to the
   participant in a conversational style, and the interview was taped on a digital
   recorder (for subsequent transcription).
5. Closing protocol on completion of interview.
6. Participant thanked.

In four instances it was agreed to conduct a second interview. Of these, one was
required due to technical problems with the recording equipment. The other three
participants ran out of time and requested a second interview; however only three
subsequent interviews were conducted (see Appendix 8 – Follow-up Interview
Questions for Participants). The following table quantifies the (individual) interview
sample.
Table 4.7: Interview sample summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual participants</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample sought to participate</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreed to participate</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>86.67% of sought sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>13.33% of sought sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged to participate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.67% of sought sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed once</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100% of engaged sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed twice</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>15.00% of engaged sample</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.8 Group interviewing process

The views of Aboriginal young people are considered to be of prime importance in this research. Advice was sought from Aboriginal people, both community Elders and HAYS workers, on the most appropriate methods of data collection with young people aged between 16-20 years. Generally, the responses indicated that some form of group interviewing in the presence of a trusted and respected Aboriginal person would be acceptable, though it was mentioned that some young people might wish to participate in one-to-one interviewing.

I was invited by these Elders and workers to attend the Aboriginal Community Youth Justice Group (ACYJG), an initiative that will be discussed in Chapter 5, to meet a number of Aboriginal young people involved at HAYS.

It was also pointed out that research data would be easier to obtain and richer if I continued to build on my established presence at HAYS, and acceptance by the young people connected with the organisation. This presence, as observer and/or participant, had been established in attendance at HAYS meetings and activities. At the first ACYJG meeting attended, the plan was to have me introduced by the HAYS Project Manager and at least gain permission to attend some of the future meetings, which was granted. However, due to some apparent miscommunication, and a full agenda in the next meeting, the opportunity to present the interview process formally and engage young participants did not eventuate, but this occurred in the subsequent meeting.

---

9 People younger than 16 years of age were not a specific target group in accordance with the research design and UWS ethics approval.
10 Whereas the one-to-one option was possible, due to time constraints and reasonably good data from interview groups and observation data, it was decided not to seek such. However, I had numerous informal discussions with certain Aboriginal young people as part of the participant observation process.
Group interviewing is recognised as a legitimate technique of data collection (see, e.g., Sarantakos 1998; Fontana and Frey 2000). Such groups can include persons specially selected for the contribution they may provide to a research issue. For example, their constructs of home and homelessness or causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness as in the case of this research. The aim of group interviewing was to, firstly, elicit information from the youth cohort on their needs, views and experiences, as another ‘expert’ group that HAYS is specifically being designed and developed to respond to and support. Secondly, group interviewing is a relatively quick method of obtaining internal variation (within the cohort) of opinions. Thirdly, the gathered information offers a data set for comparison with other participant data sets. Fourthly, it is an efficient method of canvassing a range of considered views in a single event.

A proposed sample size was not set. Rather, I was open to as many young participants as possible in this cohort responding to the research. It took four sessions to discuss the set prompt questions with those that did participate, and the groups varied in composition and size. When analysing the emerging data during the interviewing process it was discovered that some questions needed further clarification, thus triggering a need for some to be modified for administration. The following table summarises the actual process of the four group interviews conducted.

Table 4.8: Group interviewing process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element/activity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Mainly Aboriginal young people from the Mount Druitt area of NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Ranging 16 – 20 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sex               | Group 1: 3 females; 10 males  
|                   | Group 2: 1 female; 4 males    
|                   | Group 3: 1 female; 4 males    
|                   | Group 4: 2 females; 8 males   |
| Location of interviewing | HAYS |
| Facilitator       | Researcher (with support of HAYS staff) |
| Scribe            | HAYS worker |
| Process           | Overview of research and protocol provided at each session  
|                   | Agreement to proceed  
|                   | Researcher asked set prompt questions in conversational style and made notes on standard form during interviewing  
<p>|                   | HAYS worker recorded responses generally (verbatim) on |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element/activity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Continued)</td>
<td>an electronic whiteboard for subsequent printing, transcription and transfer into NVivo as a data set by researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• At times, HAYS workers prompted and participated in the interview discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems</td>
<td>• In the first session, the researcher attempted to facilitate and scribe, but this proved difficult leading to agreed handover of recording to a HAYS worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Some young people were more articulate and outspoken in expressing their views than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Some young people did not respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Whilst there was discussion, responses were at times in single words or short phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There were a number of distractions and movements of people in and out of the setting, due to its open plan layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Questions about the design, development, governance and management of HAYS seemed to be more difficult for the young people to answer, requiring minor language/explanations and terminology modification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notwithstanding the above problems, the data collected from the group interviews is considered to be reliable. The purpose of the group interviewing was to explore the views of young people; however these may emerge and be expressed. The data (in Chapter 6) reflects the ‘voices’ of young people who are engaged with HAYS in some form, and their conceptual and experiential awareness of the research issues at a point within the inquiry timeframe. Their views, of course, may change over time. The ‘voices’ reflect the imperfect and complex world of young people in the developmental and temporal dimensions of their existence. Indeed, similar propositions could be made of the more mature individual participants. Further, there are other data sets, such as observations, for verification.

4.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.3.1 Analytic and interpretive strategy

Qualitative analysis and interpretation of data sets are complex, emergent processes. Sarantakos (1998:314) indicates that ‘the majority of qualitative researchers see analysis as a description of events and of development of concepts, categories and hypotheses’, which is generally my view at play in this exploratory doctoral research. Sarantakos goes on to say that the raw data is ‘converted into [meaningful] statements,
propositions or conclusions, which ultimately will address the research question’ (ibid:313). That is, the process of analysis and interpretation that makes visible the key themes and lessons that the data convey in this case study, which are the building materials for the development of a substantive theory.

The key analysis and interpretation processes utilised in this research have been drawn from Stake’s (1995:71) ‘common-sense’ and constructionist like strategies ‘of giving meaning to first impressions as well as the final compilations’. His five strategies are detailed case description, categorical aggregation, direct interpretation, correspondence and patterns, and naturalistic generalisations. The description of the HAYS case is outlined in detail in Chapter 5. Stake’s other four strategies, as adapted to this research, are outlined and discussed below with an emphasis on the primary data sets of individual and group interviews. It should be noted however that whereas these strategies are conceptually integrated, in the reality of application during the research process, they might not become sequential. In other words, at times my experience is that the process of analysis and interpretation has been iterative and random with a reliance on, for example, the availability of recruited participants.

Yin (2003a:137) stresses that the researcher should do everything to make sure that his/her ‘analysis is of the highest quality’. In this regard, Yin points to four principles underlying good social science research, summarised as follows:

1. The analysis should demonstrate an attendance to all of the evidence.
2. The analysis should address, if possible, all major rival interpretations.
3. The analysis should address the most significant aspects of the case being studied.
4. The researcher’s own prior, expert knowledge should be used in the study, thus demonstrating awareness of current thinking and discourse.\(^\text{11}\)

These guiding principles are generally addressed or implied in the analysis techniques used in the research.

### 4.3.2 Categorical aggregation

Categorical aggregation is the process of collecting and combining like particulars. For example, issues, properties, statements and instances – into a ‘whole’ as a

\(^{11}\) I have published papers in the doctoral inquiry field during the thesis research, which have been drawn upon and referenced in this thesis. Secondly, I have incorporated my experiences, observations, views and critical reflections within this thesis.
conceptual group. In the words of Creswell (1998:155-4), 'the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data, hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge'. In this research, I have made extensive use of ‘broad-brush’ coding processes (Bazeley and Richards 2000), made possible through accessing and utilising the NVivo computer software program. Initially, seven hundred and fifty (tree) nodes were assigned to the individual interview transcripts transferred into NVivo. These nodes were then analysed and grouped under tentative categories consistent with the research questions. For example, in-vivo phrases of the participants’ responses (both individual and group) to the meaning of homelessness and attendant categories and sub-categories. Subsequent coding-on produced data, grouped in conceptual areas of raw aggregation. A review of the aggregated data, under each category/concept, was then conducted as a final analytical process in preparation for the inclusion of constructs into the findings and discussion sections of the thesis (see Chapter 6 and 7).

I have mainly aggregated in-vivo words, phrases and statements of the participants, not attempting to over-analyse their views. As a minimalist interpreter my aim has been to let the participants speak for themselves (Stake 1998:75). Therefore, the process of categorical aggregation has been used, presenting essential analysed categorical data for the reader’s interpretation, as well as mine for further analysis and substantive theory building. However, in this process the aim is still to look for some emergence of repetition to gain awareness and understanding of important issues to the participants.

4.3.3 Direct interpretation
The data revealed individual instances and participant meanings that appeared not to fit into any of the aggregated categories – the emergence of difference. In such cases, direct interpretation is used to draw understanding (Stake 1995) of what the participant is conveying. These have been woven into the narrative fabric attendant with each aggregated matrix. As will be revealed, these instances provided powerful contrasts for analysis and interpretation, again reinforcing the view that meaning, while often shared, is not in all situations shared reality – views of it are relative and constructed (see Chapter 3).
Even with shared or aggregated meanings/constructs, it is acknowledged that there is a need to see statements in their context. For example, when aggregating the data careful attention was paid to the text surrounding the coded concept or phrase, to make visible each participant’s views and semantic notions, initially and in subsequent coding-on leading to final grouping of meanings under constructs. On the other hand, there was a need to balance aggregation and interpretation functions, keeping in mind the complexity of HAYS, and not so much understanding its internal machinations, rather probing into how its stakeholders believe it should be designed and developed. Hence, the importance of categorical aggregation, as well as participant quotes, over the researcher’s direct interpretation.

4.3.4 Correspondence and patterns
Stake (1995:78) acknowledges that significant meaning can be found in a single instance, ‘but usually the important meanings will come from reappearance over and over’. Again this study has primarily sought to discover the repetitive concerns for aggregation, as the emic matters – those of importance to the study participants – in addressing the question of how HAYS should be designed and developed. To some extent, the patterns (fractals) of this research have been influenced by the predetermined research prompt questions; a process consistent with case study methods. However, the study was also designed to allow ‘free-form’ data patterns to emerge for analysis. These aggregated patterns, of self-similarity (fractality), may then be matched for correspondence (sameness) or non-correspondence (difference) with other aggregated categories, often in the form of matrices.

The danger at this stage and process of analysis is that the researcher may reach premature and even false conclusions as a result of information-processing problems such as biases, influence of ‘elite’ respondents or ignoring certain data, as some research writers have pointed out (Eisenhardt 2002:18). In attempting to address such concerns, this research divides the interview data by source, both by respondents and type. That is, the responses of Aboriginal young people (generally under 21 years of age and as service recipients) and Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people (as
Second, the separation of observations and interviews. As Eisenhardt (ibid:19) states, this ‘tactic exploits the unique insights possible from different types of data collection’ as well as different respondents. This intra-case (or within case) technique contributes to ‘the likelihood of accurate and reliable [substantive] theory, that is, a theory with close fit with the data’ (ibid:19).

4.3.5 Naturalistic generalisations

Sarantakos (1998) describes naturalistic methods as being those conducted in research respondents’ natural settings, based on a process such as fieldwork. Such an approach describes people (and events) in their ‘everyday worlds’, as experienced and interpreted by those people. Naturalistic generalisations are developed from the researcher’s data analysis in the form of the inferred principles ‘that people can learn from the case either for themselves or for applying it to a population of cases’ (Creswell 1998:154). These inferences are based on the participants’ views (e.g., evident in categorical aggregation and interview extracts) and therefore should assist the reader of this thesis to arrive ‘at high-quality understandings’ (Stake 1995:88), whether they are ‘insiders’ or not in the HAYS design and development process.

Stake (ibid) suggests that to assist the reader in making naturalistic generalisations, case researchers need to provide opportunities for vicarious experience. Our accounts need to be personal, describing things of our sensory experiences, not failing to attend to the matters that personal curiosity dictates. A narrative account, a story, a chronological presentation, personalistic description, emphasis on time and place provide rich ingredients for vicarious experience. Emphasizing time, place, and person are the first three major steps. (p86-7)

This study has attempted to develop a ‘rich’ vicarious experience for the reader, particularly those with crucial design and development roles in Aboriginal organisational settings. The generalisations drawn from inferred principles are particularly contained within narratives and matrices outlined in the review of Aboriginal youth homelessness (Chapter 2), description of the HAYS case (Chapter 5), participants’ views (Chapters 6), and research discussion and lessons (Chapter 7).

I acknowledge that some of the young respondents have played a design role. However, observations indicate that this is a small sub-group and their contribution has mainly been of an ad hoc advisory nature. On the other hand, a UWS needs analysis research project that I am part of, together with the findings of this inquiry should, theoretically, give significant ‘voice’ to the young people in the HAYS design and development process.
4.4 Case Study Representation

Traditionally, a case study’s findings are represented in narrative form augmented with matrices, tables and figures (see, e.g., Creswell 1998; Sarantakos 1998; Eisenhardt 2002). Extensive use of matrices and tables has been employed in this thesis. The advantage of these augmented forms of representation lay in their acceptance as recognised research devices, assimilating and summarising large amounts of information in a readable display. Also these displays, as Sarantakos (1998:359) writes, ‘integrate data around a point or research theme that makes sense’; serving to make immediately visible what can otherwise often be overly complex narrative description.

The format in the following chapters of case description and findings seeks to build a ‘rich picture/description’ of HAYS, to tell its facts, its story and the story of its design. Chapter 5 provides an overview of the Aboriginal self-determined youth service’s development from mid 1999 to mid 2005, which includes a description of HAYS. Chapter 6 gives ‘voice’ to the participants (as HAYS stakeholders); in a sense it is where the ‘fractal voices’ merge into a ‘collective voice’. The fractal statements are representative of the concepts and meanings conveyed by the participants, and during the final analysis similar fractals have been aggregated into single statements to avoid unnecessary duplication that the narrative conveys.

4.5 Research Authenticity

4.5.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the capacity of a measurement framework to produce consistent results (see, e.g., Gray 1991; Sarantakos 1998; Bouma 2000). In other words, if another researcher used this thesis inquiry framework under the same conditions similar findings would be produced. It is suggested that this is possible and similar results would emerge, but I stress similar not same. A range of variables would need to be noted. For example: the other researcher’s personal ethics and values; the dynamics of introducing a different researcher; the ‘local knowledge’ held by the other; relational dynamics between another researcher and the stakeholders; and so on. However, as the proposed research is not generally concerned with positivist like
accurate measurement, reliability is not critical in the sense of strict consistency. It is more concerned with reliably capturing the views and issues being experienced by stakeholders within a set timeframe. In this research, reliability is thus linked to the inquiry design and has been achieved through the process of implementing the intended research paradigm specified in this thesis.

### 4.5.2 Verification

Validity refers to the degree to which findings are in agreement with the inquiry framework – that it measures what is supposed to be measured (see, e.g., Gray 1991; Sarantakos 1998; Bouma 2000; Denzin and Lincoln 2000). In qualitative research, validity is concerned less with measurement and more with constructing research methods to produce meaning, understanding and explanations of social phenomena. To determine validity criteria for this research, I have drawn on Stake’s (2000) ‘verification’ model. The following table summarises the need for data verification according to Stake and has guided my assessments in the conduct of the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data situation</th>
<th>Need for verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incontestable description</td>
<td>Needs little effort toward confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubious and contested description</td>
<td>Needs confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data critical to assertion</td>
<td>Needs extra effort toward confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key interpretation</td>
<td>Needs extra effort toward confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author’s persuasions, so identified</td>
<td>Needs little effort toward confirmation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I also drew on Yin’s (2003a) models of ‘convergence of evidence’ and ‘non-convergence of evidence’ when developing my research verification process, which I believe contribute to producing an authentic thesis, as outlined in the following figures.
Figure 4.1: Verification of inquiry facts and constructs

![Diagram of inquiry facts and constructs]

Documents → Archival records → Literature → Inquiry facts, constructs → Observations (indirect, direct and participant) → Open-ended interviews → Group interviews

Figure 4.2: Verification of inquiry interpretations

![Diagram of inquiry interpretations]

Documents → Open-ended interviews → Inquiry analysis, interpretations and inferences → Observations (indirect, direct and participant) → Group interviews
Figure 4.3: Verification of inquiry theory development

![Diagram of inquiry theory development]

Figure 4.4: Emergent inquiry verification model

![Diagram of emergent inquiry verification model]
4.6 Summary

Overall, the research methods are drawn from a case study approach. Research data came from five sources. First, analysis of documents was conducted throughout the research to contextualise, situate and describe the HAYS case. Second, formal observations commenced early in the research, with the aim of providing greater understanding of issues relevant to the HAYS case and relatively incontestable description. Third, the process of participant observation provided an opportunity to engage in and enrich the design and development activities of HAYS with emerging research findings, my professional knowledge and experience. I was, in turn, embracing Aboriginal sensitivities and competencies. Fourth, an examination of the physical traces of past Aboriginal life was conducted in the Blue Mountains of NSW, providing an indicative understanding of where and how local traditional (pre-European contact) Aboriginal people once lived and conducted their affairs – their traditional homeland. This indirect method proved to be inspirational, eliciting the idea of transferring traditional cultural notions into contemporary organisational programs that, for example, support Aboriginal youth. Fifth, interviewing as a process to gather and interpret data through the eyes of respondents, thus providing important insights into the study. That is, participants provided their views on particular aspects of the case study, promoting the potential of response similarity or variation for comparative analysis. Overall there were forty-nine (49) individual and group interview respondents, 85% identifying as Indigenous.

The research data were subject to analysis and interpretation. First, categorical aggregation was employed as a strategy of collecting and combining like particulars. Second, where the data revealed individual instances and participant meanings that appeared not to fit into any of the aggregated categories direct interpretation was used to draw understanding of what each participant was conveying. Third, an analysis of correspondence and patterns was employed to reveal the repetitive issues of importance to the study participants for further aggregation. These aggregated patterns, of self-similarity (fractality), were then matched for correspondence (sameness) or non-correspondence (difference) with other aggregated categories, thus eliciting pattern emergence. Fourth, naturalistic generalisations were developed from
the data analysis in the form of inferred principles that people can draw lessons from for themselves or for application to a population of cases.

The research findings are represented in case study narrative form, augmented with matrices, tables and figures serving to make visible what can otherwise be overly complex narrative description. The research reliability is grounded in the process of capturing the views of research participants and impressions from past Aboriginal life. To ensure findings were authentic and trustworthy, I developed a verification system bringing together facts, constructs and interpretations.
Chapter 5 – An Aboriginal Self-Determined Youth Service

5.1 Introduction
This section of the thesis chronologically outlines the development of the Mount Druitt Aboriginal SAAP service in terms of three key stages. First, in its former configuration as Mundarra Aboriginal Youth Services (MAYS). The second stage refers to a proposed interim arrangement to provide services to at risk/homeless Aboriginal youth in the Mount Druitt area following the wind-up of MAYS. The third stage refers to the actual processes of establishing and developing Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (HAYS).

This chapter describes and situates the HAYS case within its historical and contemporary context. As introduced in Chapter 1, HAYS is located in Hebersham, a satellite suburb of Mount Druitt, NSW. Mount Druitt has one of the highest urban Aboriginal populations (particularly youthful) in Australia. As the case, HAYS can be described as an emerging apparatus of systems, programs, processes and people simultaneously interacting to produce service outputs and outcomes to meet the needs of its target group. HAYS’s uniqueness, as a complex system of agents nudging it towards becoming an Aboriginal self-determined agency, will be revealed. Intrinsic and instrumental lessons will be evident as data for the design and development of HAYS as the case, as well as other Aboriginal service organisations.

5.2 Mundarra Aboriginal Youth Services
5.2.1 The agency
Mundarra Aboriginal Youth Services (MAYS) was established in (circa) 1989 as a culturally based service for Aboriginal young people, aged 12-18 years, at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Under MAYS’ Constitution, the objectives were:

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1 The information in these three segments has been sourced and reproduced from documents in the possession of the author, as well as those obtained during fieldwork activities. I had formerly been granted permission to retain such documents for the purposes of this research. Further, I have written some of these documents in previous roles associated with MAYS and HAYS.
1. To establish community based services for Aboriginal youth in the outer western suburbs [of Sydney], with the purpose of developing a program or programs that will endeavour to meet the holistic needs of Aboriginal youth.

2. To sponsor certain ideas, services or programs, that are conceived, led and developed by local [Aboriginal] youth in the community that will establish an appreciation of their responsibilities to the Aboriginal community, to others and to themselves.

3. To train Aboriginal youth in the area of leadership with the ultimate aim of them becoming leaders in youth care and counselling programs.

4. To encourage healthy relationships between young people.

5. To provide Aboriginal workers with the express function of establishing, developing and co-ordinating such ongoing programs.

6. To have such workers available to encourage and assist at risk Aboriginal youth through prevention and early intervention, thus aiding and guiding them to become responsible, caring members of their respective communities.

7. To raise, obtain and receive funds or other aid for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the organisation by means of subscriptions, donations, bequests, entertainments or the like, or by any other means.

The Constitution specified that such activities and all other activities of the organisation should be carried out without profit to any person or persons and no dividend or other profit should be transferred to any other organisation or person.

MAYS’ primary funding source was under SAAP. Programs provided included:

- supported accommodation
- living skills
- family support
- individual support
- referrals to specialist services, such as, medical, counselling, employment and education
- financial and budget support
- court appearance preparation, and
- sport and recreation.

The service operated 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, staffed by Aboriginal workers under the governance of an Aboriginal management committee. Referrals were made through contacting the service, at any time, and arranging an assessment meeting. Upon acceptance into MAYS, a case plan was developed and put in place by all concerned parties. Depending on vacancies, the service also admitted non-Aboriginal young people experiencing an extreme crisis situation.
5.2.2 Organisational difficulties

In 1999 MAYS experienced difficulties, which led to a temporary closure and restructure of the organisation commencing in the latter part of the year. Firstly, a new governance body was elected. Secondly, new staff were recruited. Thirdly, a training program was devised to induct the new governance committee members and workers. Fourthly, the new members developed a draft mission statement under the facilitation of two consultants, one an Aboriginal person and the other non-Aboriginal. The mission statement indicates that the committee members wished to continue with the aims of MAYS, in accordance with its Constitution, based on:

- effective governance and administration
- innovative, culturally appropriate and quality service provision
- using a professional, team approach to case management
- networking, liaison and sharing skills and resources with the Aboriginal and wider community, and
- working with key stakeholders, that is, young people, families, other relevant government and non-government agencies.

The MAYS governance members committed to collectively developing an environment that engendered learning and development; one in which stakeholders could actively participate in open, constructive discussion and debate. The agency’s primary responsibility would be to the young people, families, the broader Aboriginal community and all others who were to use, or would be affected by, its programs. Core values were identified as being trust, openness, honest, integrity, commitment, accountability and respect. The governance members believed that they would be assisted in the pursuit of their mission by the following unique features of the organisation:

1. The commitment and high expectations of the governance (management) committee and staff.
2. A creative, professional and flexible work environment.
3. A culturally appropriate supported accommodation youth service.

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2 I am not aware of MAYS’ prior organisational history, nor has data been researched, prior to this time. The purpose of including the history from mid 1999 is to provide a contextual background for HAYS’s development.

3 I was employed at the time, as a consultant, to resource local area youth SAAP agencies, which included MAYS.

4 At the time, DoCS values were respect, trust, openness, fairness and teamwork – see DoCS Corporate Plan 1999/2001.
Arguably, the first two characteristics could not be considered to be unique in the sense of this restructured agency being the only SAAP agency to possess, or at least seeking to possess, these features. Other community-based agencies would share these more universal ideals. The third feature would probably define MAYS’ uniqueness, at least in the local area as Aboriginal specific, thus implying and requiring cultural appropriateness in working with young Aboriginal people. However, this characteristic does not preclude non-Aboriginal agencies from providing services to Aboriginal youth whether or not culturally appropriate, which may be a matter of perception.5

The aim was to re-open MAYS by early 2000. In February 2000, MAYS re-opened with new staff under the governance of a new Aboriginal management committee. Over the following months, the agency received extensive support and training from DoCS and the two consultants in the area of governance, management and service delivery. It should be noted that the training was mainly of an organisational nature to equip the management committee members and staff in understanding DoCS contractual requirements and SAAP service delivery standards and practices. There was some discussion at the time amongst participants about the appropriateness of designing and providing separate SAAP training packages for Aboriginal workers. Some believed this was demeaning of Aboriginal people – a type of deliberate simplification based on the assumption that Aboriginal people would have trouble understanding the standard training contents.

By August 2000 MAYS was still experiencing organisational difficulties, resulting in DoCS suspending the agency’s SAAP funds. Notwithstanding this, the MAYS management committee wished to continue with its governance responsibilities and re-open MAYS, though after a complete restructure of the MAYS model. The committee proposed to DoCS that a proportion of the existing SAAP funding be released to employ a Service Development Co-ordinator, ideally an Aboriginal person, charged with the responsibility of:

- identifying an appropriate model for the provision of accommodation and support for Aboriginal young people
- developing policies and procedures

5 ‘Culturally appropriate’ is a contested concept that by definition varies between individuals and cultural groupings, as some research participants pointed out during interviewing processes.
• developing financial and administrative systems
• providing management training
• developing a new service plan
• assessing the budget and staff rostering in line with the new model
• recruiting staff, and
• assisting in the re-establishment of the service.

The committee envisaged that the restructure process would take three months.

5.2.3 A new model

Instead of agreeing to this proposal, and releasing partial funding for the Service Development Co-ordinator position, DoCS decided to re-think the overall model of service provision to at risk/homeless young Aboriginal people, in consultation with the current management committee and the two consultants. A meeting was held in September 2000 to discuss restructure options, based on the need for short-term strategies to re-open the agency, pending the development of a long-term plan. The initial strategy centred on the possibility of another experienced SAAP agency supporting MAYS’ management committee with its governance and operational responsibilities. Alternatively, the possibility of MAYS contracting with another experienced SAAP agency to provide experienced staff to work alongside Aboriginal workers at MAYS for a period of twelve months was considered. It was envisaged that such a ‘buddy system’ would create mutuality, perhaps symbiosis, in developing skill sets; Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together to create cultural, organisational and practice competencies. During this period, a long-term strategy would be discussed and designed for implementation, based on the notion of ‘self-determination’. Aboriginal self-determination, in this context, can be described as the process of the local Aboriginal people themselves determining the form of governance they would have over the new agency. At the time, the management committee acknowledged that there was a need for an interim (short-term) plan, which may have been outside of MAYS’ jurisdiction, whilst the overall restructure plan was being designed and developed.

DoCS continued to facilitate the second restructure process through establishing a reference group to steer and oversight the re-design and re-development of MAYS. By November 2000, a direct Aboriginal service provider of culturally appropriate
support to at risk/homeless Aboriginal youth had not been re-established in the western Sydney area of Mount Druitt. Other youth SAAP agencies, through their interagency the Youth Accommodation Interagency – Nepean (YAIN), put forward a proposal that pending the re-opening of MAYS, an Aboriginal Outreach Worker be employed by a local youth SAAP agency to work with those agencies that were supporting young Aboriginal clients. Discussions continued between DoCS and YAIN on such an initiative, but the proposal, while considered worthwhile, was not agreed to and therefore did not proceed. YAIN subsequently expressed its desire to have a representative from the future restructured Aboriginal service to attend and participate in YAIN meetings and activities.

5.2.4 An interim project

However, during this period, in consultation with the Nepean Area Aboriginal Advisory Group (NAAAG) and in agreement with Marist Youth Care (MYC), DoCS proposed that MYC temporarily auspice the project, to re-establish an Aboriginal self-determined youth SAAP service. In December 2000, the Executive Director of MYC prepared a draft Terms of Reference (ToR), based on the principles discussed in the above consultation process. Under the ToR, it was intended that the new program would be developed as a partnership venture. In summary, the key principles were:

1. The objective of the project was predicated on the principle that the youth SAAP service would be fully and autonomously managed, operated and staffed by and with Indigenous people by 30 June 2003. MYC would accept a lead agency status for the beginning stages of the program.
2. MYC would establish and maintain a Reference Group for the project.
3. In the initial stages, and until agreement was reached regarding the timeframe of autonomous management, MYC would accept responsibility of all financial, professional and human resources management of the project.
4. DoCS would fund the project in accordance with funding and contract formulae as determined from time to time and in agreement between DoCS and MYC.

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6 YAIN is a forum of youth SAAP service providers operating in the Nepean and Blacktown areas of NSW.
7 NAAAG was the Aboriginal advisory group established, in consultation between DoCS and Nepean Aboriginal communities, in October 2000, primarily to provide DoCS with advice on how to more effectively (under the notion of collaboration) plan and review Aboriginal services. One of the key anticipated outcomes of such an initiative, relevant to the interim SAAP project, would be an increase in the establishment of Aboriginal controlled and sustainable services. The group has also been called the Metro-West Area Aboriginal Advisory Group and its current title is the Aboriginal Capacity Building Advisory Group (see DoCS 2003).
The ToR for the group, also in summary, included that it would:

1. Determine and implement a program of activity, which would ensure that the fully operational autonomous youth SAAP service, based on the principles of Indigenous self-determination, was in place by 1 July 2003.

2. Consist of members nominated by the NAAAG, DoCS and MYC and approved by the Minister for Community Services. The membership was to have a minimum of 50% of Indigenous people and contain people skilled and/or knowledgeable in the areas of youth work, SAAP service management, Indigenous cultural identity, the development of program structures, and the legal, management and governance development of organisations.

3. In collaboration with MYC, it was to develop a culturally specific operational model of management and a management structure for the program.

4. Develop a culturally appropriate policy and practice handbook in partnership with MYC and DoCS, and Butucarbin Aboriginal Corporation.8

5. Formulate and implement a time structured plan for the establishment of the program and the development of the management structure necessary for that establishment.

6. Continuously review the ToR to ensure that any developments beyond the initial stages of the program can be incorporated into the program implementation plan.

7. Consult extensively with the Indigenous community, including Indigenous youth, the NAAAG, and especially with those Indigenous people who have a professional interest in the project.

Attached to the ToR was a workplan, including proposed strategies, activities and timelines.

In January 2001, the NSW Minister for Community Services approved MYC as the interim auspice agency of the project. This decision essentially complied with the principles of the second restructure proposal previously discussed with the MAYS management committee.

5.2.5 Project reference group

As part of the process of establishing a new Aboriginal youth SAAP service, DoCS called for expressions of interest (EoI) from people within the local community to form a reference group. The group was to be made up of people, both Aboriginal (minimum 50% representation) and non-Aboriginal, as specified in the above ToR. In

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8 Butucarbin is an independent Aboriginal organisation that provides a range of support services including community development, management and adult education in Aboriginal organisational settings.
March 2001, DoCS sent out an EoI package to interested organisations. The package contained the principles and terms of reference (see Appendix 9) that would guide the group through its work in both supporting the interim service as well as developing the process to design the new service. The invitation specified that the design group members, in the initial period, would meet at least fortnightly to establish the service and then monthly to provide ongoing support. It was envisaged that the process would commence early in May 2001 and would see meetings dropping back to monthly around the middle of June.

The group was charged with two key tasks. Firstly, to assist MYC in the establishment of the interim service. This role would decrease as a service was established – switching to a maintenance role – in time for the second task to begin. The second task was the development of a process to achieve the design of the new Aboriginal youth SAAP service that would eventually replace the interim service. In the design and development process, the specification also outlined the crucial need for the Reference Group to take its model and discuss it with the community, particularly Aboriginal young people. Interested people were invited to fill out a form including their personal details, Aboriginal status, and demonstrated skills as outlined in the ToR. A selection panel including the DoCS Community Program Officer (CPO) and three members of the NAAAG, and a representative of MYC would select a mix of people to form of the design group. In time, this design Reference Group was established, but the next critical step would be to update the local Aboriginal community on the new proposal.

5.2.6 Community consultation #1
Following extensive preparation DoCS convened a public meeting in April 2001 to outline, to the Mount Druitt Aboriginal community and other stakeholders, the current situation and context of the delivery of SAAP services for young Aboriginal people in the local area. DoCS’ primary aim was to seek comments and feedback from the open meeting. The NAAAG Chairperson chaired the meeting. Key presenters were the Executive Director of MYC, and the DoCS Area Director and CPO. The Chairperson conducted a welcoming protocol, and then the CPO briefed the meeting on the current situation and background, stating DoCS’ preference for an Aboriginal auspice.
However, its finding was that such an entity could not be identified in the Mount Druitt area. The Executive Director then outlined MYC’s position as seeking to work with all parties under a partnership approach, with Aboriginal people in the majority and under their direction. Comments were then fielded from the public attendees.

There were significant community concerns about the restructure process, proposed model and the whole issue of supporting Aboriginal young people. These included:

- The need for increased and direct consultation with the Aboriginal community of Mount Druitt with reference to the interim project and the longer-term provision of SAAP services and the use of the existing building at Hebersham.
- The identification of skills and resources within the Mount Druitt Aboriginal community that potentially could provide the necessary expertise to manage and deliver SAAP services for Aboriginal young people in Mount Druitt.
- The identification that DoCS needs to more effectively utilise its own Departmental resources when working around Aboriginal issues. For example, involve the Aboriginal Unit and its staff from DoCS Central Office.
- The identification of concerns with the selection of MYC as the interim provider, highlighting concerns around previous perceived problematic examples of service delivery decisions made by MYC in the local area. In addition to this, some attendees indicated that there is a range of services within the Mount Druitt area better placed [than MYC] to deliver SAAP services for Aboriginal young people.
- The identification that DoCS needs to work much more closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).
- The identification that the proposal to use a non-Aboriginal organisation, as the interim auspice, is seen as an extremely backward step/process and that better processes are available. In particular, references were made to the issues of ‘colonisation’, ‘white management’ and ‘the stolen generation’.
- The meeting highlighted the need for the service in the local area and expressed concerns around the securing of the funds for Aboriginal young people in Mount Druitt.

In summary, the major concerns can be clustered into two broad areas. Firstly, about the proposal to use a non-Aboriginal service as the interim auspice. Secondly, around the process, particularly in terms of consultation, that was used to develop the proposal up to that point in time. It was clear that the process of re-establishing an Aboriginal specific service required further re-design work. In time, the Hebersham

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9 A senior DoCS Aboriginal Officer had previously been involved in project discussions and had been invited to the meeting.
Aboriginal Youth Service – Interim Service Project was established. The next section describes the process immediately leading up to and in establishing HAYS.

### 5.3 An Interim Aboriginal Youth Service Project

#### 5.3.1 Community consultation # 2

As noted in the last section, members of the local Aboriginal community did not endorse DoCS’ proposal. It should be noted, however, that at the meeting of April 2001 not all attendees were against the proposal. For example, some Aboriginal people indicated that they were willing to work with MYC, but they said that the invitation for such a proposal should come from the local Aboriginal community. It should also be noted that DoCS had had some discussions with the NAAAG, as its local Aboriginal consultative body, and believed there was support for its proposal. DoCS did, however, acknowledge the issues raised at the April 2001 meeting and committed to review its approach and re-convene another public meeting in May 2001. It declared its aim of partnering with the Mount Druitt Aboriginal community in the re-establishment of an Aboriginal youth SAAP service. MYC stated it was unwilling to continue with the project unless it received endorsement from the Aboriginal community. MYC was seeking a mandate predicated on a partnership approach. As such, MYC’s intention was to be part of an extensive consultation process with the Aboriginal community, including Aboriginal youth, the NAAAG and particularly those people with a professional interest in the project. On this basis, MYC acknowledged the views expressed at the public meeting and temporarily withdrew its offer of auspice support, pending further re-design work. However, MYC made it clear that it was still willing to assist the Aboriginal community and DoCS in re-establishing a youth SAAP service.

DoCS convened a second public meeting on 4 May 2001. The purpose of this meeting was to review the issues raised in the April public meeting and, in partnership with the Mount Druitt Aboriginal community, continue the process of re-establishing the service for at risk/homeless Aboriginal youth in the area. In achieving this, DoCS presented three criteria – community, SAAP and general criteria – as part of the overall service development goal against which to evaluate the way forward. Arising from the meeting, two key agreements were set. Firstly, the agreed criteria to evaluate
proposals by potential auspice entities were:

**Community criteria**

- Preserve scarce community resources – use existing resources.
- Where gaps emerge develop local community [to respond to gaps].
- [An] Aboriginal controlled organisation.
- An organisation [i.e., people] with the capacity, skills, understanding, resources and knowledge to succeed.

**SAAP criteria (as per SAAP IV strategic themes)**

- Knowledge, understanding, and skills around homelessness.
- Knowledge, understanding, and skills around case management.
- SAAP infrastructure – policies and procedures, human resources, data collection and SAAP accountability systems.
- Ability to provide a range of responses in crisis situations.

**Other general criteria**

- Incorporated entity.
- Experience as a funded agency.
- Demonstrated performance.
- Links with community.
- Committed to working with the community.
- Experience in the delivery of services to young people.
- Commitment to ongoing evaluation of practices – service development.

Secondly, it was agreed that a nominated group of people receive a mandate to form a temporary working party to develop a range of new (interim) service models for recommendation to the Aboriginal community through DoCS as the ongoing process convenor.¹⁰

### 5.3.2 Interim working party

The nominated group (IWP) consisted of ten Aboriginal representatives,¹¹ one consultant, one peak body representative and a DoCS CPO.¹² Over several meetings, the IWP developed seven possible service proposals/models. In its final deliberations,

¹⁰ The concept of DoCS as a ‘convenor’ is arguably a more appropriate term than that of a ‘funder’. In essence, DoCS is not a funding body. Its resources are gained through various governmental taxation systems of revenue collection from the Australian public. A more appropriate description is that DoCS is an ‘authorised allocator and administrator’ of the public’s funds to support community services and convene community development initiatives.

¹¹ From government, service provider organisations and the community.

¹² In its first meeting, the IWP discussed and agreed on its ToR, purpose, ways of dealing with conflicts of interest, and its contract. The IWP agreed that the previously established ToR, developed by MYC, captured the work it was mandated to undertake, for submission at the next public forum on 15 June 2001.
the IWP decided that five models should be presented to the community, being:

1. Putting the service out through a full expression of interest process with no limits on which organisations could apply, although with a strong preference for an Aboriginal entity to be the provider of the service.

2. Using a negotiated expression of interest process to identify an Aboriginal auspice, and to then establish a range of strategies to support that service in the establishment and delivery of the SAAP service.

3. The original DoCS proposal involving MYC.

4. Using a negotiated expression of interest process to identify an Aboriginal auspice and to then establish a steering committee made up of members of the auspice body and the SAAP sector. This group would have a large degree of responsibility for the project with the auspice body delegating the bulk of its tasks and activities.

5. The first phase of this option was to form a community reference group made up entirely of Aboriginal people, including Aboriginal young people and/or their advocates, which define the services to be provided. The second phase was to recruit a SAAP service provider (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal) as auspice and provider to work with the community reference group around the delivery of SAAP services to Aboriginal young people in Mount Druitt.

5.3.3 An interim proposal

The ultimate recommendation of the IWP, using the criteria developed at the previous community meeting and working through implementation plans for each of the models – with the additional criterion of time – was Model 5 (see section 5.3.2 item 5 above). Whereas none of the models fully met all of the criteria, the working party recognised that Model 5 went close, could be achieved quickly and had a fair degree of likely success. Model 5 was based on the notion of bringing the best resources of the Aboriginal community together in a partnership with a SAAP service provider. It was also evaluated by the working party as having the capacity to begin the process of developing a new service to take up the delivery of SAAP services through an (autonomous and self-determined) ‘best practice’ Aboriginal community-based organisation.13

DoCS, throughout the life of Model 5, would work closely with both the SAAP agency and the community-based reference group to support the model in operation. It was recognised that the interim model would not be fully ‘self-determining’. However, it involved: a community reference group with a key role of defining the

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13 Later in the process of establishing an interim service, there was some discussion about the possibility of the proposed Reference Group incorporating to become the new, future autonomous auspice entity of the service.
service that is to be delivered; a team of workers and their co-ordinator, also drawn from the Aboriginal community; and, perhaps most importantly, some of the ingredients necessary to ensure that over the following eighteen months plans that were to be made would be put into action to ensure that the new Aboriginal community-based organisation would be in place to take up the delivery of SAAP services for the target group.

In summary, the IWP identified the following strengths of Model 5:

- it could be implemented fairly quickly
- it allowed direct involvement of young people
- 100% Aboriginal community involvement in the reference group which has a number of key roles in the provision of services, including defining those services in line with SAAP IV
- from the very beginning the end-point of a fully self-determining Aboriginal auspice was in mind and would be worked towards, and
- it was an interim measure, deemed most likely to succeed.

Therefore, it was considered that the model was close to meeting all criteria, and over time it would assist in meeting all of the agreed criteria. Model 5 was to be implemented through five steps:

1. Recruitment of a community-based reference group.
2. DoCS to, in partnership with the reference group through an expression of interest process, select and open negotiations with the SAAP service provider.
3. Recruitment of Aboriginal staff.
4. Commencement of service delivery.
5. Commencement of work on the development of a new Aboriginal youth SAAP service provider in the Mount Druitt Aboriginal community.

Finally, Model 5 ensured community control, as it was to set up a community-based reference group that would have the primary role of defining the service to be delivered. Obviously, this group was constrained, in part, by SAAP IV imperatives, but having said that the objectives of SAAP IV allowed considerable scope for the type of service that was to be delivered.

DoCS received community endorsement on the working party’s Model 5 recommendation in the community meeting on 15 June 2001. Over the following months, DoCS prepared an expression of interest package, in consultation with the NAAAG, for organisations to submit their tenders for the interim auspice of the HAYS project. The IWP then disbanded, as its work was complete. Refer to Figure
5.1 below for a diagrammatic depiction of Model 5.

The diagram of Model 5 was originally drawn with closed boundaries, but this was mainly for a visual representation of the relationships between all parties. The diagram presented below has been expanded to conceptualise and describe, in a more dynamic way, the reality and complexity of the proposal. The diagram depicts the organisations and young people as being set in open, complex, dynamic and adaptive environments – that is, without closed lines/boundaries. A range of external and internal dynamics, operant in reality, influences these environments in human activity systems such as SAAP service provision. Each entity is influenced by the other one(s) and wider political, governmental and societal variables. For example, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) work on social ecology theory suggests that human beings (and therefore organisations) are subject to socio-cultural influences. These range from immediate and direct influences in close proximity, such as the family, to those that are more distant, such as societal and governmental cultures, systems and processes (as cited in Grey 1991).

It was within such a fluid environment that Model 5 was designed and developed. It is within such an environment that SAAP service provision is both provided and received. Thus, there is a dynamic relationship of provision (e.g. SAAP agency) and response (e.g. client). Reference is made to Bronfenbrenner’s work as it clearly recognises that different social environments are influenced by different structures and cultures. Within these structures and cultures are different ways of ‘knowing and doing’. Such structures could describe the different Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures, systems and processes at play in the design and development of the Mount Druitt Aboriginal youth SAAP service.
5.3.4 Expression of interest # 1
In December 2001, DoCS sought expressions of interest from service providers interested in auspicing the HAYS – Interim Service Project (HAYS – ISP). The EoI package contained an information section, service specifications and application form. In more detail, the package outlined the overall aims of SAAP, the goal of providing support to Aboriginal youth in the Mount Druitt area, DoCS contractual requirements,
tender eligibility criteria, service standards, staffing requirements, required service outputs and outcomes, and an explanation of how a tender/EoI should be submitted. In the package it was stated that the goal was: ‘the timely provision of SAAP services to Aboriginal young people through a best practice and Aboriginal community-based organisation’. In achieving this goal, one of the key strategies would be the delivery of services in the interim by an experienced SAAP service provider. A critical component in meeting this goal would be the development of a partnership between the local/regional SAAP services system, the Aboriginal communities, and DoCS. It was clearly specified that the new service would replace MAYS and the earliest possible re-commencement of service provision was of the highest priority.

It was proposed that the interim service (HAYS – ISP) would operate for a period of up to eighteen months. During this period, the successful tenderer would be involved in assisting in the development of a new Aboriginal managed SAAP service agency, to replace the interim service arrangement. It was envisaged that such participation would involve a period of handover, following the interim auspice period. DoCS indicated that the temporary project would begin to seek to position itself as a lead agency, for Aboriginal youth, in the development and provision of culturally appropriate and collaborative projects across the Nepean and youth SAAP services’ system.

An assessment panel was convened by DoCS to examine all tender submissions. Each application was to be assessed against the specified selection criteria. The panel would determine acceptance and funding recommendations, for referral to the Minister for Community Services for consideration and a determination. MYC was the only organisation that submitted a tender for the project. Its tender was considered, but not accepted due to concerns about the organisation’s ability to deal with Aboriginal issues and to provide culturally appropriate service delivery.

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14 ‘Best practice’ was to be achieved by ensuring the ‘most effective, culturally appropriate services are provided to young people’ (Source: HAYS Draft Plan for the Establishment of a Self-Determined Indigenous Youth SAAP Service, 23 August 2002).
15 The SAAP services’ system as constituted by YAIN and its members.
16 Information provided to me in September 2005 suggested that there might have been another interested tenderer. Further investigations with this agency revealed that it did not submit a tender. Access to the tender list and assessment criteria is not available to me as it contains confidential information in files held by DoCS.
5.3.5 Expression of interest # 2

In March 2002 another EoI was implemented, closing late April. MYC again submitted an EoI, but indicated that it was unwilling to take on sole project leadership responsibility, yet it was willing to participate in a joint leadership role with the Aboriginal community. However, no Aboriginal organisation had applied (see previous footnote # 16). Notwithstanding this, there were people from Aboriginal organisations in the community indicating that DoCS should continue negotiations with MYC in an attempt to work out an agreeable solution; people urgently wanted the service to be re-established.

DoCS formed an EoI selection panel, consisting of two of its officers and two representatives from local Aboriginal organisations. Assessment criteria were the same as the first EoI, as were the specifications and contract conditions. In May 2002, the selection panel met with representatives of MYC to review its EoI, interview MYC and develop an implementation plan to progress a partnership approach for the interim service, for the approval of the Aboriginal community, MYC Board and the Minister for Community Services. The plan included:

- principles and practices for a partnership approach and joint leadership between MYC and an Aboriginal steering group to develop the interim service, acknowledging that each party brings unique skills and expertise to the process
- a clear consultation and communication strategy and protocol
- participation strategies to ensure ongoing Aboriginal representation on the steering committee, which would aim to work towards incorporation and Aboriginal self-management
- employment of an Aboriginal Project Co-ordinator (APC)\(^\text{17}\)
- a process to identify immediate needs for interim direct service to the community
- a documented process between the Aboriginal community and MYC, which agreed to provide culturally, appropriate services to meet the needs of the homeless Aboriginal youth in the Mount Druitt area. This documented process was also to outline the aim of the project to the local Aboriginal community and to commit to a process that would engage an Aboriginal entity to eventually run the project,\(^\text{18}\) and

\(^{17}\) The APC title subsequently changed to: Aboriginal Project Manager (APM).
\(^{18}\) I was invited to meet this objective in conducting this PhD inquiry at and with HAYS, including the documentation of its design and development. Subsequently, a UWS research team, including myself, is involved in conducting an analysis and documentation, by invitation, of the needs of Aboriginal youth in the area.
• service design and development as a major focus with limited service delivery at the initial stages.

5.3.6 Selection of an auspice organisation

Both the MYC Board and the Minister’s delegated DoCS representative approved the plan and MYC was selected as the interim auspice organisation for the project. The agreement, dated 5 August 2002, specifies that the implementation of the project would be in line with certain requirements, as set out in the existing documents supporting the establishment of an Aboriginal self-determined youth SAAP service. The terms of agreement, previously discussed between the selection panel and MYC, are summarised below:

• The Aboriginal Project Co-ordinator’s (APC) responsibility would be to facilitate the role between MYC and the steering committee (reference group) as to culturally appropriate issues regarding the operation of the Aboriginal youth service and to work with the steering committee to develop a culturally appropriate youth SAAP service.
• The steering committee’s main role would be advice and assistance to the APC and MYC regarding culturally appropriate issues that would need to be incorporated within the youth service. The steering committee would also provide an ongoing consultation role regarding the continued running of the service, and the long-term committed plan to eventually hand over the service to a viable Aboriginal entity.

In partnership with the steering committee the APC, under the employment of MYC, would be charged with the following responsibilities:

• To develop an ongoing communication and consultation process with the Aboriginal community.
• To develop a long-term process for the hand-over to an Aboriginal organisation and for an ongoing commitment to clearly address the needs of Aboriginal young people in the Mount Druitt area.
• To facilitate the interim HAYS project employing an agreed, reasonable number of Aboriginal workers with appropriate skill levels.
• To encourage joint leadership skills within the interim service, as this was one of the key issues identified in the analysis of the MAYS model. MYC would be engaged to manage and use its expertise in such leadership development, service development, service systems development and training.
• To bring skills such as working with Aboriginal young people, cultural skills, knowledge and experience in culturally appropriate service delivery.

All parties would need to be committed in addressing the long-term needs of the
Aboriginal community, thereby continually involving and keeping the community informed on the appropriate running of the service.

At the time, there were concerns expressed about the (perceived) issues of fragmentation within the local Aboriginal community. All parties discussed the need to be aware of any local issues impacting on the design, development and operation of the service. It was noted that the project might have initial difficulties in trying to please the range of Aboriginal groups within the Mount Druitt area. It was recognised that a 100% mandate from any local community(s) is rarely achieved, if at all, in such organisational development initiatives. In arriving at the decision to proceed, it was considered extremely important that the process of re-starting an Aboriginal youth service in the area commence as soon as possible as Aboriginal youth, at risk of or experiencing homelessness, were without a culturally appropriate youth service in the Mount Druitt area.

The next section of this chapter describes the process immediately leading up to the opening of HAYS, and the work that had been conducted in designing, developing and providing services to the Aboriginal community.

5.4 Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (HAYS)

5.4.1 Community consultation # 3

The IWP continued to meet with MYC over a number of months to progress and establish the interim service. The critical issues included developing a reference group, a strategic plan, a communication strategy, and the Aboriginal community endorsement of MYC. As part of the overall process, DoCS convened another public meeting in September 2002 with the purpose of updating the local Aboriginal community on its progress, presenting a draft development plan for community comment, seeking endorsement of MYC, and requesting nominations for the community-based reference group. Twenty-two people attended the meeting and eight nominations were received for membership of the reference group. In addition, it was strongly recommended that a local Elder and a young person be included in the group. This was acknowledged with a supplementary suggestion of further opportunities for

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19 MYC initially developed a strategic development plan that was endorsed, forming part of its contract with DoCS and the Aboriginal community.
local Aboriginal people to submit their nominations, following concerns that there was not strong representation from the community at the meeting. DoCS explained that it had sent out a large e-mail circulation to Aboriginal services and community people. This was countered by the suggestion that other ways may be needed to reach Aboriginal people in the community.

5.4.2 Community endorsement

However, it was agreed by those present at the meeting that the partnership between the Aboriginal community, MYC and DoCS be supported, subject to the following recommendations:

1. A local Aboriginal Elder and young person be added to the reference group.
2. The local Aboriginal community is offered further opportunities for involvement on the reference group.
3. A process be agreed on how the nominations will be selected to form the reference group and this will be facilitated by the interim working party, which has Aboriginal community representation.

It was also agreed that the next stage of the process would be for the working party to meet early in October 2002 to progress the plan and finalise the process for the selection of the reference group.

5.4.3 Community reference structures

The IWP met and reviewed the process, recommendations and outcomes of the September meeting. Arising out of its discussions, the IWP agreed to endorse the previously drafted ToR for the group and continue with recruitment of the group’s membership. Secondly, it was agreed that a meeting be convened for Aboriginal young people to seek their views on participation in such a group. Thirdly, it was decided to organise another consultation meeting late in October, to finalise the reference group’s membership (of the proposed twelve positions).

Aboriginal young people’s advisory group

On 23 October an Aboriginal young people’s community information meeting was conducted at HAYS. The purpose was to outline the interim project’s aims and progress, and to seek two young people to join the reference group. There was some discussion as to whether young people would feel ‘safe’ to participate in such a forum.
It was subsequently agreed that young people should have their own meetings with a process developed for this group to communicate its views to the reference group. Initially, the young people’s group meetings were conducted informally at barbecues, where they could gather and offer their opinions, which could be documented and fed to the reference group. The aim of these events was also to broadcast the project’s developments to young people, their families and communities of Mount Druitt. Subsequently, this initiative formalised into the Mount Druitt Aboriginal Community Youth Justice Group (ACYJG), which continued to meet and play a significant role in the initial design and development of HAYS.

The ACYJG had, as its basis, the notion of involving young people to empower them to contribute to their communities, which is part of the NSW Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council’s (AJAC) objectives. The AJAC was engaged by the NSW Government to develop a plan to counter the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the detention and juvenile justice systems. Aboriginal young people represent ‘between 39% and 47% of all juveniles in detention in NSW’ (AJAC 2003:5). The plan focuses on justice, as well as underlying social, economic, cultural, customary law, law reform and funding issues. A key AJAC strategy aims ‘to squarely place Aboriginal people at the centre of defining and resolving their own problems’ (ibid:6).

Aboriginal community reference group

On 6 November the first Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) meeting was held. Participants were issued with an information package containing a letter outlining their role, the recommended Model 5, the draft strategic plan, and the list of nominees. Concern was raised that not all the nominees were present and there were questions about how this should be dealt with. It was recognised that the group may need to initially act as an ‘attractant’; gradually drawing others to attend the group meetings, thus working towards a fully functioning and committed group with the potential of eventually incorporating as an entity to auspice the future self-determined service. It

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Five of the eleven nominees attended the meeting, plus two participants from MYC and the CPO from DoCS. One explanation for the initial limited attendance is that Aboriginal people are often called upon to attend a number of activities and meetings within their community. This may produce participation difficulty between parallel meeting dates and times, rendering some people unable to attend. This was certainly the case in the work of the group and resulted in it re-scheduling ARG meetings in an attempt to promote equitable participation. However, participation and attendance at the ARG continued to be problematic.
was decided that all those people nominated should be elected, with the potential scope of recruiting others should some of those elected not continue, and importantly that Elders and young people be consulted during the work of the ARG.

The immediate tasks of the ARG included the endorsement of the APC’s job description and proposed plan to establish the interim service. The group subsequently experienced a number of formation and composition iterations in an attempt to maintain its focus and membership, particularly to honour the commitment of local Aboriginal community involvement. Matthews (2003) reports that the project partnership group and ARG membership subsequently changed to become more reflective of youth practitioners in the Mount Druitt community. Matthews indicates that this occurred to ensure inclusion of up-to-date perspectives from people working with young people.

Nonetheless, participation and attendance of local people in the ARG remained problematic. The issue of poor community participation, however, is not confined to Aboriginal communities. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, community participation in small organisations has become a problematic SAAP sector issue, particularly in retaining skilled people who largely provide their services in a voluntary capacity. On the other hand, Aboriginal community participation may be constituted in forms not well recognised under a Western organisational governance (reference group structure) paradigm.

Despite the apparent ARG participation problem, the HAYS project has achieved significant outcomes and progress towards becoming an autonomous Aboriginal self-determined youth service. The following sub-sections outline the opening of HAYS and the work it initially developed.  

5.4.4 Service opening
The HAYS interim project opened in May 2003, four months beyond the original timeframe, following the appointment of the Aboriginal Project Manager (APM). As it was envisaged that the project duration would be eighteen months, the future handover date of August 2003 to an Aboriginal organisation would need to be extended. Stakeholders (at the time) were not ‘timeframe locked’ and they recognised

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21 Sections in this part of the thesis, in particular, have been reproduced from papers published by myself and co-authors (with permission). See, for example, Knox and Matthews (2004, 2005).
the need to ‘get the project right’, so were prepared to incorporate into the project emerging issues and recommendations from the Aboriginal community. The initial critical stages were the:

- recruitment of staff
- development of [project] infrastructure
- establishment of a mechanism to document the community’s aspirations for inclusion in the ongoing project design, planning and development
- development of a strategic planning approach for the future establishment of the Aboriginal self-determined youth SAAP service
- development of ongoing project evaluation and planning mechanisms
- concurrent provision of direct services to at risk and homeless Aboriginal youth.

The following sections briefly outline the developments and programs being created at HAYS up until mid 2005.

5.4.5 Recruitment, employment and staffing

The APM was recruited and commenced duties in March 2003, with the responsibility of facilitating the design and development process of the project, in collaboration with the ARG. In parallel, direct service delivery to at risk/homeless young people was to be initially provided through outreach support by an Aboriginal caseworker. The first round of advertisements for this position only secured one applicant, who was deemed unsuitable for the position. There was much debate and discussion in the Aboriginal community, which reached HAYS via a community feedback process, indicating that there were concerns that the position was not ‘Aboriginal identified’, nor sex appropriate. Subsequently, two positions were created and advertised. This next round of advertising stated there were two designated positions available. Aboriginal male and female caseworkers commenced September 2003. It was considered to be culturally appropriate to appoint males to work with male clients and females to work with female clients, though it was recognised that this is not always possible in the reality of limited resources. An administration position was created to assist and support the APM. Residential program staff were employed in the second half of 2004. Other positions have been determined and filled either by casual employment or volunteerism. For example, a volunteer receptionist and a paid cleaner have been

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22 All HAYS staff are employed by MYC.
casually employed. The APM reported that Aboriginal people from the local community have made numerous approaches to HAYS regarding offers of volunteerism, but mostly community members seek paid part-time or casual work.

The original HAYS development plan also included an espoused commitment to formulate and implement a training program. It was initially proposed that all HAYS staff undertake a SAAP induction-training course. However, this initiative has not eventuated and can be attributed to, in part, the questionable and convoluted process of establishing the residential component of HAYS. It is apparent that the service adopted a conservative approach in human resourcing. That is, MYC appears to have relied on a traditional ‘market place’ recruitment practice of advertising, interviewing and then appointing an employee to a designated position. In the opinion of the APM (Matthews 2005), two issues worked against the efficacy of this practice. First, significant Aboriginal programs in the local area were being funded and ‘rolled-out’ by government concurrently with the development of HAYS. Thus, the demand for skilled people was high, and in a community with a limited (Westernised) skill base available human resources is problematical due to limited training options. Second, historically there has been reluctance on the part of government to invest in developing an enhanced local Aboriginal skill base.

Therefore, the human resourcing of HAYS has been one of its biggest challenges, and arguably will remain so unless its designers formulate a better strategy for the training, professional development and retention of its current and future employees. I outline examples of how an inadequate human recourse strategy is impacting on HAYS services and development. First, the availability and efficacy of HAYS’s core service components has depended on the presence of skilled staff. Some services have either ceased or diminished in line with the exit of certain staff members. Subsequent recruiting of skilled people has been difficult as implied above, and therefore services to young people are affected. Second, in my assessment, the APM has been overly drawn into managing the HAYS entity and dealing with these staff resourcing issues. As a result, the APM’s concentration and action on the original

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23 I suggest that this also applies to the entity’s future governance members. Concomitantly, training and development are wider issues for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community services’ sector requiring improved strategic thinking and resourcing.
position goal of leading and facilitating HAYS’s design and development has been diminished, leading to further project handover delays.

5.4.6 ‘Whole of family, whole of community’ approach

The APM (Matthews 2003) argues that poverty and marginalisation are the underlying causes of the disadvantage experienced by the Mount Druitt Aboriginal community. This view is supported by other members of the Mount Druitt community (see, e.g., Bell 2003). In this, the APM and other staff asserted that HAYS is charged with the responsibility to assist, support and facilitate change wider than focusing on the alleviation of youth homelessness. Accordingly, there was a desire of the APM and staff to instil the philosophy of a ‘whole of family, whole of community’ approach within HAYS to be holistically empowering back to the family members of the community’s young people (Matthews 2003).

In discussing the meaning of the ‘whole of family, whole of community’ concept further with HAYS staff, three principles became clear. Firstly, it is an approach that partly rests on the notion of traditional Aboriginal social and economic inclusiveness, responsibility and reciprocity where every (able) member of a group contributes to the well-being of its members. Secondly, it is based on the need to simultaneously work with a young person’s family and community in order to promote successful holistic outcomes. In other words, collective support is required to ensure that any ameliorative interventions are sustainable. Thirdly, it embraces the requirement to seek community members’ views and aspirations on how HAYS should be designed and developed, given it is a community support service and that it would become an Aboriginal self-determined agency. To this end, HAYS management sought to listen to and prepare briefings and budgets on ideas and concepts brought to the project by community members for the consideration of the ARG.

5.4.7 Core service components

Some of the community’s ideas and aspirations have become essential community development and service delivery components at HAYS, while others are still being considered. However, not all of the established components have continued to date. In part, the reasons for this have been made visible in the human resourcing discussion.
above. Another reason may be the apparent change of HAYS’s development under new people in the project partnership group (from MYC and DoCS), who seem to be focusing more on establishing a SAAP residential service component. Other reasons are outlined below in a description of the service components.

Language and kinship program

This program commenced with the aim of assisting Aboriginal young people to revive or acquire their traditional language. The rationale being that people are culturally re-empowered when they acquire and speak their traditional language. To quote the project facilitator (Oppliger 2004):

> The rationale for the project is that language contains culture and identity. When Indigenous peoples world wide reclaim their languages and then revitalise these languages they are developing a strong sense of who they are in their families, clans, nations, country and world. Already I have watched the young people at HAYS, who have engaged in the language exercises, beam with pride as they see their language in print and begin to learn their language. To me it looks like they are connecting with their heritage, culture and spirituality. Aunty Edna Watson (Dharug Elder) recently said to me: “Without language there’s no culture. Language is the important part of the culture.” Other Aboriginal people in other parts of Australia have said similar things. Aunty Alice Rigney from South Australia is quoted by Rob Amery as saying: “Our language is linked to our land. It is intrinsic to culture. The two are very strongly connected. Our language gives us clues that tell us about our environment, the meaning for our existence.” (p1)

The kinship element of the program aims to assist young people discover their ‘family trees’. The view is to document their kinship ties, developing a ‘Mount Druitt Aboriginal Tribal Tree’. Thus, the hope was that the young people would acquire knowledge of their Aboriginal history and connections, enabling them to become leaders in their community. The piloted language and kinship program, whereas considered vital to counter boredom and promote the well-being of Aboriginal youth, has been postponed due to the illness of one its key leaders. The status of the program is to be reviewed in 2006.

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24 Amanda Oppliger is a doctoral student of Linguistics (Australian linguistics – Aboriginal languages).
Music project
A music project was established, arising from the language and kinship program. The project aimed to engage young people, particularly diverting them from crime into more positive and creative activities. A number of young men, at times with their fathers, came to HAYS and were provided with music tuition from a local Aboriginal musician. A hip-hop group, called Murdi Rampage, emerged out of this initiative. In the intersection of the music project with the language and kinship project, members of Murdi Rampage defined themselves as Wangkumara people. One of their first songs was called ‘Wangkumara Brother’, followed by ‘Young Black and Deadly’. The group went on to record a CD of its work, and performed live at a number of concerts. The music program has not continued due to the ebb and flow of available people to support the initiative at HAYS, but its potential remains.25

Employment opportunities for young Aboriginal people
HAYS staff were concerned when Naamooro, the only Indigenous job network service in Mount Druitt, returned its operations to its Redfern head office. Therefore HAYS has been investigating the establishment of an Aboriginal youth specific job network club, to be part of the future handover of service, as a complimentary element in meeting the needs of local Aboriginal youth. In the meantime, through the practice of case management, staff assisted clients to access employment support through other community services. There were also moves to provide a government-funded program called the Personal Support Programme (PSP), mainly targeted at homeless youth.

PSP is a brokerage service that assists disadvantaged people with employment training and recruitment services. In consultation with the Mount Druitt Aboriginal community a youth consortium of service providers, including HAYS staff, was established. The consortium aimed to form a tender for an Indigenous specific PSP initiative for the Mount Druitt Aboriginal community. The consortium approached the consultant engaged by the Australian Government to initiate PSP forums, seeking assistance to develop its tender. Unfortunately, the consultant experienced personal sickness and became unavailable.

25 The music program was profiled in the Sydney Sun-Herald newspaper (Iaccarino 2005).
Consequently, a tender was not developed. However, HAYS has maintained its case management support process and networked with Centrelink (an Australian Government Department) to continue supporting homeless Aboriginal youth to gain employment opportunities. In partnership with MYC’s JobSquad program, HAYS had also applied for government funding to recruit and train at risk/homeless Aboriginal youth in landscaping. The first project was to be the renewal of the HAYS site, and it was envisaged that the trainees would move on to other landscaping projects for the local community. HAYS was unsuccessful with its application, but an aspiration still exists for such a program.

Integrated Case Management System (ICMS)

The ICMS aimed to provide Aboriginal youth with holistic case management support. Firstly, HAYS case workers networked with youth SAAP accommodation agencies in the region to develop placement and support options for homeless Aboriginal youth. The model included advice to the (non-HAYS) residential workers on quality service, sensitive to the cultural needs of homeless Aboriginal young people accessing the off-site programs. This ICMS outreach model also extended to at risk Aboriginal young people (and their support services), with non-shelter needs, in the community. Secondly, the ICMS model aimed to create and instil new and positive work practices in young people, utilising ‘personal futures planning options’ to address the issues that currently confront them. The program aimed to help them counteract their anti-social behaviour and build self-esteem, laying down a foundation for longer-term goals that they wished to achieve. In essence, it was a practical application of the HAYS ‘whole of family, whole of community’ philosophy. The ICMS also acted as catalyst to stimulate the Aboriginal youth and family services’ system in the local area.

The ICMS initiative has continued to some extent, but its efficacy is dependent on the philosophical awareness and practice skills of MYC as auspice and HAYS staff, as well as the resources available in the network of non-HAYS agencies that support young Aboriginal clients and their families. Further, whilst the design group appeared to endorse the model in a planning meeting held June 2005, limited coherent discussion was instigated on its apparent results in working with clients, their families and community. Again, key HAYS auspice decision-makers in the meeting seemed more interested in re-establishing a residential SAAP service, despite the available
emerging findings from this doctoral research that clearly supported the efficacy of the ICMS model in working with the local Aboriginal community.\(^ {26} \)

**Prevention and Intervention Project for Indigenous Young People (PIPIYP)**

The PIPIYP initiative was to be piloted in September 2003. This was a concept that developed into a community-based partnership between the Mount Druitt Police Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, Holy Family Church Youth Project Officer, and HAYS. Through this partnership arrangement, the group initially sort to target ten extremely high-risk young people, both male and female, who had been brought to the attention of the local police and other emergency services on numerous occasions, relating to underage drinking and other anti-social behaviour. The aim of the project was to create new, positive practices utilising the ICMS aims and processes. The outcomes of the initial stage would provide a basis for the continued development of a ‘whole of family, whole of community’ approach in addressing the issues identified by the young people. In doing this it was also envisaged that a youth perspective would be provided for other Aboriginal organisations’ (that HAYS has contact with) strategic planning.

The APM (Matthews 2005) indicated that the practical idea was to formulate a night patrol group to act as an interventionist, but also be a preventionist, strategy in dealing with at risk young people who were abusing drugs and alcohol, and ‘wandering the streets’. The pilot group held a couple of meetings, but due to other initiatives that were developing in the community at the time the energy for the project diminished. However, through the Community Solutions\(^ {27} \) initiative, government authorities positioned a program for an Aboriginal night patrol under the direct auspice of the Mount Druitt Police. Subsequently, reports Matthews (2005), the available project resources were shared with the local Pacific Islander community.

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\(^ {26} \) In keeping with the research protocol, key design stakeholders had previously been issued with the emerging findings and were comprehensively updated on these during the June 2005 meeting. Of concern to the auspice group was the lack of documented evidence demonstrating tangible outcomes from ICMS interventions. Whereas this appeared to be a reasonable concern, it should be stated that the auspice had not extensively invested in developing internal project data collection and monitoring systems. At the time of writing this thesis, the reasons for this situation are unclear, but may be partly due to human resourcing issues. A more critical proposition is that some design group members lack ‘conceptual depth’ of contemporary Aboriginal issues and needs. However, as this thesis has not been designed to focus on service delivery outcomes, I did not pursue the matter.

\(^ {27} \) ‘Community Solutions’ is a NSW government initiative that aims to prevent crime, support families, and strengthen communities (via capacity building) in the Mount Druitt area.
Matthews goes on to suggest that the Islander community were so well structured and organised, that this group developed a greater say over the access to the resource. Further:

So all the good intentions can happen, but it is all there. The money is there, and it comes back to quality leadership and people doing what is meant to be done. And consistently, what I see is an underestimation and an overlooking of my [Aboriginal] community’s generosity to be sharing of what we have. We always have been, always will be. And yet when there are specific allocations for our business, someone, someone always thinks it’s more important that it goes to somebody else. So we’re still waiting for a [formalised and funded] night patrol. (ibid)

Nonetheless, Matthews goes on to say that there are community volunteers ‘patrolling the streets’ at night and early hours of the morning on foot and in their own vehicles. HAYS’s direct involvement in this initiative has diminished, except there is the possibility of receiving a request for accommodation or support should an identified young person be in need of assistance.

The driver’s licence project

The enthusiasm to develop such a project was generated out of a Youth Accommodation Interagency – Nepean (YAIN) meeting. Driving offence charges within the Aboriginal community (NSW state-wide) constitute the third highest category of offences by which Aboriginal people engage with the criminal justice system (Matthews 2003). According to HAYS staff, securing a driver’s licence is often difficult for many Aboriginal people because of their outstanding fines and orders relating to previous driving offences. For example, driving with no licence, driving an unregistered vehicle and/or driving whilst suspended. The staff advised that the rate of imprisonment for Aboriginal people in these categories is concentrated in many NSW rural and remote centres, such as Dubbo, Walgett, Brewarrina, Bourke, and Wilcannia; all highly Aboriginal populated centres. The licence initiative could have strong, positive criminal justice outcomes as well as the potential of other achievements being reached within the context of this program.

It was proposed that a series of meetings be held to establish a focus group for the development of the initiative, to commence lobbying for funds and other resources, and securing appropriate partners. At the time, this initiative had access to a manual car and the participant could access this vehicle to do her/his required fifty
hours’ driving time. All costs associated with this vehicle were to be recorded and when funds were secured the donor of the vehicle would be reimbursed for some of the associated expenses. HAYS received a grant of $30,000.00 to establish the program, but due to the persistent human resourcing problem and change-over of case workers, the project was not able to be implemented.

However, the APM (Matthews 2005) reports that HAYS had negotiated with the NSW Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) to provide on-site education and training forums on driving licences. In partnership with the Holy Family Centre (HFC), HAYS was provided with three RTA computer units (located at HFC) for people to access and obtain their licenses. This project was originally initiated for the Aboriginal community – young people and their families – but due to its success non-Aboriginal people also accessed the system. By late November 2005 approximately 450 people had accessed the on-site system for tuition or attainment of a licence (ibid). Matthews (2005) went on to say that:

And the reality is that having a driving licence is almost like having identification now … So, it addressed a lot of parameters in the social validisation of the young people. It gives them a vast array of access and of privilege ... ‘identification’ gives you privilege.

Getting It Together Scheme (GITS) and Family Adolescent Project (FAP)

In April 2004, as part of the NSW Drug Summit recommendations and Western Sydney Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Plan 2003–2006 (DoCS 2004) the establishment of an Aboriginal GITS and FAP initiative was funded in the Blacktown LGA of NSW under the auspice of the Ted Noffs Foundation. Drawing on the initiative’s Terms of Reference (DoCS 2005), the two projects are summarised as follows. GITS was aimed at offering vulnerable Aboriginal youth (aged 12-18 years) a free service that they could access to primarily address their alcohol and/or substance misuse, and thus limiting their risk of experiencing homelessness. FAP aimed to provide a free support service to Aboriginal families/carers to prevent or minimise and manage potential conflicts with young people (10-17) in their care, which may prevent family disconnection. This service was targeted at families experiencing problems with violence, alcohol and/or substance misuse.

HAYS agreed to have the Noffs staff at its premises at the request of DoCS, and thus HAYS became a partner with Noffs and DoCS in the implementation of GITS.
and FAP. The HAYS APM agreed to provide day-to-day operational management of the service and its staff. Subsequently, the partnership and service delivery proved difficult to manage and in a meeting between parties, held May 2005, it was agreed that the Noffs Foundation would relocate to another premises, but continue networking with HAYS. The Noffs placement may have further complicated the already complex and diverse HAYS initiatives to be managed, and this contributed to prolonging HAYS’s capacity to reach its original goal.

In the same meeting, the APM again raised concerns about the ongoing difficulty of recruiting people to fill vacant positions at HAYS. It was agreed to temporarily close the residential unit component (which will be outlined below) of service delivery for at least two weeks to enable a review of HAYS’s design and development. Statements were made about the need to re-visit HAYS’s original vision and plan, and staff training proposal. It was apparent that HAYS had reached a stage requiring consolidation of its activities. Therefore, it was agreed to hold a two-day review and planning forum in June 2005.

**Networking**

Networking has occurred with a range of agencies to secure their involvement in promoting HAYS’s developments. Contacts have been made with, for example, Sydney Regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, NSW Aboriginal Housing Office, Coalition of Peak Aboriginal Organisations (NSW), Youth Accommodation Interagency – Nepean (YAIN), NSW Attorney General’s Crime Prevention Division, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination’s NSW Indigenous Coordination Centre, and the University of Western Sydney. HAYS has endeavoured to act as a specialist service to a range of agencies and youth networks by providing inter-sectorial collaboration, advice and service support. The capacity to network is directly linked to the availability of time and resources of HAYS staff. The extent this networking varied considerably with the ebb and flow of people at HAYS.

**Community and government agencies**

HAYS assisted organisations, private sector groups and government departments to launch, rollout or host community events. For example:
• NSW Women’s Legal Resource Centre – Indigenous Women’s Project launch of the Anti-Violence Game for young women and legal needs survey for young Aboriginal people.
• NSW Department of Land Conservation work training program for Aboriginal young people.
• Daruk Aboriginal Medical Service outreach service and client contact.

The involvement of HAYS in such events is of an ad-hoc nature.

Residential component

On opening HAYS, the APM set out to get an ‘all clear’ from the NSW Department of Housing (DoH) on the condition of the building – the existing SAAP crisis accommodation centre – where homeless youth would be housed. This was undertaken in view of the noticeable damage to the structure of the building and the appearance and continued lengthening of cracks. The DoH undertook an initial inspection to determine its course of action in conducting appropriate repairs. Another issue of concern was the layout of the building; it would be offensive to a large section of the Aboriginal community in accommodating males and females together. In addition, the efficacy of such an on-site residential program in working with Aboriginal youth had yet to be established.

Therefore, pending the resolution of these three issues, an interim accommodation option was arranged by accessing vacancies in other existing MYC residential programs. That is, HAYS staff would place and support Aboriginal young people in temporary off-site accommodation. To my knowledge, limited referrals and placements were effected under the temporary option. While the building problems were being resolved, the kitchen and lounge room areas of the HAYS crisis unit were still accessed by the project staff and some clients for meetings and cooking.

The HAYS residential component opened in February 2005. My analysis is that this was a premature opening for three main reasons. First, the original plan did not specify that such a program would be offered under the temporary auspice arrangement. The intention was that MYC, as an experienced SAAP service provider, would develop the necessary SAAP accommodation crisis unit (and other SAAP services) infrastructure, policy and procedure for such a service component to be handed over as part of the HAYS initiative transfer to a future Aboriginal self-determined agency. That is, if it was deemed as being an appropriate service. Second,
as SAAP crisis accommodation is an intensive program, considerable resources in terms of staff, management, co-ordination and administration are required to efficiently and effectively offer and deliver such a service. Therefore, in pursuing the establishment of a residential unit, energy was diverted away from focusing on HAYS’s primary goal, as previously specified in this thesis. Third, the establishment of appropriate intensive supported accommodation services for young people experiencing crisis is subject to the provision of adequate funding levels. It is questionable that the present recurrent funding level available is of sufficient magnitude to appropriately staff, manage and deliver such a program.

In summary, it is my view that the premature opening of the residential component may have unnecessarily prolonged the attainment of the HAYS project’s goal. Critically, there had been no rigorous analysis by the HAYS design group on the appropriateness of such a service provision model to at risk/homeless Aboriginal youth. At worst it may have significantly, but unintentionally, elicited conflict between design and development stakeholders, nudging the project into a vulnerable position.

5.4.8 Other initiatives

‘Coffee shop’ concept

HAYS staff said that Mount Druitt Elders have indicated that there is no place to gather socially to create an environment where Elders and young people can meet. It was proposed that HAYS promote the use of its office building on a fortnightly basis, at a time planned in conjunction with community events, meetings or gatherings, for people of community to gather socially and discuss matters pertinent to them. At the same time, enjoying light refreshments and social interaction could be experienced amongst the community of the young and elderly. The core aim of the initiative was for ‘community to come back’ and take leadership in the empowerment of young people. My observation is that HAYS was attempting to act as a catalyst for ‘re-knitting or re-weaving’ a local Aboriginal ‘community fabric’. However, perhaps this would be a ‘synthetic weave’ of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal social and economic organisational practices.
Opportunities

In 2004, there was a focus on Western Sydney, and in particular Mount Druitt, in the form of initiatives and potential funding coming from the NSW Premier’s Office and other government projects. For instance: Community Solutions Family Violence Symposium; Community Solutions Crime Prevention initiatives; and, DoCS’ Aboriginal Children, Young People and Family Plan 2003–2006. HAYS was well positioned to be a significant partner in these ventures.

However, the APM indicated that creating a human resource base for HAYS (and other Aboriginal agencies) was one of the biggest challenges facing HAYS, the community and government. In this, a comprehensive skill development strategy would be required to resource and equip workers and the community to continue efficacious governance, management and service delivery functions of any additional HAYS components. My observation is that, while government and non-government community agencies have acknowledged this, little work has been conducted to progress this foundational community development training imperative.

Therefore, I consider this to be a critical unresolved HAYS design and development issue, particularly if the self-determined agency goal is to be realised. However, I would argue this issue is not just a characteristic of Aboriginal settings; it also requires attention in non-Aboriginal community services’ settings.

5.4.9 The future of HAYS

In Matthew’s October 2004 report, she indicates that a number of HAYS’s services were continuing without recurrent funding allocation. These included: counselling and support; supervision of the ACYJG; the language and kinship program; and, liaison and site management of the GITS/FAP project. Also, considering the development stage of the HAYS project and the broader vision for the project beyond that of a SAAP residential service, it would be highly desirable that the holistic components already in operation continue to consolidate and develop.

Conceptually, the design group endorsed this holistic proposition: the ‘whole of family, whole of community’ approach. It was decided that MYC would, for the duration of 2005, continue to fund the Aboriginal Project Manager position and one Outreach Caseworker, in addition to the recently opened residential service. The cost
of maintaining the non-residential aspect of the service for 2005 would be met from
the project’s accumulated non-recurrent SAAP funds. However, the APM indicated
that the APM and Caseworker roles would need to be re-negotiated to ensure the
continuance of the non-residential aspects of the program in terms of rigorous
Aboriginal youth services’ system development, based on access to appropriate levels
of recurrent funds. Preliminary findings from my research activities support such
assertions. Emerging evidence suggests that the move towards HAYS becoming an
urban-based ‘whole of community gathering place’, with many constituent programs
based on traditional knowledge and practices, has the potential to alleviate Aboriginal
youth homelessness. It could also be argued that local Aboriginal communities’
aspirations would be best serviced in developing a centre that caters for the diverse
needs of local Aboriginal youth, not just those who experience homelessness. 28

The goal of HAYS becoming an Aboriginal self-determined agency appeared to
be kept in sight based on the innovative, appropriate and efficacious programs that the
Aboriginal staff and community were establishing. However, despite the involvement
of a number of Aboriginal people in the project (including staff), concerns were
mounting from MYC about the perceived lack of formal Aboriginal community
involvement in the Aboriginal Reference Group. Consequently, MYC called for a
review of the project in mid 2005 to re-recruit people on to the ARG and re-establish
the project’s strategic plan in the service of its original documented goal. In my view,
HAYS’s activities were generally moving in the direction of its original goal.

It is at this stage that my formal fieldwork at HAYS ended, after I had presented
my preliminary research findings to a planning forum of design and development
stakeholders. At this forum, I passionately encouraged the stakeholders to be aware of
and consider the research findings. I suggested that organisational endeavours,
particularly such as HAYS, are conversations in action, and encouraged the HAYS
design and development stakeholders to intensify their conceptual, strategic and
practical conversations. That is, to deeply listen and consider ‘giving life’ to the
research participants’ ideas and aspirations.

28 UWS at present is conducting an inquiry in partnership with the ARG and HAYS to determine such
needs. The findings will further inform the appropriate design and development imperatives for
incorporation into the HAYS project.
5.5 Summary

The history of the Mount Druitt Aboriginal youth SAAP service can be viewed in three stages. First, in its initial configuration as Mundarra Aboriginal Youth Services. This funded Aboriginal youth SAAP agency, established in 1989, experienced organisational difficulties in 1999 ultimately culminating in its wind-up in 2001.

Second, in the absence of a functioning youth service, the Department of Community Services, in consultation with the Nepean Area Aboriginal Advisory Group and Marist Youth Care, proposed an interim arrangement. Essentially, it was proposed that Marist temporarily auspice an interim project to re-establish an Aboriginal self-determined youth SAAP service. During the interim auspice period, a process would be designed and developed that ensured the eventual establishment of an autonomous Aboriginal youth SAAP service. However, there were two main community concerns with the interim model: the use of a non-Aboriginal entity to auspice the project; and, the perceived lack of community consultation regarding the proposed engagement of Marist. In view of this situation, Marist expressed its reluctance to proceed without Aboriginal community endorsement and support.

Third, in consultation and agreement with the local Aboriginal community, DoCS re-designed the proposal based on an open tender process where a community organisation – Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal – could submit its tender to auspice the interim project. Marist was the only organisation that submitted an expression of interest in the tender process. Eventually its proposal to work with DoCS and the local Aboriginal community was accepted, as it generally complied with the tender specifications to auspice the interim model (HAYS – Interim Service Project) and assist in the design and development of a future autonomous Aboriginal self-determined youth SAAP agency. This service therefore replaced MAYS.

HAYS, the subject of this thesis case study, formally opened in May 2003, following establishment of the project’s community reference structures and appointment of the Aboriginal Project Manager. HAYS service components, under the philosophy of a ‘whole family, whole of community’ approach, included community development and case management programs for Aboriginal youth. However, there have been significant challenges in establishing and maintaining HAYS, including: the effectiveness of the ongoing process of community consultation; the use of a non-
Aboriginal auspice organisation remains a contested issue for some people; the declining participation of community members in the Aboriginal Reference Group; and, the apparent lack of availability of Aboriginal human resources.

Significantly, the questionable decision to establish a SAAP residential unit may have adversely affected the progress of designing and developing the future autonomous Aboriginal self-determined youth SAAP service. Another significant and unresolved issue is the establishment of a comprehensive training program for the current and future agency governance members and service delivery workers. A third significant issue to be addressed is the procurement of funding levels to develop the future agency in line with the local community’s aspirations arising from this thesis.29

These three significant design and development issues were originally considered as part of the contracting process between the key stakeholders in establishing the HAYS project. My observation is that they remain issues for urgent attention, discussion and resolution if the goal of designing, establishing, developing and maintaining an effective Aboriginal self-determined organisation for homeless youth is to be realised. I describe such organisational design and development processes as conversations in action.

29 My understanding is that HAYS – ISP will now be handed over to an autonomous Aboriginal organisation in the second half of 2006.
Chapter 6 – Our People, Yearning for a HAYS

6.1 Introduction
This chapter outlines the research findings, drawn from an analysis of the research participants’ interviews and indirect physical traces data collection. The findings are grouped into the constructs of home and homelessness, followed by the participants’ perceived causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness. Next the design and development findings are outlined, followed by HAYS governance and management ideas emerging from the data analysis.

This section of the thesis, in keeping with the research methodology and methods, includes direct participants’ quotes (each assigned a numerical code) to evoke the essence of the research, particularly allowing the ‘voices’ of Aboriginal people to be heard (with minor editing for clarity and confidentiality). The use of the term ‘Category construct’, in the tables that follow in this chapter, has been drawn from the research philosophy outlined in Chapter 3 and case study research methods outlined in Chapter 4 of this thesis. The constructed categories in the tables are my fractal interpretations of data or participants’ direct statements that convey meaningful messages.

This intentional process of augmenting the case study findings with matrices serves to make visible these messages, rather than being represented in overly complex narrative description. As outlined in Chapter 4, the representation of the findings in this form provides ‘richness’ to the thesis, creating a simultaneous awareness of individuality and diversity, and yet a shared or collective sense of what is happening and being yearned for at HAYS.

6.2 The Construct of Home
6.2.1 Defining home
In response to the open-ended question, ‘what does home mean to you’, the interviewees indicate that there are multiple perceptions, meanings and experiences
relating to the construct of ‘home’. The following extracted interview narratives provide indicative summaries of the participants’ definitions of home.

Home is dependent upon the way people want to define it:

*I think it’s up to the way people want to identify it. I identify that my home is in Western Sydney, even though I was born in Redfern. I grew up mostly in Blacktown and I lived in Penrith so that is my home; that is my place.* (05)

*Home for young people is wherever the young person identifies as home, and it may be their own cultural, physical homeland of the particular family and grouping that the young person belongs to. It may be a sort of substitute homeland. We need to make sure that we know what the young person identifies as their home.* (15)

Home can be more than one place:

*Home can be more than one place, but it’s not just about place; it is about the things that go with that place.* (04)

*I have a sense of home in other places where I’ve lived and worked. I have a postcard memory of shots of places, scenes and all that sort of stuff. So I can actually transport myself back to those places through the vision that I have of that place and what I’ve recorded of that place.* (10)

*There are many places I think that I certainly feel a strong affinity with and quite often the sort of border between person and place is fairly blurred, but certainly I do feel affinity to place; to some places.* (15)

Home does not necessarily include connecting to people:

*So I can’t say that home includes connections to family, because all your family don’t live where you live.* (06)

*Yes, because I don’t have a concept, or I don’t have the experience rather, of home being a place where my family is in the sense of it is usually just me generally. I’m probably a bit odd in the sense of I’ve largely lived by myself, so home is not a big place of connecting to people.* (07)

*For me it doesn’t necessarily mean with the family.* (15)

Sense of home can change over time:

*Maybe your sense of home does change over time. As I think back when I was a kid, home would have been almost entirely about the people ... like providing mum, the cat, and my sister were there, it didn’t really matter where we were. Although as you get older, for me at least, place then arose as important coupled with people. I guess I linked the two, whereas it is actually now quite different again so it does change.* (07)
Home has some history as well because I think as our home evolves or changes, or is constituted over the years; it has lots of little stories. So you can look at that picture on the wall and see what came from it, and what the chain of events, which led to that … it’s kind of a living text. (19)

The young people’s views on the meaning of home were straight-forward:

*Home is just home.*

*Home is what you make it.*

*Good and bad.*

Further analysis revealed that a sense of home may be physically, metaphysically or culturally constructed and experienced.

### 6.2.2 Sense of physical place

Physical place refers to the natural and built structures that people associate with or assign some form of connection, or sense of connection, to such as where they live, where they feel safe or where they relate to their families, friends, communities and networks. The following table summarises participants’ responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
<th>Group participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Natural place**  | The place where I was born
Where you live
My traditional lands
A place of provision | Is country
Yes, it can be [about land] |
| **Built place**    | A house for our mob
My dwelling
Home for my kids
Home for my family | Boring
Eat and sleep
Has been Missions |
| **Personal place** | Where you have choice about things
A room with a door that shuts
Must have your own bed at home | A place to smoke
[A place to play] PlayStation
A place to sleep |
| **Safe place**     | A place of shelter
Where I feel comfortable
A place of stability and security
Accessible at all times
A place of safety
Where you lay your head | A safe feeling
Feel comfortable
Feeling full from Nan’s cooking
[A place] to feel warm |
| **Relational place** | Physical place to have relationships
A pivotal place for your networks | |

Designing and Developing Aboriginal Service Organisations
6.2.3 Sense of metaphysical place

In contrast to physical place, metaphysical place is taken to be a more philosophical sense of place. It is concerned with the constructed concepts of existential place where people derive meaning from their spirituality, culture, human relationships, belonging and identity. One’s sense of metaphysical place is, however, complex; it may merge with one’s physical sense of place. Take, for example, the following quote from one participant that highlights this interconnectedness, when asked what keeps the respondent living away from their family place:

Knowing that there’s people that live down here that come from that place, that’s where their people come from [Aboriginal language region], my tribal name, my town and there’s a few [tribe] people that live around here. I’m staying with a couple of them and all we talk about is, every now and then, [town] and [town] and just reliving all the little towns up there that they love going to and camping out under the stars an all that kind of stuff. … but moving away permanently helped me with my career. I needed the change and I needed to do something to make myself proud of whom I am and to go back and have my family really acknowledge and say: ‘Well you are doing a good job, I’m sure your mother would be proud of ya.’ (12)

This person speaks of connections to tribal language, identity, land and belonging, but sought change by moving away from her ‘traditional home’ for career purposes. The following table conveys a range of metaphysical constructs.

Table 6.2: Sense of metaphysical place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
<th>Group participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal place</td>
<td>Is my little world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A place for me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is quite emotional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A place to express yourself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A place of personal growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family place</td>
<td>Family relationships and connections</td>
<td>Home is extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They can trust family [i.e., youth]</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I had family back up support</td>
<td>Family is your home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where my mother is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational place</td>
<td>My house is open for anyone</td>
<td>Is community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A place for friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It’s not just about place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who you connect with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community connection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category construct</td>
<td>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</td>
<td>Group participants’ in-vivo statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of identity</td>
<td>I’m a different person at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who I am</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A place where you are respected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of belonging</td>
<td>Feeling you belong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A place where you’d be missed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A place where people care about you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural place</td>
<td>Connection to culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reciprocal commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home has history as well</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual place</td>
<td>Spiritual and cultural roots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A place where there is love</td>
<td>Feeling loved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It will never go away</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas for some participants there is a strong, traditional sense of physical and spiritual place, others’ views may have changed:

Respondent
My views [have shifted] somewhat and land and country is not as significant as it used to be

Researcher
As in your identity and connection?

Respondent
As in my identity and connection, yes. It is not that significant at all really. I suppose I have a much um ... I’m looking from a Christian perspective too in saying this that um ... well fundamentally this world is not my own so that connection to this land is no longer that significant at all ... (17)

The young people were also asked some additional questions regarding their sense of home. First: what happens if you can’t go home? The response was: we’ll go to friends, Nan’s or another place. It appears that they would seek a known, comfortable or safe place to stay. It was evident that some young people may seek to leave home. For example, it was recognised by one respondent that every family is not perfect, some are dysfunctional. Second: what happens when you are away from home? The response was: missing others who are not there, indicating their sense of connectedness or belonging. The final question put to the young people on home was: what do you think/feel about seeing AIATSIS map of Aboriginal Australia?\(^1\) The

\(^1\) AIATSIS map that attempts to represent all the tribal (language/nation) groups of the Australian Indigenous peoples (Horton 2000).
verbatim responses were: true Australia; knew how Dad met Mum; tells [and] shows where ‘it is’ [home]; nothing felt; knowing who neighbours are; how we met; other side of family; good yarn – share information; already knew where it was [home]; and, lore practices. This verbatim collection of responses generally indicates that some of the young people have an awareness of their heritage, ancestors, traditional lands and cultures.

6.2.4 Sense of cultural place
As identified in Chapter 4, I incorporated the data collection process of exploring traditional Aboriginal sites to seek pattern (fractal) impressions of past cultural life and organisational processes, rather than necessarily drawing conclusions, for comparison with the data emerging from the other research collection methods. It was also to gain insight and inspiration from these places, perhaps a vicarious experience of ‘traditional place’. Since the later part of 2004, I have conducted numerous field trips (to more than 70 sites) in the Blue Mountains (NSW) to discover, inspect and record my observations of these Dharug sites. The following fieldwork narrative encapsulates my findings, which were presented and discussed with HAYS staff for verification and potential incorporation into the agency’s design and development philosophy.

It is a warm, sunny day in the upper Blue Mountains of NSW. A group of people, including two archaeologists, a social scientist/researcher [me], a bush regenerator and a couple of bush-walkers, set off to explore and map some Aboriginal cultural sites. The walk takes us along a beautiful, shaded corridor of trees growing on an extinct volcanic ridge area. The forest and vegetation then change to reveal the typical Mountains region environment of eucalypts and native plants, as we continue on the journey.

A slight diversion takes us to a small open rock platform on the western side of the ridge. Glimpses of a deep gorge are possible, with a hidden river at the base of its sheer sandstone walls. One archaeologist shows us what is believed to be an exposed drinking well on the platform, surrounded by flat covering stones as protection over the pooled water against evaporation and thirsty animals. We ponder and discuss possible explanations and ideas of the well’s purpose and significance. It is believed, in another time, that Aboriginal people carved out such rock wells, thus having a fresh, sweet supply of water (following rainfalls) along their pathways and journeying. One of the members picks up a stick and stirs the leafy matter at the bottom of the shallow well – a small frog appears. The frog’s presence suggests that the water is unpolluted, and certainly worth living in! The archaeologists on the return trip will map the well.
Our journey continues. The next stop is a larger open rock platform on the eastern side of the ridge with expansive and magnificent views. Below is a creek, again hidden by a deep gorge with vertical sandstone faces. Our exploration group stops to take in the view and discusses some Aboriginal art sites, both on the opposite ridge and to the north of the viewing point. One member makes a comment about the invasions experienced by Aboriginal peoples in Australia and the destructive impact on them. Other members openly and quietly acknowledge the impact of colonisation. There is a shared understanding without needing further elaboration. After refreshment of water from plastic and aluminium containers, which I find as an interesting contrast to the well, our trek continues along the lightly forested ridge, passing a number of Banksia serrata trees or ‘Old-man Banksias’. An eagle soars overhead. A lyrebird has built its nest high up in a small rock shelf.

Mid-morning finds us emerging onto an open rock plateau with panoramic views, particularly to the north – Darkinung land. Behind the group, to the south and east across Dharug land, lays Gundungurra land. To the west, Wiradjuri. At first glance, the plateau has an unusual rock surface – tessellated from an ice age thousands of years ago. The lead archaeologist encourages us to start looking around for signs of past Aboriginal occupation. During the exploration, some of us quench our thirst from the fresh rainwater in shallow pools on the plateau. It becomes clear, over the next couple of hours of exploration, that the area has been inhabited. There are: grinding grooves beside shallow wells in the rock surface where Aboriginal people once shaped their axes; grooves for sharpening spears; an engraving of a woman dancing; an engraving of an emu’s foot; and, ceremonial carvings of sacred and spiritual significance.

During the exploration, lunch is taken under the shade of a tree. Some of us choose to relax in the open, under the warmth of the sun. More discussion takes place. One can imagine Aboriginal people doing the same things in years gone by. Three members and I decide to conduct a search a couple of contours below the plateau, exploring caves for signs of past occupation. Chert and basalt flakes, from tools such as axes, are found scattered on the floors of a couple of caves. Along the front of these shelters, as beautiful entries and displays, are colourful gardens of native plants in flower, particularly Boronia.

It is clear that this place has been well occupied and would have been a significant ‘ground’ – perhaps a ‘home’. It seems that this place would have provided for: food sources; shelter; occupational activities; ceremonial activities; creativity and art activities; learning and training; community and relationships; celebrations, such as corroborees; and, spirituality.

Reluctantly, I leave this deeply moving place and head back to my suburban ‘home’.

This place remains as a photograph in my mind and has come to be one of the most profound memories in my research journey. In a sense, this place could be called a ‘homeland centre’. It contains the things that we associate with modern places of ceremony, creativity, learning, living, industry and home. However, for Aboriginal people, their ‘sense of place’ or ‘sense of home’ cannot be traditionally separated from
the land (as discussed in Chapter 2). An Aborigine says: ‘I am the land’, together with
the flora, fauna and everything else as a corporate organic whole (Stockton 1993:80).
Further, Aboriginal people are ‘ennmeshed with the land, the totality of all there is, in a
real dynamic identity’ (ibid). Simply: ‘The land is home to the Aborigine’ (ibid:81).

It is in this traditional dynamic that spirit, sacredness, kinship, relationship,
learning, occupation and place are present and formed, giving life and existential
meaning; it has been essential for Aboriginal life and well-being. It contains
traditional knowledge and ways of knowing that have powerful lessons for
contemporary institutions, organisations and communities. This is the dynamic that
the exploration group and I were in the presence of and experienced, during the walk
and on the plateau. This is the dynamic that speaks to us today and can inform the
design and development of initiatives like the Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service,
as an urban-based service.

6.3 The Construct of Homelessness

6.3.1 Defining homelessness

Similarly, as noted in defining home, the interviewees indicate that there are also
multiple perceptions, meanings and experiences influencing the construct of
‘homelessness’.

The group respondents believed that old people and young fellas, who don’t like
paying rent, are those Aboriginal people mostly likely to experience homelessness.
When asked about Aboriginal rural (in contrast to urban) youth homelessness they
indicated that it is only old drunks sleeping in the park. One young respondent
associated homelessness with squats. Another suggested that sometimes Aboriginal
people might not be homeless, but rather at times, just on ‘walkabout’. On the other
hand, it was pointed out that some people choose to live like this – not blackfellas, but
whitefellas and one respondent said: I don’t care or think about it.

Some individual participants saw homelessness in terms of opposites to their
constructs of home. Also, that it is complex and perspectives will vary. As one
participant said:

I’d say that homelessness is a lot of the opposites to the things I just mentioned
about home. It is about not having a choice or a safe place to sleep or stay long
term. It is about that insecurity of tenure and homelessness might be about not
knowing from one day to the next where you are going to be staying or living. They [the homeless] can’t actually put their roots down and settle long term or actually start developing networks. Or some of them might not want to develop networks because it might be, you know, ‘Well I’ve got all these networks and now we’ve got to move on and it’s all a waste of time’. So I think that’s a real issue with people that are homeless. So there are different levels of homelessness, but homelessness is really complex and diverse and I think what it means to me it would be totally different than what it means to someone that is really homeless, because I haven’t lived it. So I’m looking at it from my perspective. (04)

Some participants perceived homelessness as a culturally determined construct:

I was thinking it’s a reasonably universal, relatively cultural free definition. Where it becomes culturally loaded I guess is when one person describes what safe is or what affordable is and stuff like that. So it is kind of like the definition [i.e., SAAP] is okay, but I think if you’re working with any group, you have to accept that what is safe or desirable for them may be quite different to what I would want in my home. (07)

In Indonesia, there are lots of people who are homeless, but they are in family units and seem to be able to function quite well. But of course it is difficult for them and those physical things mean that their life is not really functioning in ways as it could, but because there aren’t other factors that are causing their homelessness other than their poverty, it means that often their families are quite functional. So, I don’t know that homelessness is actually true for them in that sense. But that is a totally different culture and there are whole other reasons as to why there’s homelessness, or the physical homelessness anyway. (18)

6.3.2 A social justice issue

Participants indicated, both directly and indirectly, that homelessness is a social justice issue, particularly as a matter of human rights. For example:

I suppose the more concrete side of homelessness is essentially on the area of human rights, of the right to have shelter, the right to have food, the right to have a place to live. (15)

I hate homelessness in that I’ve been homeless myself. It is one of the … and I’m an adult with resources and at that stage of my homelessness it was … part of me was thinking there’s no way that I could start to look at settling down because of how emotionally fractured I was feeling and taking on the responsibility of then having to care for a home because I was having difficulty caring for myself, just seems really unreal. So each time I think of homelessness, and I’m called out at night [for support work], I think about the cold bodies and this is becoming a problem because when I’m hearing about our young people being attacked, our young people being found dead, our young people being out on the streets at night, I instantly think of cold bodies. I think I’m vicariously traumatised actually through my work. So I hate homelessness. I think I hate it
more because part of our [Aboriginal] culture is about reciprocal obligation, sharing. And I was never homeless until I was an adult, I felt more homeless as an adult than what I did as a young person. It’s shocking; it’s a piss-off that it happens in this day and age. In terms of where the world is spiritually, it’s actually an incongruent practice that we have so many young people globally without a family, without a home, without the basics. Yes, it hurts me. (10)

Not having anywhere to go, not having anyone who expects you, not having anyone who misses you, not having anyone who inquires into your well-being. It means not having shelter, not having education, not having anything. (14)

Yes, I mean the reconciliation thing I think is basically stalled because of not being led from the top [by governments]. You know in terms of the government approach it is not ... practical reconciliation doesn’t address the real hurt and inherited sense of dispossession that Aboriginals would feel, I don’t think. And more than practical sort of stuff is needed. It needs, as you say policy, but it needs a strong message of acceptance and willingness to try and talk about what needs to be done to solve the problems. (16)

One young respondent summed up the injustice of homelessness succinctly: Never been homeless, but have seen homeless people – it’s sad, it’s wrong.

Homelessness in Australia is seen as a social justice issue by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, as previously discussed in this thesis (see Chapter 2). Weeks and Quinn (2000) argue that homeless is a result of social inequality, perpetuated through entrenched disadvantage. For example, the impact of poverty, unemployment, ‘locational disadvantage’, as well as discrimination associated with race and ethnicity. They point to evidence that Aboriginal people are ‘within the 10% of Australians experiencing the most difficulties in obtaining adequate housing’ (ibid:11).

Aboriginal authors, such as Behrendt (2003), write about the problematic relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and accurately attribute Aboriginal injustices to the initial colonisation of Australia:

From periods of cultural genocidal practices – invasion, massacres of Aboriginal people, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families – to theft of property and denial of fundamental rights, it is a relationship complicated by historical injustice, compounded by institutional legacies and an idealised nationalism. (p7)

Behrendt goes on to stress that Aboriginal people are still the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and poorest sector of the Australian community, quoting extensive socio-economic data to support her assertions. It can be clearly argued that,
fundamentally, Aboriginal homelessness in Australia had its beginnings some 217 years ago, and continues to be a problematic social justice issue requiring urgent attention. The designers and developers of contemporary Aboriginal organisations must take these issues into account. As a participant (16) suggested above, there needs to be a strong acceptance of this reality and a willingness to talk about what needs to be done to solve the problems.

6.3.3 Impact of ‘the stolen generation’

One of the participants relayed a personal experience of ‘the stolen generation’ during an interview that poignantly conveys the initial impact of children being taken from their families and communities. As well, the subsequent experience of forced (adaptive) ‘protective movements’ from the person’s traditional homeland is evident.

The participant’s (edited) extract follows:

Researcher
Why did they [respondent’s parents] have to move from their place [traditional lands] in the first instance?
Respondent
The Aboriginal Protection Board had this policy you see. They would go into the school, they’d come out in two big shiny black cars, they would come in with a policeman and a manager and the poor old school teacher Mr … he hated that kind of stuff, you could see it, and I was only a child you know. I’d see it in his face and he didn’t like them coming out. And then they would take that one [a child], that one, and that one, might be four they’d take away. I’d seen them take three, no four children that day, and then lunch-time came and we all went around to my Aunt’s to have lunch and I never said anything [to her]. I came back and went to school and went home down to the humpy where we lived. The kids [that were taken] weren’t going home from school and then they [their families] were saying, ‘What happened to the kids?’ Some [parents] went off to the teacher and he told them, and they were asking us kids [also], and he said, ‘Oh, they went away in the big black car with a policeman’ you see. And so then they [family members] would go in just on dusk – it was 13 miles away – they’d go in and go to the Lord Mayor’s office, the jail first to see if they can hear the kids crying and go to the doctor’s office, but they never thought they’d go to the hospital where they [the authorities] hid them – hid the kids in the hospital. They’d [authorities with the stolen children] catch the train early next morning to go to … down south you know. That’s how they did it, because the train to … always went early in the morning at 7.30 am. And they took the children away …
Researcher
So part of your parents moving was …
Respondent
To get us …
Researcher

To protect you, so you could not be taken. They were worried and scared that you and your other siblings would be taken by the Aboriginal Protection Board?

Respondent

That’s right, that’s true, yes taken, that’s right. (02)

Other participants clearly referred to the adverse impact of children being taken from their families, which may lead to Aboriginal youth homelessness, if there is such a phenomenon. For example:

Well in some circumstances I think there is [Aboriginal youth homelessness], but it would be a minority of circumstances. And I think what creates it is family violence, drug and alcohol substance abuse, poverty, intergenerational dependency, welfare dependency. And well when I was working with the young people, the young Koori kids in the criminal justice system, I did my own research on families, personal stuff that hasn’t gone out to anybody, this was just totally for me, and I suppose it is how I set up my networks of how I know families now from all over the state of NSW and sometimes interstate, is that I looked at some of those families and they were descendants of ‘the stolen generation’. So I think a lot of our youth homelessness is to do with parenting because as far as I’m concerned you can’t be a parent if you don’t have parents. I could not imagine growing up without parents. I would not know how to be a mother if I didn’t have a mother; if I grew up yes, if I grew up in an institution, in a home, taken away with a group of other people then I don’t learn those skills and you don’t automatically know how to be a parent. You know that is a learned thing over your life; yes, you are born to learn those things. Yes, so I think a lot of our youth homelessness comes from that as well. (08)

Children of ‘the stolen generation’ may not have developed a sense of belonging and identity:

Homelessness means to me that you don’t have a sense of belonging; you don’t have a connection to actually belonging to anybody. Whether you have an aunt or uncle you don’t even know, whether you do have aunties and uncles that you know or you have family members that you know, but you are not connected to them. That is my sort of interpretation of homelessness. I mean homelessness for me is not just being without a home or a house to live in. It’s not having a real strong connection with your family members or with anybody who you want to have strong connections with who know your family members, who know where you come from, who know if you’re a ‘stolen generation’ child for instance and nobody knows where you’re from, then you feel homeless because you can’t get a grasp of who you are or where you are coming from or where you are going. So that’s my answer. (11)
6.3.4 Lack of physical place

Where can Aboriginal people who lack safe and secure shelter find a ‘home’? The absence of natural and built places is clearly problematic and forces adaptation to dwelling or living in risky, if not dangerous, places for some people. They may simply have no access to basic shelter, which may be of a temporary or longer-term duration. This has been a problem of the past; it continues in the present and the signs are that it will be with us in the future. The following table tells this story.

Table 6.3: Absence of a physical place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
<th>Group participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Absence of built place | No where to call home  
People have got nowhere to go  
No shelter  
No roof over your head  
A tent in a friend’s backyard  
Overcrowding | Shelter not provided |
| Absence of safe place | People on the street  
Disconnected from place  
Absence of that comfortable place  
Absence of that safe place  
A vulnerable position  
There’s something about that pillow  
We acted like a refuge family  
Getting kicked from pillar to post  
Worrying about where the bed will be  
That sense of survival comes through | Unsafe  
Ostracised  
Sleeping in the park – food vans, hot drinks |

6.3.5 Lack of metaphysical place

The disconnection from one’s culture, community, family or self leads to a range of individual and social problems that contribute to homelessness. The experience of being homeless can be a profound existential alienation from a person’s physical and relational places and spaces. In the words of one participant:

Respondent
[Homelessness is] where people have got nowhere to go, they are homeless. They have got no shelter; they have got nowhere to call home. No family there, no nothing, they’ve got nothing. So when you are homeless, I reckon, they’ve got nothing, they’ve got nothing to look forward to I suppose.
Researcher

*So they have no shelter and they have no family?*

Respondent

*Yes, it is all gone. If they have got a home, they are more together I suppose. Like their mind is together and [they are] happier. If they have got nothing, they have got nothing.* (01)

Other participants’ fractal statements (contained within their responses) are aggregated in the following table.

### Table 6.4: Absence of a metaphysical place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
<th>Group participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal problems</td>
<td>It’s an anxiety state</td>
<td>Sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disconnect from self</td>
<td>Violence/assault (including sexual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You question your powerlessness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vicarious trauma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental breakdown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is all encompassing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dealing with the shit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emptiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No love</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol and drugs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
<td>No family</td>
<td>Never really met a homeless Aboriginal person as they always have family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disconnect from family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family dysfunction</td>
<td>No family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffused identity</td>
<td>Disconnect from self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who am I, where am I?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not knowing who you are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnectedness</td>
<td>Away from my home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can’t put roots down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not having that home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not having that support mechanism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not looking out for others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking to belong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Throws everything out of proportion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You just don’t belong anywhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a cultural place</td>
<td>I’m not educated about culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They’re community’s responsibility [i.e., homeless youth]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6.4 The Causes of Aboriginal Youth Homelessness

#### 6.4.1 Defining the causes

As with the definitions of home and homelessness, participants also expressed multiple views when asked about the aetiology of Aboriginal youth homelessness. However, some participants do not necessarily believe that the phenomenon actually exists; rather that it is an imposed construct by non-Aboriginal people. For others the phenomenon, whether real or not, may mask deeper problematic issues that young Aboriginal people are experiencing.

It may not mean the young person is without a home:

> It depends; a lot of young people that I see don’t consider themselves as homeless because they go to other family members. If there is a break-down in the immediate family unit they tend to move out and move into other extended family members’ houses or homes. (08)

And a lot of these things that are happening are still swept under the carpet, so Aboriginal people aren’t prepared, or they’re trying to prepare themselves, to bring their sort of situation out into the open. I think that it is an embarrassment, like when somebody speaks that they’re homeless. So I think that’s an embarrassment for themselves ... like you don’t hear a lot about Aboriginal people saying, ‘I’m homeless’. Well I’ve never ever heard of an Aboriginal person saying ‘I’m homeless’; they always say ‘I’ve got nowhere to go’ and that’s their way of saying that they’re homeless. But it is embarrassing for them in relation to expressing that they are homeless and a lot of them, like a lot of the youth that I know, and I know a lot, I mean they’re homeless and I mean I don’t like to say homeless, they don’t have a stable home to live in, but they do have family. So the interpretation of someone being homeless from a government point of view or from an Anglo-Saxon’s is that this person does not have a house

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2 The group participants’ (young people) views of Aboriginal youth homelessness have mostly been woven into the preceding narrative fabric on the meaning/construct of homelessness.
to live in, any stability whatsoever. Whereas they might be living with friends of family or aunts and uncles, but they aren’t actually homeless. (11)

The young people may not be experiencing what they think is homelessness:

I think it is, basically it is the loss of whatever equals home or homeness, i.e., sense of home if you like for an Aboriginal young person. Like I could go out and say this one [person], this one, this one is homeless, but in their own sense be they couch-surfing, be they whatever, they may not be experiencing what they call homelessness. (07)

The causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness may be similar to non-Aboriginal homelessness:

What do I believe creates ... I wouldn’t pretend to know what it feels like to be an Aboriginal young person so I can’t truly, truly live it. I don’t work in a service, so I don’t have that day-to-day perspective. So the stories that I hear suggest that the problems relate to [not] having an extended family, I mean some people were displaced, like lost. I know personally there are a lot of stories of parents dying, of high mortality rates, where people are finding themselves with no parents or no kin and having to fend for themselves. The displaced stuff I think, there is a high migration where people come, like young people come to the city, and they might find themselves homeless because they think there’s an opportunity there that doesn’t exist where they are. And that would be a similar process to most young people that live in rural Australia or regional Australia. I suppose there are the usual cannon of things that would happen in a culture. You have violence and abuse, and drugs and alcohol in the family, and family break-down. There might be a situation where a person is unemployed, disconnection with the family. When I bring it down to those ingredients, I can’t see the causes being any different to anybody, the reasons for homelessness. I think all the elements, which contribute to Aboriginal homelessness, are the same for anybody who is homeless. (19)

If young people are abused, they may have no support and/or nowhere to go:

So I can think about what I needed to say, because in a way it felt like to me I was putting a lot of blame on my own [Aboriginal] people and that’s why I felt like a bit touchy because I just could blurt it out if I wanted to, but I actually had to think about what I was saying. Only because I’ve never been a victim of molestation or rape or neglect and I can’t really highlight and express my opinions of why people are homeless in relation to that, but I have seen young people like myself, the same age – little bit older – who have been victims of that and nothing ever happened. It never ever came out to the surface, they moved away, they got on with their life, but not really and that’s what I have sort of seen as homeless because they couldn’t stay there any more because no one believed them or, ‘It’s all right just go over to the next stay’ [place to stay]. And I think that I had to be real in that question even though I don’t know what other people are going to talk about. I mean I could be the only person thinking this way, but then, I had to be true to myself knowing I’ve had best friends, who have
moved away from their whole family, who were homeless, who I perceived as being homeless because they had nowhere to go, they had no support and they even came in and lived with us and we took them in … my mother would always have somebody at her house, you know once a week, whether it would be one of my friends or whether it would be my brothers’ friends, or you know. (11)

Clearly, this last narrative describes a sensitive issue and should be seen in a broader context of the impact on a culture(s) that has been under extreme existential pressure since colonisation. I have become more aware of and sensitive to the intractable problems being experienced by Aboriginal communities. As the findings indicate, existential problems cannot always be directly attributed to the individual or the family as a nuclear unit, nor do they solely rest with the Aboriginal nation of peoples in Australia. Individuals and families, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, are part of a wider dynamic social system; they are part of a wider complexity of human policies, activities and processes that may produce inhumane outcomes. For example: social injustice; ‘the stolen generation’; and, the break-down of the physical, metaphysical and cultural places and spaces discussed above. The way we are engaging as human beings, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, in my view is often inhumane and requires a radical paradigm shift if we are to healthily raise and care for our children and young people, as society’s future leaders.

Interestingly, one participant said that being homeless dismantles one’s sense of culture, identity and place. It is where these constructs all break down:

And what is interesting about homelessness too, because it’s at the edge of what is considered to be … everyone is considered to be of a place, of a home and a family. And homelessness is where it all breaks down. (19)

Is it possible that the apparent spiritual and cultural disconnection that some young Aboriginal people experience is contributing to existential issues of greater magnitude and importance than their possible physical homelessness? Do the young people themselves actually believe this disconnection is problematic? And what of individuality and diversity within the cohort of Aboriginal youth? How does a SAAP service such as HAYS respond to these issues, and should it?

SAAP services are normally configured to resolve crises (see Chapter 2), targeting specific groups: women, women escaping domestic violence, men, and youth. In short, it is a more conservative or liberal approach to dealing with homelessness (see Chapter 2). This issue was, in part, discussed with one participant:
I think it is [i.e. SAAP] a genuine attempt to begin to cater to individual differences. And I guess we’ve got used to thinking in terms of target groups. Our next challenge is to actually recognise that within those target groups there is even further layer of diversity. I think, in terms of Aboriginal youth homelessness, one of the hardest challenges is you are actually dealing with two subgroups; they are not only Indigenous, but that they are also young people. I guess my background in youth work, and ongoing interest in the youth sector and young people as a population, for me those two, if you like, cultural descriptors are equally important. So I would want to see a service that responds as much to them as young people as also to them as Indigenous people. And I’d want to make ... one of the tensions for me then is I probably make sense of them as young people through a very Western conceptualisation of what young people means. So then in doing this, are you actually then becoming just another agent of colonisation and assimilation? I don’t know what the answer is. Another part of me still comes back and says but that critical issue of viewing them as young people is still equally paramount. I mean they are also Aboriginal young people, like joining the two things together because they interrelate. (07)

6.4.2 Macro and micro views

When discussing and analysing the aetiology of Aboriginal youth homelessness, it needs to be seen in a past, present and future context, as well as who is doing the viewing:

Yes this would presume that I know a lot about the Aboriginal scene and I can’t really say that. I’ve done a fair bit of reading and travelling and visiting Aboriginal communities around the nation, but I’m not in their world view, but I think there’s a good deal of alienation which carries back generations after generations. So that sense of not being acceptable in the present dominant society, not having access to the skills that would make them acceptable ... feeling alienated and unwanted. And I guess there are all sorts of shame attached with that, with family break-down, which comes out of a result of that marginalisation of Aboriginal society after 200 years of abuse. That’s not being judgemental in anyway, but that’s describing the reality I think that families have had to deal with ... enormous, enormous pressures. And the amazing part about that is that the community still has considerable strengths which have survived that and still intact even though it seems to be dominated by, you know, drug issues and alcohol issues, domestic violence, stuff which you know the kid is obviously trying to manage. It’s survival; homelessness for some Aboriginal kids I think is a survival thing. That’s their way of coping with the world they find themselves in. And yes you’re not going to change that without changing the context in which the kid is trying to survive in. (16)

Examining a macro context would make visible the wider or overarching structural, political, economic, institutional and social factors contributing to Aboriginal youth homelessness. The following interview extract makes visible one
person’s perspective, particularly colonisation and policy issues, which has ‘fractal resonance’ (similarity) with the views of other participants aggregated in the tables that follow this narrative:

Well I think you can take a macro and a micro view to that [Aboriginal youth homelessness causes]. Macro you look at the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal people for the first 216 years, it will be different in the next 216 years, but the last 216 years have actually created a lot of horrendous peril that people are confronted with through social circumstances they’ve got themselves into, but have even found themselves in. So do you understand that? I think some people have got themselves in the shit, but there’s other people that are just trying to live the best [they can], but they’re caught in the shit. I think there’s still so many things of our cultural and spiritual make-up that isn’t adhered to through public policy and housing is a really significant [example] … We were given a four-bedroom fibro house in an all-white neighbourhood and we were meant to, well there was an expectation that you move in a social manner that is consistent with everyone else in the street, but how do you house a family of [14] people? Well this is how you do it: girls in one room, Dad slept in another room with all the boys, and Mum slept in the last room with all the babies. But even as a young [sex] I never knew what it was like to sleep in a room on your own, I never knew what it was like to sleep in a bed on my own until I was an adult, I’ve never had my own room until I was an adult, and never had my own clothes actually until I actually went out to buy me own because of the whole sharing … So the whole reciprocal sharing thing was really, really big and it was at that time when people were pissed off with that because I’d come home and someone would have me clothes; that’s when the individuality started to come in because you then had to defend your own right against your own personal possession. So circumstances has created that individualism as well, which has created, just compounded all of the fracturing that goes on amongst Aboriginal people. So that’s the macro okay. (10)

Table 6.5: Macro causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invasion</td>
<td>Primarily goes back to invasion; Impact of colonisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They were not even seen as humans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It’s been around for a long time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispossession</td>
<td>Sense of lostness; People were displaced, lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>Aboriginal community implosion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard to deal with root cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Impact of stolen generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genocidal policies of government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of poor public policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Designing and Developing Aboriginal Service Organisations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Continued)</td>
<td>Culturally insensitive policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty of standardised support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Living in a white system; Not going to use white-man’s system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universally shared disadvantaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complexity of service provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Break-down of support system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failures in the school system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rorting the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic disadvantage; Lack of resources; Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intergenerational dependency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welfare dependency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marginalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Re-victimisation of the victim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problems with community management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of reconciliation</td>
<td>Reconciliation has stalled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need a strong message of acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Requires willingness to talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>Racism in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problems because of skin colour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A micro view would make visible the more local, community, family and individual psychological and social factors contributing to Aboriginal youth homelessness. Importantly, they should be seen in a ‘holistic nesting’ with the macro factors – there is a dynamic connectivity between the two. The following interview extract makes visible one participant’s perspective, which has ‘fractal resonance’ (similarity) with the views of other participants aggregated in the table that follows this fractured extract.

First, the participant (10) speaks of abuse:

The micro is that we still have higher levels of sexual assault, rape, violence, abuse and neglect going on. We have, in this community, children that live on the brink of starvation, and some are actually going through what they call a feast-famine syndrome. When you’ve got money, you feast, when you haven’t got money, you’re in famine. Okay. And that has major ramifications to their ... how they grow up as adults: fail to thrive, all those syndromes sort of come into play.

Second, the micro impact of culturally insensitive policy:

So it comes back to the cultural insensitivity of policy makers because you know if we were to house a [large] Aboriginal family effectively we would give them the six bedroom home with two bathrooms, a driveway with a carport and...
probably a garage to store all their excess – that doesn’t happen so all things, you know Mum’s possessions that didn’t fit in the house ended up being ruined because there was nowhere to put them. You know, there … so homelessness, there’s a macro and micro sense, the micro sense is that sometimes it’s just not safe, or there’s just not enough room.

Third, the family and emotional pressures on young Aboriginal people:

And yet we’re expecting young people to function in some normality of you know going to school, having homework and going home and doing that homework. The reality is some of our people haven’t even got a table for kids to sit at. And then there’s the whole emotional pressure that young people go through if their parents and older brothers and sisters were unsuccessful at education, then they’re only going to put shit on the young ones who are striving to be different. So there’s immense pressures in the house where there’s been lots of social issues that haven’t been addressed [with] the older members of the family and they will inevitably impact on the younger ones even though they think they can be different to their older brothers and sisters. That’s just too hard. A lot of the young people will leave [home] because it is intolerable to stay in those environments and so they’re leaving through choice because they know there has to be something better. Now that’s sad, if they think being out here on your own with nothing is better than staying at home where at least you can keep a roof over your head, we’re in a sad, sad scene.

Fourth, the break-down of traditional culture:

So it comes right back to all that regard, respect, social control, integrity [traditional like culture] … where as all that’s lacking now … we hear of young men violating, raping or bashing their mothers and grandmothers. Why is it so intolerable? Because these young people feel they have no freedom. It’s a bad scene. Why do I think young people are homeless? Cause they can’t handle it at home, because it’s a shit place to be, they can’t handle it at home cause it’s a shit place to be. Just look at five matters … this week [for example] … one girl who won’t go home because she feels that her mother doesn’t believe her that she’s been multiply raped. You know, it just can’t be that there’s no faith in young people. I think adults have no faith in young people. I think adults are far more paranoid than what they’ve ever been in the history of our world. I think people forget too quickly that we were kids once and we’re able to retain memories of stuff and why aren’t we relating to that more and how we engage with young people. Just that common courtesy natural nice stuff, adults aren’t like that.

Fifth, a lack of youth participation in policy formation:

Adults are making the same mistakes as what government did with Aboriginal affairs. The fact we sit around and talk about youth issues, but there’s not a young person in the room. Now that ain’t right because again all we’re doing is imparting our values of paranoia and all these other things, placing it now down on policy that’s going to affect young people. We’re already creating that mis-match.

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Sixth, a lack of safety and reciprocity:

So yeah, homelessness comes in two shapes: macro and micro; and it’s just not safe. And in that there are very limited alternatives for our young people. Once upon a time you could go to your nannas or you could go to your uncles, or your big sisters, but because dysfunctionalism is rife in so many families it’s not safe to go there. The other part is that the people don’t want anything to do with it because they’ve got their life together and bringing in someone who’s coming from the ‘bad shots’ is reminding them or they feel that they’re gonna head back there. … Now in reciprocal obligation … I’ve supported a lot of my [people] who have been homeless and been through juvenile justice. You just have to do it because nine times out of ten there is no one else. There is no one else, and that comes back to that obligation that we have through kinship. That’s why we’ve got so many problems. (10)

This powerful and evocative narrative captures what may actually be hidden and deeply disturbing problems within the community. Accordingly, there is a need to sensitively reveal the ‘reality’ of some Aboriginal people’s existence. This must be done with respect, patience and wisdom. This narrative is not an isolated view as the following table reveals.

### Table 6.6: Micro causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Locational</strong></td>
<td>Urban, rural and remote differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The urban environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Migration of youth to the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abuse</strong></td>
<td>Kids just don’t tell people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child neglect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical abuse; Sexual abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violence; Domestic violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual problems</strong></td>
<td>Drugs and alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting into crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No respect for living in family unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kids rebel against parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kids becoming selfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative relationships with police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family problems</strong></td>
<td>Family dysfunction; Disconnection with the family; Lack of family communication; Lack of family support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Break-down of extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of parenting skills; Parents pushing kids too hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of support in modern society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There might be fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When the defacto moves in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantaged childhood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As earlier suggested when discussing the hidden impacts of Aboriginal youth homelessness, the data continues to reveal some very sensitive and painful issues. Again, I stress that this analysis is drawn from participants’ stories (their knowledge, views and experiences), and should also be seen in a broader context of the impact on a culture(s) that has been under extreme existential pressure since colonisation. Further, it should be acknowledged that they are individuals’ views, not necessarily the local community’s. However, the data does make visible some patterns of narrative similarity.

### 6.4.3 Physical, metaphysical and cultural factors

There are similar causative factors in Aboriginal youth homelessness as in general homelessness, as reported by some participants. In discussing the aetiology of Aboriginal youth homelessness, a participant succinctly suggested that it is linked to the disconnectedness of youth from their traditional spiritualities, cultures and homelands:

... well I think all of that, it's fairly easy to put down any youth homelessness, but particularly Aboriginal youth homelessness, as being a poverty issue and it certainly is, but it's much more than a poverty issue, I mean financial poverty issue. I think the financial poverty issue comes as a result of the loss of connectedness; connectedness with people’s roots and essentially with their homeland, wherever that homeland may be or wherever they identify the homeland that they have. And to be barred from being able to make that connection, and I think in general terms Aboriginal youth, as a subset of Aboriginal culture, is caught in that bind all the time, that there is a spiritual disconnectedness which eventually leads to poverty, which eventually leads to the concrete parts of homelessness, the actual lack of shelter, etc, etc. It carries with it, at the same time, it carries with it a whole spectrum of things like physical and sexual abuse, harassment, intense usually negative relationships with police, all of those sorts of things. And I think one of the big difficulties for me is that in this particular line of work all you're dealing with is the symptoms ... [it’s] very, very hard to deal with the root cause of the whole thing. (15)

The root cause of Aboriginal youth homelessness is linked to colonisation. Loss of sovereignty, culture, homelands and family are the main drivers of this real
phenomenon. The impact of homelessness is clearly evident in the preceding participants’ narratives and fractal statements, as well the following table.

**Table 6.7: Physical, metaphysical and cultural factors contributing to Aboriginal youth homelessness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a physical place</td>
<td>You see kids on the street&lt;br&gt;Some might be houseless too&lt;br&gt;People say: ‘I’ve got nowhere to go’&lt;br&gt;Lack of shelter&lt;br&gt;Lack of safe place&lt;br&gt;Pushed from place to place&lt;br&gt;Overcrowding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a metaphysical place</td>
<td>No sense of belonging&lt;br&gt;No safe place to grow&lt;br&gt;Spiritual disconnectedness&lt;br&gt;Non-functioning members of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a cultural place</td>
<td>Disconnection from their homeland&lt;br&gt;Disconnection with traditional life&lt;br&gt;Lack of traditional guidelines&lt;br&gt;Break-down of reciprocity&lt;br&gt;Cultural degradation&lt;br&gt;Fractured cultures&lt;br&gt;Aboriginal politics&lt;br&gt;How modern Aboriginal people live&lt;br&gt;Our [Aboriginal] values have changed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**6.4.4 Taking responsibility**

Notwithstanding the significant issues discussed above, it was pointed out that the Aboriginal community should be taking responsibility in addressing Aboriginal youth homelessness. One participant talked about the impact of alienation, oppression and dispossession of his people, but suggested that more positive action is needed by his people to address a range of issues for the benefit of future Aboriginal youth:

... because they have lost, Aboriginal people have lost a lot of motivation in that their self-esteem and their self-confidence has been diminished, because they’ve been put down for years and years and years. And so you know, ‘We’ll just stay down here at the bottom because this is where everybody wants us to be, this is the way we’ve been treated all our life and it’s easier just to do what Mum and Dad and Grand-mum and Grand-dad did all their life’. So, I think we have to take responsibility as well, but you know youth homelessness, whilst I don’t have any children, youth homelessness is ... can also be generated within the home in that family violence, domestic violence, exposure; you know young people being exposed to early relationships because some of my clients are 14 and 15 and
they already have girlfriends and boyfriends that they live with and things like that. The fact that there isn’t that structure of how, like if we were back living in more traditional ways you know, what you are supposed to be doing, there was a guideline for everything, but now you know society’s evolved so much that young people have so much power in determining what they can and can’t do. You know, ‘If you do that to me, Mum, I’ll just go and tell the police and you’ll get into trouble, or I’ll go down to the Department of Community Services and I won’t be staying here anymore’. So there is domestic violence, drug abuse, young people being exposed to [being] parents or family, relatives, doesn’t just have to be immediate family like just cousins, that early exposure, it’s always going to be there in the back of your head and it’s like a seed that’s planted and some people can just let it die and wilt in the sun, other’s think that it’s easy and they got through life doing that and people have to take action and responsibility for their own actions and you know we can sit around and say: ‘It’s because of the government, it’s because of the white man and all that’. In some degrees it is, but I think we have to start making more positive movement, not just for ourselves but for all the young kids that are coming through now, because you know there are kids having kids and while … that is going to continue to happen. They haven’t been exposed to what’s available, you know education, employment, the possibilities of being able to go overseas and travel the world; you know that’s outside a lot of people’s realm …. Unless people can experience things that are positive and have a positive effect, they’ll never get outside the square they are living in. (09)

In summary, this participant is suggesting that whereas Aboriginal peoples can attribute their situation to being ‘put down’, it is time for them to take responsibility for the well-being of their homeless youth and future children. The participant recognises the need for traditional guiding social and family structures, but also calls for individual responsibility of his Aboriginal people.

Another participant suggested that in the struggle for Aboriginal people’s justice, including a reconnection to their homelands, the young people themselves need to be involved:

The other part of it I think too is, and I’m not too sure whether this is just non-Indigenous thinking or whether it’s really a sort of universal thing, I think part of the way that young people learn to relate to their home and their homeland is by actually taking civil action and being involved in the struggle. And we often think, well not we, but I often get the reaction from the public that’s a very, very negative thing for them to be involved in the struggle. The reality is … because one of the most depersonalising and disempowering parts of any life that applies to – I think it applies to Indigenous people as well – is to recognise that the struggle is as important as the victory and in fact it’s probably even more important because that is … the struggle is actually what creates one’s sense of identity and one’s sense of belonging and one’s sense of connectedness. It’s because it is making a public statement of who you are. Now what I’m not sure
about is whether that’s a non-Indigenous way of looking at it or not, and I’m finding that out. I’ll eventually find it out, but I haven’t found it out yet. (15)

Perhaps in answer to these questions of justice and identity, in a discussion with another participant I suggested that language gives you culture, it gives you knowledge, and it gives you place, spirituality, connectedness and identity. The response was:

Yes, so then you are not going through that whole conglomerate of finding out who you are, where you come from, what language will I speak. And I think that is where we are fortunate from the rural areas to grow up with that – that is our strength and I know I chose to move to the city to give my children a better opportunity, but I keep that connectedness with our relatives back home. I keep that open and encourage my children all the time to go home to see their families, to spend time and meet their father’s people, not just my people. (08)

Also, spirituality defines one’s identity and gives ‘life’ within one’s self and one’s people. Rolheiser (1998:11) suggests: ‘The opposite of a spiritual person would be someone who has lost his or her identity, namely, the person who at a certain point does not know who he or she is any more.’ I agree with Rolheiser and would assert, drawing on the research findings, that for some Aboriginal people the disconnection from their traditional spirituality and culture is so profound that – whereas they may identify as being Aboriginal – they may have lost ‘who they are’, ‘where they come from’, and their ‘traditional language’. In other words, the disconnection may be so immense that it is impossible for them to re-claim their identity, and they thus become subject to forces that propel them into a new identity formation process. For some people, adaptation may be possible, for others this may be a very difficult process leading to identity disintegration, implosion or existential problems where artificial and destructive solace may be found in, for example, substance abuse. Alternatively, a person’s existential angst may be externalised in violence towards loved ones and other people. The trajectory or spiralling circular causality of these scenarios is existential disintegration. On the other hand, some may take a journey of discovery and re-gain the essence of their Aboriginal identity. Perhaps ‘taking responsibility’ is easier when ‘you know where you come from’ and ‘you know who you are’ or ‘when you re-gain a sense of identity’.
6.4.5 ‘We all bleed the same colour’

A participant pointed out the prime importance of a ‘safe place’ for all young people, whether Aboriginal or not, free of abuse and:

*I guess the only difference between Aboriginal young people and just other young people is the colour of their skin. You know their identity, I guess, and the cultural links that they have are very intricate as well, but ‘we all bleed the same colour’ and we all experience the same things, but on different scales and I don’t think there is much difference, there is difference, but it’s not as significant as some people portray it to be. You know in that if everybody came from a safe home or had parents that worked and had, you know, positive role models I guess, we could all still function the same way. We need to have the cultural link, because it’s something we’ve lost and the communities whether it be here, out west, or along the coastline have lost a lot in regards to that, but I guess there comes a time when I feel we have to get beyond that. While it is lost, we may be able to recapture it, but we can never get it back to the way it was before and I guess we have to evolve with society. (09)*

However, the participant acknowledges the need for societal evolution without completely losing Aboriginal identity through maintaining ‘cultural links’.

6.5 Designing and Developing HAYS

6.5.1 What attracts young people to HAYS?

This question was put to the group participants and produced more animated responses from the young people than previous questions. HAYS can be seen as a powerful attractant to young Aboriginal people, based on their following responses:

- Something to do, get out of house
- Achieve some skills to further life goals
- Kinship/language program
- Make new friends
- Meet ‘neat chicks’
- Music program
- Food, get together, feast and yarn
- Workers are good, easy to talk with/to
- Come to learn about culture
- Cause we love the workers
- Makes us feel good about ourselves
- Makes us comfortable
- A place to talk about our problems, celebrations, issues and help each other
- Education, [such as], learners permit for driving
- No other place like this for young Aborigines [in Mount Druitt]
- Outings/activities
- Lets us ‘voice’ our views and they are acted on by staff, [that is,] programs like
6.5.2 What is HAYS trying to achieve?

This question was introduced to sensitise participants to the design and development questions, considered to be the primary focus of the research. The question was put to all participants to elicit data on their understanding of HAYS’s purpose for comparison with the stated aims of the project. This information therefore becomes available to the HAYS designers for consideration in the design process: adaptation, confirmation or re-design. Some extracted indicative participant narratives follow:

... bringing the community together, like the children. Get the children involved, get them off the streets away from drugs, away from alcohol, harder drugs and stuff like that. And to occupy their minds because there’s always stealing. That is number one, a lot of kids tend to go and steal. (01)

I think the ideas they’ve [HAYS staff] got are very good. I think essentially it’s a community development project which is going to incorporate working with families of kids. I think obviously there’s a homelessness issue – being able to provide that practical support; roof over the heads of kids who are desperate, but also getting kids back to their families, back to their communities. Education I think should be a big feature, appropriate education for Aboriginal kids. Early intervention activities stuff for the local community kids I think is ... there are some good things happening there; being a gathering point for Aboriginal interest groups. Aboriginal programs could meet there to generate solutions to common problems. The idea of working with those ... different agencies in that area, in partnership, I think is a great idea should the money become available. I think employment; getting jobs for Aboriginal kids, I think would be great if we could make that happen. But I think our focus, you know we’ve got to have a tangible focus, an effective ... The focus is kids, adolescent kids in particular who are desperate either because of their involvement with the law or their homelessness or their drug and alcohol problems. I mean that’s been our ‘bread-and-butter’; that’s our mission. So I think that’s where the fundamental focus should be ...and other broader focuses should be linked into that. There’s danger that it can become too broad and doesn’t make a difference in any one of those areas. So I think we need to get some clear areas where we’re making a difference, but then broaden it from there rather than start broad and never narrow it down, which I think is a danger. (16)

Respondent

I love it here. It’s kinda like when I first come here, I’ve got to be honest with you it’s like I was in, because I was having a lot of family problems at home, a lot of background problems and that, you know, and I wasn’t coping too well and when I came here it was like I was actually walking into a different
dimension. You know what I mean, I was leaving that crap out there and I was coming here where it was like, I was kind of in a big bubble that no one could burst because I actually ... oh every morning I used to come here and just sit out the front and just mellow out on my own and just sit there, you know. And as soon as I’d be going back home, the shoulders would go down, the stress would start coming back. And yes I love it here, but it’s not like that any more. I’ve become more in self-control, I’ve become more ... I’ve always been dependent, but like I’ve become more, more reliable on myself, more ... I’ve learnt a lot about myself here ...

Researcher
You have been on a journey, if you like, and I was just wondering when you talked about this place around safety and connection, belonging ...

Respondent
Yes, I feel all that here. It’s kinda funny; it might be because I’ve grown up in an orphanage. I’ve been, I was a street kid here [in Mount Druitt] for 12 months you know. I’ve actually been there and done it all. You know what I mean, and you know yourself being a street kid there’s no safety in that. There was plenty of times where me and my mates could have been killed, bumped off, out of the road. There’s plenty of times where we put ourselves in bad, serious danger and it might be because of that where I feel safe here and if [person] thinks that something is wrong with me she’ll actually sit down and say: ‘What’s wrong, Sis?’ You know and sit down and talk to me. (13)

The following table categorises some of the key individual participants’ responses to the question of what HAYS is trying to achieve. It also provides the verbatim responses from the young people during the group interviewing process.

**Table 6.8: The perceived aims of HAYS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructed categories from individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
<th>Group participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A safe place for homeless young people</td>
<td>Help young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellbeing of young people</td>
<td>‘Get into the good’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment of young people</td>
<td>Strong ‘black future’ – stay young, black and deadly! Give us a ‘voice’ to express views and/or issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with local Aboriginal community expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal self-determination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal cultural development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal community development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An innovative service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, some participants believed that the aims of HAYS are still being worked out, and that their attainment may take longer than originally anticipated. For example:

*And it is looking at trying to create an Aboriginal managed and controlled Aboriginal youth service for kids at risk or kids that are homeless. So that falls within the SAAP framework. So that is basically what it is trying to achieve, but it is about ... it is trying to achieve I think, we still don’t know what it is trying to [fully] achieve ... it is still being worked out. We know that is going to be all of the stuff that comes under the SAAP standards, through SAAP IV and moving on to SAAP V, whatever that is going to look like, to achieve some stability and case management for Aboriginal young people to address whatever their issues are, which has led to their homelessness. So it could be looking at achieving things like reparation with family, whatever you want to call family, giving them some stability in their lives, giving them opportunities for education or employment attainment. So whatever they need within their case management.* (04)

*With a project like this it might take longer and the funding body has got to understand that this particular project was always going to be difficult to get back [referring to former MAYS project]. And I think we have got to a stage where we have achieved something. The next stage would be about, ‘Okay, how do we work to those next stages, if we take a step-by-step process and look at our goals in a realistic sort of way, I think it’s got more chance of success’. Rather than saying it hasn’t done what we wanted it to do, but it has done something. And what has it done? We need to reflect on that.* (05)

### 6.5.3 How is HAYS reaching its goals?

This question is about process: participant knowledge and perception of what is actually happening at HAYS. It was discussed with all participants and Table 6.9 below summarises their responses. However, the young people did not provide the verbatim expression of the concept of ‘self-determination’ included in this table. Rather, the group interview meeting dynamic shifted to a discussion about the concept and meaning of Aboriginal self-determination following the above question on what HAYS is trying to achieve. Notions of ‘self’ were discussed, analysed and described as being: ‘me and groups of people/​selves’. ‘Determination’ was discussed, analysed and described as: ‘achieving something; decisions (positive – past, present and future, i.e., decisions have a time dimension, and negative – learn from mistakes); self-control; co-operation; freedom to express; commitment; honesty; respect; and vision(s), i.e., visualisation of the future and how it could be’. It could be argued that that the young people were under the influence of the HAYS workers’ views on this
issue, and realistically they were and are. Nonetheless, from my research observations, it is evident that the young people were expressing a form of self-determination in their activities and involvement at HAYS. The statement in Table 6.8 above – *give us “voice” to express* [our] *views* – is indicative of their desire for self-determination.

**Table 6.9: Perception of how HAYS is achieving its aims**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructed categories from individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
<th>Group participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying needs of young people</td>
<td>Through self-determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering young people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal cultural development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole of family and community approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case management process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following extract encapsulates some of the key philosophical notions as HAYS builds a service model in working with Aboriginal youth:

*Well, I think HAYS has stepped out slowly, but they are taking sure steps, it reminds me a bit like a baby, it is crawling, the organisation is crawling, and is starting to walk now and those slow steps and those processes are really important because we need to get it right. 216 years is not a long time, it is really one second in the big scheme of time. And I think HAYS has taken its time to get it right and do it right and it is really exciting how it is developing, it is really practical, it’s responsive and it is meeting the needs of the young people and their families. I think it’s fantastic, I know when I was youth working before [at service], for a number of years and it is something that I was trying to push for that back then, but no-one was ready to listen. HAYS has come about at the right time, people are looking for change and different ways of doing things and people, especially governments and bureaucracies, are finally letting us take the reigns of our problems and coming up with our own solutions and HAYS is doing that very, very well. And I know I’ll stand behind it 100% and keep the flow going until we are running, because I think other Aboriginal organisations can learn too very, very effectively off the HAYS model and I think that is what I like so much about [another service] too, it has similar philosophies in dealing with social justice and human rights issues and the work that they do at [service]. It is similar philosophies that HAYS is starting on and I like those philosophies because they are practical, they are down-to-earth and they do create change for the better, a more positive and enhanced lifestyle. I mean I’ve just seen these young people [at HAYS] grow so positively in this last 12 months and I worked with some of these young people for a number of years trying to encourage them to grow, and you know, nurturing them to flourish into those flowers that we all hope they’ll be and … but HAYS is doing that in such a special way and a holistic way and it is exciting and it is positive. So yes the HAYS model is a really good model.* (08)
On the other hand, the following fractured participant extract points to the complexity of situating and fully implementing the emerging HAYS model and processes. First, the participant (04) speaks about the complexity of human service provision:

Yes, well the complexity with human services and all the complex issues that a service like HAYS would be faced with by the young people and the families and the community and the government agencies means that HAYS will be trying to do a million things at once in order to achieve what is set out to achieve, not only for itself as a service, but for the individual needs of young people. So, I mean, I show people the little diagram [of a services’ system] that [person] has done, the one with all the little circles and links and the networks and these are the linkages across all of these services, and networks … The conceptual map is really complex and it is like a classic because that demonstrates how complex it is to achieve … that could be just one outcome for one young person.

Second, the complexity of addressing an individual’s needs in the services’ system:

So in order to address a drug and alcohol issue for a young person that presents to HAYS, and one of their caseworkers is working with that young person and that young person’s primary issue that they want to work on – might be drug and alcohol – that conceptual map [i.e., HAYS’s services’ network model], I would say you could tick off 90% of those networks to address that one need for that one young person because in some way lots of those services are interconnected. And it might be that the young person needs … obviously they’ll need the medical health type services, counselling, they might need TAFE or education, they might need to learn to drive, or whatever, whatever it is … they might need to learn to cook, all those sorts of things to give them some activities and purpose in their lives. It could be a small task or it could be a big thing. So, I think it is happening to a certain extent, but on the service delivery and operational [level] … for young people … so reacting to young people turning up at the door and being allocated a case worker … and I know that the workers are actually linking in with a lot of services, but there is also the barrier or the element that people see is the traditional SAAP accommodation service.

Third, the practical need of a bed for a homeless youth in the services’ system:

With the work of accommodation, it’s the roof over their head method of bricks and mortar method of addressing those issues or achieving those aims … Yes, so I don’t know to what extent that is happening because I haven’t got that detail. But I would expect that given what we know about the number of Aboriginal homeless young people, from all our reports and the research that has been written, and also given the transient nature in the population in Mount Druitt in particular, that the fact that the accommodation element or aspect of the HAYS project is not operational, would have a huge impact on the effectiveness of achieving some of those outcomes because you can do so much with case management and linking in with all the services, but if you actually need a bed,
there is only so many beds within other mainstream youth SAAP services, and it may even get to the case that young people might have to move away from their existing community. So there might not be any, if the young person needs a bed because they are in crisis, they might need to move to Penrith or Sydney or Wollongong or wherever. Whereas, and I know it’s only four or five beds within the HAYS project, but that I would see as a barrier.

Fourth, the question of whether an accommodation (bed) service is the best model for homeless young people:

But I know that on the other hand the accommodation model may not be the best model, but I don’t know what the research is around that and whether there are other ways to actually allocate the resources for the HAYS project away from the accommodation model into a different type of accommodation service or for rent for premises you know for young people rather than ... so I think some of that research on models really needs to happen. (04)

The participant’s point about the efficacy of the traditional SAAP accommodation model was raised by other participants and draws attention to a critical design question: What is the best model for HAYS? Further, how will the HAYS designers conceptually, organisationally and operationally consider this question? In other words, how will they research and know that their proposals are in the best interests of Aboriginal youth and local Aboriginal communities? I suggest that the findings in the following design and development sections of this thesis reveal lessons to be considered in answering these questions.

6.5.4 The design process

By design, I refer to the process of conceptualising, creating and then preparing and planning for the HAYS project to be executed with its end intention and purpose in view; preparing to and actually ‘giving life’ to HAYS. The open-ended question put to the participants was: How should HAYS be designed? The findings are presented with participants’ responses organised in terms of the constructs of conceptualising, creating and planning. The following three tables, participants’ narratives and analysis, provide rich research informed ideas, aspirations and strategies for the design of HAYS.
Table 6.10: Conceptualising HAYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interests of young people</td>
<td>Get young people interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In the interests of young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young people having service choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So young people run HAYS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to know young people’s definition of home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A nourishing initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rebuilding sense of home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Careful of treating them as clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and traditional values</td>
<td>Links to their culture; Cultural input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A culturally specified service; HAYS as cultural service leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiate own identity and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reconnect with homeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A traditional ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding own inner strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity approach</td>
<td>Complexity of human service planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acknowledge complexity environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responding to cultural complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We can never go back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>Needs to be holistic framework; A one-stop-shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole of family and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create the cutting edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wider than accommodation role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Indigenous service capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Able to run on our own money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under Aboriginal leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly, there is an explicit aspiration to design HAYS in the interests of young people. However, in terms of a return to traditional culture there were diverse participant views. One participant spoke about the quick evolution imposed on Aboriginal people and not being able to get back to a traditional culture, as in ‘place’ (land). Nonetheless, the participant thought it would be possible to draw on traditional culture as in connections and the ways of loving, caring and working for others. Language, identity, kin, connectedness and belonging could still be present and occur in ‘place’, but not the same way as it used to be. The participant went on to say:

… no, we can never go back. The way that people used to connect I can only imagine like if I could dream it’d be all one happy clan out in the middle of nowhere and we all know how to survive, we know how to do things, but evolution happens, it doesn’t matter where you are everything, everything evolves and unfortunately it was imposed on us, it didn’t happen at a natural rate, I guess. It was imposed and we, I think Aboriginal people are very strong
people. Once they can find their own inner strength and when it comes from their culture or their skills or a talent that they have, they can grow from that and take that on board and use that to grow within a community. I think where we fall down is that we don’t have enough positive role models out there in the grass-roots area to show young people that there is a better way to live, you don’t need to get into trouble, if we can just grab hold of what we know and rebuild our family structure so we’ve got the support, we can still function in the society as it is now. (09)

Another participant was concerned that HAYS, as a culturally specific service, avoids becoming a ‘cultural sledgehammer’:

Yes, so I think a service like HAYS rather than being mandated to apply a set of cultural constructs, needs to be better positioned like all the other services to work with the person as they are when they come through the door, but over time I think you, particularly if that person by going to that service is signalling they want to affiliate with the Indigenous community in that area, (a) that it gives them that opportunity, and (b) if there are common, I guess, needs, practices, resources, whatever that apply to that group of people then you have got a service that can actually then take advantage of those commonalities. (07)

During the conduct of the research, I did not get a sense that HAYS staff and designers would act as ‘cultural enforcers’, but there was an understandable agenda of re-empowering youth with a sense of their Aboriginal identity and traditions. Through that identity, and their constructs of culture, staff are able to facilitate change and a difference in improving the well-being of young people as they help them to learn more about ‘where they have come from’ and ‘who they are’ as a group of people, as one participant pointed out previously in this thesis. Whereas if that identity becomes or remains diffused, into the diverse array of competing contemporary cultures, what is their future and where is their power-base? As discussed with one Aboriginal participant, I questioned whether there is a need to ‘Aboriginalise’, for example, SAAP training packages for organisations like HAYS. I asked if there was one standardised package rolled-out, would there be something of the Aboriginal identity lost, or at least denied? The reply was:

Yes that is right. And because of the assimilation and the mainstream focus and all what is going on all the time, the danger is that is going to get lost again. So that is what the bigger danger is like. (05)

Exploring the issue further with the same participant, it was hypothesised that we see through history the ancient, or the very old, knowledge systems, followed by the pre-colonial traditional systems and now we have a complex traditional and
contemporary composite system. And so we have a number of Aboriginal people in Australia placed in different knowledge, identity, culture and network systems:

Yes that is ... we were talking the other day about Aboriginality as the big issue of course. There was someone talking about, in the [news] paper, they were talking about how many Aboriginal people are actually married to non-Aboriginal people and what that means [how do they then identify themselves?]. And to me that doesn’t mean anything if that person still wants to identify as Aboriginal. Part of them is Aboriginal, and if the other half of the person is Irish or English and if they want to identify as English then they should have every right to do that as well. So I am not saying that ... let's put this into perspective so everyone can look at it and look at it as their own identity, because that's what identity is about isn't it? It is not about saying just because you are part Aboriginal you are Aboriginal ... it’s up to that individual person to decide. (05)

Is this assimilation with mainstream Australian society? Is it an intensification of the intergrade process that has been occurring since colonisation? These questions rightly belong with Aboriginal people to address and for mainstream Australia to listen and accept their views, particularly how any culturally specific service organisation, such as HAYS, is conceptualised.

In response to the question of how HAYS should be designed, the young people indicated that they should be having their say in the design process of conceptualising HAYS, and they said it should be Aboriginal community controlled. Further, they expressed a desire for whole community involvement: [that is,] middle-aged people and Elders and young people – male and female. Discussion with them also covered the need to make the process transparent to whole of community.

The act of creating HAYS should be through communication, consultation and accountability based on a partnership approach and reliable information, as the following table indicates.

Table 6.11: Creating HAYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coherent conversations and consultations</td>
<td>Need communication with community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reframing Indigenous consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breaking through some barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationships become important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A common glue, universal anchors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed by research</td>
<td>Look at an effective model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look at homelessness if not around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify needs of young people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In discussing the creation, vision and future of HAYS and its programs, one participant also cautioned about infrastructure needs and the potential for staffing problems:

*Yes there are other aspects that are more visionary. I think what we started off with was a very simple vision that we establish a SAAP service, basic SAAP accommodation service, and that we would employ the manager to establish that under a contract and then [the design team] would 'walk away', making sure that everybody knew we could come back if needed. As the program has developed, partly because of all those external things, but also I think because of mainly listening to the way the community wants things done we are starting to form a different view of a how it should happen and we are still in the middle of the discussion so there’s nothing definite about it yet, but there are a couple of things that come out of it. … There is very, very strong pressure being exerted on the program itself to take on a far wider role than just accommodation program and there is funding to go along with it. So the major issues we have to deal with are: (a) what is the infrastructure, what sort of things do we need to make sure it has in place; and (b) how do you stop a limited staffing from over-extending itself all the time, and how do you do that compassionately so that you recognise that there are far too many problems for one person or three people, which is the staff compliment at the moment. There are far more problems than they can solve with their limited resources even with extra government funding, and how do you set priorities when the community itself is screaming out for help and direction and leadership and all of those sorts of things. So we’re in the middle of all that stuff at the moment and one of the great risks of … I think is burning out staff before we can actually establish what we set out to establish. So there’s*
those sorts of difficulties which we are trying to work through now and broadly we call that infrastructure, what sort of infrastructure do we need to set up and work through that. And what are the objectives that we are going to identify as the objectives that will go forward. … So it’s all a big discussion at the moment and it’s come about, well sorry it’s moved us away from our original plan. It doesn’t help to be having state and federal elections coming up at the moment to be perfectly honest because each of them are throwing all sorts of money at the problem which is what they always do and they don’t look at the fundamental, underlying issues. (15)

Other participants covered the issue raised about moving away from the original HAYS plan. However, there were mixed participants’ views about how to respond to this apparent drift. The following table reveals the human complexity of planning.

**Table 6.12: Planning HAYS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>HAYS context has changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Involvement of] Non-Indigenous designers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Joint service planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeing where the synergies lie [with other services]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build in sustainable infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[The need for] A clear planning framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes</td>
<td>It [HAYS] has lost its focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change from original plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Let’s re-write the plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the goals achievable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[The HAYS model] Still being discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>Slow progress towards goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beyond set timeframe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handover</td>
<td>Constructing, finding a new auspice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positioning HAYS for handover</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, some participants obviously believed that the original project plan was to establish a SAAP residential crisis unit. However, HAYS planning documents do not support this view. The documents specify that it would be a SAAP service, which could encompass a broad service delivery model *‘to ensure [the] most effective, culturally appropriate services are provided to young people’*.3 This is an issue that would require further coherent conversations between the designers and

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3 Source: Draft Plan for the Establishment of a Self-Determined Indigenous Youth SAAP Service, 23 August 2002 (also see Chapter 5).
the community to make visible the varying perspectives and expectations. To proceed without a high level of coherence (see Chapter 1 section 1.6) may bring about conflict.

Clearly, any organisational design initiative needs adequate planning, infrastructure and resources to appropriately respond to and meet the needs of service recipients. Aboriginal organisations may be more vulnerable in these areas, particularly where Western systems have been imposed on Aboriginal organisational styles of caring for their own people. One participant succinctly observed that:

*I think you’ve got to build an infrastructure which is sustainable into the future which doesn’t depend on who’s in the job at the time. And I don’t know whether Aboriginal organisations are good at that. I think it’s got to have a clear policy framework, which it can always go back to, a clear planning framework that it’s got to go back to. Clear principles of human resources and finance, which have monitoring systems, built into it rather than leaving up to what seems a good idea at the time and clear principles of practice in terms of dealing with very vulnerable kids. Now that needs a lot of cultural and community input into what is an Aboriginal style of dealing with their own families and their own kids and not sort of overlaying sort of Western expectations, but still there are some basic justice issues relating to abuse and protection, child protection, and making the young person acquire the resources they need to live in a quite clearly multi-racial society. They’ve got to be very comfortable and at home in their own community [where] they have a sense of belonging, but they’re also got to be able to see a future in the reality of this Australian society as it is now.* (16)

The table above also indicates that there were concerns about HAYS’s focus and progress. For example, one participant captured this:

*I was thinking the other day when we had our reference group [meeting] that I feel that the process of getting information and doing the design would be the easiest. Easiest in the sense that you get information and you sit down and talk about ... yes, but I don’t think it is going to be ... I think it is going to be a little bit more challenging because now things are happening so quickly around the actual project and around where the place is based. I think that it might be ... there will be a bit of pressure on the place to just operate rather than looking at a model ... I thought that there would be a little bit more thought put into the model. And I still think there should be, I think there should be, we need a service to the Aboriginal community so let’s get the service, but we should be able to look at it continually, evaluate and say: ‘Hang on this is not working, if this is not a positive thing, well how do we change it?’* (05)

This participant presents a critical view that would be valuable to put forward in conversations on the actual design process. The practice of continuous discussion, sense-making, action-taking and evaluation throughout the design process would, theoretically, elicit agreed, shared and thus more sustainable outcomes. This includes
the process of research informed design and development. It would honour the wisdom and input of the local Aboriginal people. However, it appears that stakeholder energy was focusing more on HAYS’s development under given assumptions of what the youth SAAP service model would become – that is, a SAAP residential program.

6.5.5 The development process

By development, I refer to the process of actually bringing the project into being and activity, and to its ongoing building and expanding towards its intention and purpose. The open-ended question put to the participants was: How should HAYS be developed? The findings are presented with participants’ responses organised in terms of the constructs of being, activity and expanding. The following three tables, participants’ narratives and analysis, like the design discussion above, provide rich research informed ideas, aspirations and strategies for the development of HAYS. Initially, the participants appear to be expressing a strong desire for the instilling of traditional Aboriginal culture within HAYS. Some participants suggest that traditional and contemporary ‘ways of knowing and doing’ be incorporated into the HAYS development process. Other participants speak about more applied and practical processes – the doing (development) supposedly coming out of the thinking (design).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Preserve and instil traditional culture | Connecting with Baiami⁴ 
Maintain culture and integrity; Learning to preserve culture 
Culturally appropriate [service] 
Aboriginals know the best model 
Aboriginal way of doing business 
A traditional way of working; Traditional and contemporary knowing 
A modern-day tribal ground 
What sustains us as humans 
I try to decolonise my heart, mind 
Involve community Elders 
Keeping past un-kept promises 
Maintain language and kinship work 
Our people, yearning for a HAYS |

⁴ As previously referred to in Chapter 1, Baiami is the High God of Aboriginal peoples from the south-eastern area of Australia.
The statement (above), ‘Our people, yearning for a HAYS’, is deeply moving. It brings forth notions of a longing and an ache for the reversion to traditional culture, as clearly visible in the verbatim responses above. Perhaps this yearning can be met through the concept (above) of developing HAYS as a ‘modern-day tribal ground’; a powerful attractor that encompasses most of the innovative notions, ideas and statements made by various participants. For example, one participant said:

Well, you know ... we’re developing a holistic approach that has a service emphasis on young people, but you know service to them occurs in a ‘whole of family, whole of community’ context. That we’re about generating a positive peer culture amongst the young people here, so that they are self-resourcing and self-sustaining ... because that’s one of the things is finding good people to work with young people as well. So looking at a self-sufficiency approach to that. Also empowering these young people away from a welfare mentality because who’s to say that youth issues and services can’t be around economic development for young people and other things ... generating holistic approaches around housing, but not just looking at the way that people have been housed in crisis before, you know utilising that infrastructure resource. Like the Land Council say [could] buy us a block of flats so that we can have good size rooms in crisis to independent living [programs], but we are able to do that in the community by which that we can be self-sufficient and self-generating and that self-determination and self-management is naturally occurring in actuality, not just a policy aspiration. So, that’s part of it. (10)

This participant went on to speak about learning and how this would take place:

Pretty much now that we have a client base, it is emerging that HAYS has potential to become a ‘learning centre’ by all the different activities that young people are stating that they want to see, and that’s like that raft of programming that we’ve spoken about to you. There’s a need for these young people to be resourced so they are seen as giving back to their own family and community and some of the ideas about that have been like looking at social nights and videos because there’s a whole gamut of information about black Australia on videos that our young people need to access. So it’s about setting that up so they can have film nights with discussion with Elders and other people. And to look at
reconnection and looking at a relationship or reconsolidating a relationship between the old, elderly and senior people in our community and the young with the young. It needs to have that ‘multifunction polis’ thing going on for it. My vision of HAYS is that I just see it congested with people doing activity and a whole raft of things, there is action here all the time and in that there’s engagement and it’s operating like a ‘modern-day tribal ground’ where you have people here doing things, there’s gathering going on, there’s you know it’s all happening. (10)

And, then the participant called for community and government to support the innovative ideas, concepts and approaches emanating form HAYS:

So yeah it’s about how do we … you know setting this up as the ‘tribal lands’ and everyone having a role and task in the sustaining of that …. It’s about creating the cutting-edge here too, and it’s also a really good opportunity politically because of all these other government initiatives that are coming in and the vast resourcing around Aboriginal stuff … Community Solutions and that Family Youth Strategy stuff. It’s also a really good time to be looking at approaches towards a model of governance for this Aboriginal community and how it is also primed to be looking at self-government … checking out the feasibility of it and that’s because of the high energy that HAYS has created to get people that haven’t been talking for a long time talking again, but again being the visionaries that we are here as well putting out new concepts, new ideas, new approaches that are far more simplistic than what they’ve been trying to get up. You know we could just be sitting in a meeting … So I think the intellectual capacity of HAYS is benefiting the whole community at a crucial time where major community development and infrastructure is occurring and it’s happening against the backdrop of community that are fragmented. You’ve got half of them saying, ‘Go away’, the other half saying, ‘Well what … do we do with [the government resources and funding coming into Mount Druitt].’ (10)

The young participants said the Mount Druitt Aboriginal Community Youth Justice Group should continue to be involved in the development of HAYS. In addition, they indicated that other young Aboriginal people such as: Juvenile Justice young people; local young people; school students in years 7-12; and, ‘street’ young people should become involved. They appeared to have faith in the workers and consultation process as evident in the statement: HAYS is going to let us [do things]. They clearly believed they were also being supported and empowered through programs such as the language and kinship, and music and other initiatives being developed at HAYS.

At the time of conducting the interviewing phase of the fieldwork, there was indeed a high level of youth presence and participation at the HAYS service. My observation at the time was that most of the support strategies appeared to be of a
community development and early intervention nature. I had actually observed positive youth development and self-esteem building through HAYS’s interventions. Of particular importance, the young people were engaged in a range of educational and occupational activities that were promoting and building opportunities for them.

Table 6.14: Bringing HAYS into ‘activity’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service networking</td>
<td>Linking to other services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link in to Blacktown Aboriginal [Child, Youth and Family] plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Services’ system development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationships is where it happens</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Openness to work together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness and efficiency</td>
<td>Develop measurement systems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progressive evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuous improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look at clear outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing resources</td>
<td>Accessing funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HAYS needs more money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More administration support</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This table identifies that participants are generally in favour of a systems approach to HAYS’s development, though as is often the case in community organisations, additional resources are required. However, some participants pointed out that working in a services’ system is often problematical. For example:

*Oh yes, definitely. And I have seen it before with my very eyes, people that are not only Aboriginal people, but other people and NGOs or organisations or people won’t work together because for whatever disagreements or factions they are involved in...* (04)

My own knowledge and experience of the SAAP sector also suggests that there are different agencies’ philosophies, theoretical frameworks and practices that underpin their service delivery models which may not ‘click together’ in a services’ system, together with agency issues of identity and power. The same participant, as above, replied:

*Yes, different histories ... or similar histories, whatever ... Yes, and I actually saw this at a discussion a few weeks ago when someone on the HAYS project, when we had a meeting, actually said: ‘Okay we need to link in with this other organisation otherwise we’re not going to achieve what we should with this project’. But up until then they had been slagging off about that other*
organisation, but when we were talking about what needs to happen and what can add the most benefit for the ‘four point access strategy’ whatever it is called, that organisation hadn’t been mentioned up till then and then they were suddenly mentioned. Then a couple of weeks after … because the HAYS workers said: ‘We need to work with them, so I’ll give them a ring’. So it is about that knowing what the young people need and how that is going to be affected by the other relationships to the other organisations ... (04)

Table 6.15: Expanding HAYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category construct</th>
<th>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Young people identifying their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify needs of young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support framed in service of need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We are getting it right [at HAYS]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We have got evidence for people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement of young people</td>
<td>Need to prioritise youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involve young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Get more girls involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young people are our future</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community of young people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting young people</td>
<td>Resourcing the young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop what is already here [at HAYS]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temporary community of connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need early intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create pathways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look at case management model</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outreach support</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Youth] Involved in positive activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching them living skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent livings skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All our custody rates are going up; [So HAYS] As an alternative to custody</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probably getting ‘Circle Sentencing’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crime prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Process anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing program dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering young people</td>
<td>Building resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changed pathways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generating positive peer culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Programs are locked in [at HAYS]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regain sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By [utilising] community youth justice group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young people decide Aboriginal future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category construct</td>
<td>Individual participants’ in-vivo statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement of community</td>
<td>We need more leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aboriginals have community skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tapping into extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tapping into community resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The community will stand behind the young people</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Put them back to community</td>
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</table>

Participants called for a range of programs in the service of young people’s needs, rather than an imposed model of service delivery. As earlier alluded to, the development of the residential program, while considered important, appeared not to be a priority issue. On the other hand, some participants were concerned that it would become, perhaps inappropriately, the focus of HAYS. Some clearly wanted it, whereas others suggested alternatives to a SAAP residential crisis model. The following extracts provide examples of the diversity of opinions:

[the residential program at HAYS needs to be in place] because we do need it, we do need it big time. Because a lot of our youth out here don’t know where to turn, they’ve got their people, like they’ve got aunties and uncles or older brothers and sisters, but it’s that sense of belonging [that] has been kind of lost in the … can you see where I’m coming from? (13)

I don’t really care about the residential component because I don’t believe in it. I don’t know, it would just be interesting, that’s my view it would just be interesting. They’re going to get boys or girls in? Whether they’re going to go co-ed. I don’t know it would just be interesting … (14)

I mean that’s a difficult one, I suppose. The old Mundarra was the residential service. I think it held about six to seven people at the most. It seemed to be a lot of work to look after that very small amount of kids, I think. Certainly, though, they probably need to have a look at an effective model around homelessness and have a look at what might be better than the past. Anyway, I don’t know if they have had a look at a case management model or something or a non-accommodation model and probably use the premises [at HAYS] as one part of the solution, rather than all of the solution. I think the residential service was all the solution last time and I just sort of think it was very flawed I suppose; lots of gaps there, lots of kids that sort of missed out. And I think that HAYS may need to have a look at some very clear outcomes. I suppose with kids, start to have a look at what homelessness looked like if it wasn’t around, if we had no homelessness what would the world look like then? What would Mount Druitt look like then and how would Aboriginal kids, or what would Aboriginal kids look like, that were no longer homeless? Some of those very utopian I suppose visions and start to develop something from there. (17)
The above participant proposes the idea of residential support as being one of HAYS’s service components, which is in keeping with how HAYS was actually being designed and developed. Insightfully, the participant goes on to ask some powerful reframing questions.

The following participant’s (06) fractured narrative perhaps sheds some light on reframing options for further consideration. Firstly, a campus accommodation model that integrates notions of community and supports young people to develop their education and employability:

The Live and Learn campus is worth seeing because I think conceptually it’s not a bad model. You don’t have to adopt the physical characteristics of the model, but I think the value of the model is to look at the young people in terms of their community, their education and their employment. To me, I don’t think we have ever really exploited the assets that the Aboriginal community has. To me when you look past it, a lot of the issues that drive their disadvantage are also some of the assets they have in building their resilience. Trying to actually bring young people out of their family structures and put them into a communal refuge, I think in the long-term is not going to really change much because I think that really is basically a crisis response model. It really doesn’t take on board the other two concepts [family restoration and independence under SAAP].

Secondly, providing intense early intervention support to maintain young people in their communities of connection:

I look at the Burdekin model at Dee Why that actually looks at the young people on the northern beaches in terms of a community response to youth homelessness. And they actually base their whole model on a kind of a view that very few young people come to them who are absolutely roofless, they actually do have some place where they are staying. And so a lot of the emphasis initially is on shoring this up and this might be... Aboriginal young people often have huge access to extended family for instance and a lot of reason... sometimes the reason that breaks down [occurs] is simply pure economics; the family can’t afford to look after them. And the same concept was used over there [Burdekin], so the whole idea was to get some very, very intensive early intervention work in there to work with the young person where they were at, i.e., it might be a friend’s house, it might be with the extended family person to actually keep that thing going. That’s your crisis response. At the same time working with their family to look at whether resolving some of the issues that can happen there could happen. Where those two things fail, they have actually recruited a community care capacity to actually manage some of the young people within community settings, but they actually had a pathway through to a longer-term support of housing... but if you trust the evaluations that were done, and they were independent, some of the clear outcomes are that they have gone from getting almost no people into a stable education system, when they were
operating as two refuge type models, to now really getting a very high percentage of young people into higher secondary and tertiary models.

Finally, the participant concludes that if the ‘Live and Learn’ and ‘Burdekin’ models can be somehow combined, a good transition system of support can be provided for Aboriginal young people:

*If you start to look at Aboriginal communities and we say okay community, family ... there is strong resilience within communities despite all their problems, there’s strong connections to families, despite all their problems. Often if you start to look at what some of the drivers of the problem in those structures, they’re often economic drivers. So if you can actually get some very strong intensive effort, based on the Burdekin model, based on the good concept of the Live and Learn model, I think in there, you’re starting to provide supportive environments that will let the young person transition through, and importantly, fail a bit along the way and drift backwards and forwards if they have to.* (06)

In sum, the implementation of a holistic service delivery model with residential and non-residential components would be a wise development, if the designers are to honour the local community’s aspirations. Whatever service configuration is established, effective Aboriginal governance and management have been called for and are essential processes in underpinning any desired support interventions and outcomes.

### 6.5.6 Governance and management

Governance is the process of exercising overall authoritative leadership, control, direction, performance and management of an organisation (see, e.g., Lyons 2001). Some participants, particularly young people, were not familiar with the term ‘governance’, so it was substituted with ‘leadership’ when necessary. Similarly, the term ‘management’ was at times substituted with ‘co-ordination’ to promote discussion with participants. During the interviewing process, emergent discussion with some participants elicited ideas and proposals on how the (present and future) Aboriginal youth service could be governed and managed. Indeed, some participants had emphatic views on these elements of HAYS’s organisational leadership, management and structure.

In response to the open-ended question, how should HAYS be governed/led, the individual participants generally expressed a desire for *Aboriginal self-determination,
community involvement, young people’s involvement and innovative community management as the HAYS governance criteria. The young people’s verbatim responses to this question were: Elders and older Aboriginal people with respect, understanding of youth issues, qualifications, cultural/spiritual knowledge; young people; and local knowledge, connections to wider community to obtain things [such as] government and non-government services, as the governance criteria.

In the community services sector there has been reliance on a model of governance known as the ‘classic model’. Essentially, a committee/board of people (usually volunteers) is elected to govern the entity by its members, and a manager/co-ordinator is employed to co-ordinate the entity’s service delivery and operations provided by employees. This is the former Mundarra model of governance that has become increasingly difficult to sustain in contemporary organisational settings (see Chapters 2 and 5). The reasons for this difficulty include: the (mis)use of power (Knox 1999a&b), the decline in volunteerism (Lyons 2001), and the impact of economic rationalism and managerialism (see, e.g., Kenny 1994; Rees and Rodley 1995). As a couple of participants said:

*It is somewhat of a flawed model I suppose. I don’t know, in any model that we have I suppose there is some sort of relationship of power in there, it certainly gets in the way of good outcomes at times, if we don’t understand how that power works and we abuse it in some way, unconsciously we may. I’m just trying to think of a model that is based totally on trust I suppose. The models that we have, I think they’re based on mistrust, because when we start to deal with models we start to have systems and we have procedures in place to say this is how we will do a certain thing. We get very hooked into structural issues about and procedural issues about ... we’ve got this if you [respondent draws model] like hierarchical model that says how we should behave in an organisation and that tends to run the organisation then. That the system runs the organisation pretty much like the ‘old engine’, if you’ve got a bad part, we’ll just put another part in there and that should fix it up and it will continue to go on as it should ... (17)*

… before we switched on [commenced interview] we had this discussion about community management. I think community management as a pure model is becoming much more problematic. As we go along and you look at really big changes and issues like occupational health and safety and those increasing levels of responsibility on management committees. And the substantial increase in complexity of doing community management, I think it is becoming harder to actually expect that volunteers can actually fulfil that task anyhow. So I think it is really becoming across-the-board much more difficult. And if you start to look at what we were talking about, we are tending to have increased failures right
across-the-board in community management structures. This kind of manifests itself, as the structures are not being able to operate, in the service closing. And of course, services withdrawn from the community. The point I was making is that we tend to have much more of our funding for Aboriginal organisations invested in community management and we tend to have higher failure rates. So training is not just the issue, I think it’s important, but training is not just the issue. It is the capacity often of those communities to operate cohesively. (06)

Some participants would like to see the service governed under Aboriginal self-determination by the local community, but the question is: Who and what constitutes the local community? Whatever way HAYS is governed, it will probably be in contested terrain. For example, one Aboriginal person suggested that Marist could continue to manage HAYS because it was really working well. Another participant was considered in her views and said:

Once it [HAYS] is handed back to the Aboriginal community, in due time, I think that instead of implementing Aboriginal views then, it should be done right now because that change will be absolutely to … well it takes a long time and it will be a huge change if we tried to do it at the end. So the huge change if you tried to do it then … so where as now I think what needs to happen in relation to when it comes time to hand over, back to the Aboriginal community, that that process needs to be sort of a slow, not a slow, not a fast, but sort of medium speed. It needs to be done efficiently and correctly, and by introducing Aboriginal ways of service delivery or implementing new cultural programs. I think it needs to be stable now so that there is that smooth changeover, there is no complications, there is no worries about what’s going to happen ... (09)

Organisational management is the process of day-to-day co-ordination and guidance of an entity’s activities in accord with its policies and procedures, usually in concert with an agreed strategic plan, under the direction of the governance group (see, e.g., Bolman and Deal 1997; Lyons 2001). The manager or management group is therefore responsible for (and I say to) the body of people, their positions and roles, authorised to conduct the co-ordination and delivery of services.

In response to the open-ended question, how should HAYS be managed/co-ordinated, the individual participants expressed a desire for Aboriginal management, an innovative model and a youth consortium [as a management group] as the HAYS management criteria. The young people’s verbatim response to this question was: workers and manager under the direction of Aboriginal community, as the management criteria. As evident, this question elicited limited, but direct, responses. It is apparent that most participants had limited awareness of the functions and
difference between governance and management, though this inference is flagged here as being tentative due to the lack of responses to this question.

Of the few responses obtained, one participant said:

… I see the development of the youth consortium. I visualise that and I dreamt about that being the management committee of HAYS when it stands on its own two feet and becomes autonomous. (08)

Another seemed to be happy with the current auspice arrangement, or at least assumed the arrangement with current Aboriginal staffing would continue:

I’ve never looked at it that way. They are going pretty good. Like the [staff] are … they have got other things going on, it is pretty full-on here. I think they have got it community managed, haven’t they? (01)

A third participant suggested that a new approach to service management is required:

At the end of the day, whatever decision is made there’s got to be a demonstrable benefit to the clients. So if it goes back to an Aboriginal community organisation [for governance and management], you’ve got a baseline. This is what Marist through its management has been achieving for these young people, what is going to improve by going back to this sort of thing? And if you can’t actually define how it’s going to improve, then my view is it shouldn’t happen. I’m much more interested in trying to create leadership or options for Aboriginal people to move into some of these big structures. That’s what I would like to see. Marist can lead the way and we can use that with [other large service providers] to try and actually look at them actually getting Aboriginal people into their Boards. (06)

However, if the entity’s goal of a self-determined service is to be achieved, as the young people said above, it needs to be under the direction of [the] Aboriginal community employing Aboriginal workers and [a] manager to deliver services. What organisational structure or model, including governance, management and service delivery programs this sits within is yet to be determined by the design and development group, presumably in conversation with the local Aboriginal community.

### 6.6 Summary

The findings suggest that there are multiple perceptions, meanings and experiences influencing the constructs of home and homelessness. Home is related to one’s connection to and sense of physical, metaphysical and cultural place. Similarly, homelessness is related to one’s disconnectedness from or absence of a person’s construct of home. However, generally speaking, Aboriginal people’s traditional sense
of home has been inextricably linked to their physical environments, and to their social and spiritual places. The causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness are seen to have their roots in colonisation. In many instances Aboriginal people have been disconnected from their traditional homelands, producing a devastating loss of culture, identity and well-being. The impact of ‘the stolen generation’ continues to negatively reverberate in Aboriginal families and communities today. The implosion of some Aboriginal communities is linked to oppressive regimes, social and economic disadvantage, and to personal, family and community existential problems.

In response to these issues, some Aboriginal participants have suggested that the Aboriginal community itself should now be taking responsibility to address the homelessness of their young people. The design and development of HAYS is a project that appears to have been ‘giving life’ to this responsibility. Mount Druitt Aboriginal community members, including their young people, have become involved in HAYS. It has become a powerful attractor of hope, as some participants clearly indicated that their community has been yearning for an agency and service such as HAYS.

There is a perception that HAYS is being constructed as an organisation that will become a safe place for at risk/homeless Aboriginal youth. Secondly, it will aim to empower young people, and meet the community’s aspirations of becoming an autonomous Aboriginal centre for cultural, community and family development. However, some participants believe that HAYS will take longer to reach these goals, in comparison to the original specified project timeframe.

Generally, the findings indicate that the initial stages of the HAYS project were progressing well towards its goal. Research participants, members of the local community and project stakeholders have endorsed its design and development philosophy of ‘a whole of family, whole of community’ approach. In designing HAYS to become an Aboriginal self-determined organisation, participants called for the incorporation of traditional culture and values, but cautioned that care is needed in the sense that HAYS avoids becoming a ‘cultural sledgehammer’.

The young participants indicated that they wished to be involved in the design of HAYS, and that it should be Aboriginal community controlled. My assessment is that HAYS staff clearly expressed a desire for and developed programs that opened
unforced opportunities for the young people to learn about their cultures, languages and identities. Concomitantly, case management support services in areas such as personal development and creativity, therapeutic interventions, and employment opportunities were being offered and developed.

Nonetheless, it is clearly evident from participants’ views that there is a need for further coherent conversations between the Aboriginal community and the HAYS designers. This would identify an effective service model, which would include all the requisite components of addressing the causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness, family and community fragmentation, and the provision of support services as a safety net for at risk/homeless Aboriginal youth. Clearly, such a model would require adequate conceptualisation, strategic planning, infrastructure and resources to appropriately respond to and meet the needs of the young people, their families and their communities.

Participants expressed concern about the imposed Western styles of organisation, agency governance and service delivery. Therefore, it has been imperatively suggested that HAYS receives cultural and community input into how it should be working with Aboriginal youth and designing the future agency. This is not a single event. The design of HAYS requires continuous discussion, sense-making, action-taking, and evaluation activities to elicit efficacious and sustainable outcomes. Fundamentally, this is a research informed process, which some participants identified as a design and development criterion.

However, it has been suggested that the energy of some design stakeholders has focused more on HAYS’s development under an assumption that the agency would become a conventional SAAP crisis accommodation service. This is in contrast to the clearly agreed and/or subsequently expressed aspiration that HAYS innovatively research, design and develop a comprehensive service model to: instil and preserve traditional culture; involve and listen to the views of local Aboriginal people; maintain its broader community development approach (e.g., language and kinship program); provide advocacy on homelessness policy; create learning and training programs for personal, skills and identity development; and, provide family and community support/development initiatives. This service model has been envisaged as ‘a modern-day tribal ground’, as a community ‘gathering and learning centre’ where young
people are resourced, supported and equipped to become future leaders of their communities.

The findings indicate that HAYS’s future governance – the process of overall authority, leadership, control, direction, performance and management – should be under the direction of the local Aboriginal community. Though, the actual implementation model of auspice transfer and arrangements was not determined by participants. The findings also generally indicate that the day-to-day management of the service – the process of co-ordination and guidance of an entity’s activities and service delivery – should be by Aboriginal people.

Overall, the research findings point to a need for coherent and strategic conversations to continue the design and development of HAYS. The next chapter discusses this inference, outlines lessons learnt, offers a possible Aboriginal agency model, and outlines a substantive theory of organisational design and development.
Chapter 7 – A Modern-Day Tribal Ground

7.1 Introduction

The thesis findings contain a multitudinous array of implicit and explicit lessons for the design and development of Aboriginal community service organisations, such as HAYS. Mostly, the findings are self-evident. This chapter discusses and integrates my macro interpretations and learnings educed from the review of Aboriginal youth homelessness, the description and analysis of the HAYS case, and the fieldwork observations and findings related to the HAYS research.

So far this thesis has established that Aboriginal youth homelessness is a complex issue, requiring holistic (complex) design, development and support responses. It has been argued that a local Aboriginal community is the best source of influence and support for its young people. In agreement with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, the last resort would be for a young homeless person to be placed with a SAAP agency such as HAYS. However, HAYS is perceived as being designed and developed to provide holistically for their needs – the ‘whole of family, whole of community’ approach – under the interim auspice arrangement with MYC (Chapter 5). It is envisaged by HAYS staff that the future auspice of the SAAP project, under an Aboriginal self-determined and community-managed organisation, would maintain such a holistic philosophy.

In the governance and management of funded programmatic support services to homeless youth, this thesis has argued that there are significant problems with the model of classic community-management, whether by Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal peoples. It appears that DoCS, as HAYS’s administrative and funding body, was cognizant of community-management limitations, as it initially (though with some reservation) awarded the contract to re-establish the Aboriginal youth SAAP service

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1 As outlined in Chapter 2, if a child cannot be maintained within his or her family of birth then Welfare authorities should give preference to placing the young person with extended family. If this is not possible, then a placement with another family in the young person’s community should be considered. Should option 1 and 2 not be possible, then the young person should be placed with another Aboriginal family. If all of the above options were not possible, then the last resort would be to place a young person outside his or her Aboriginal community.
in Mount Druitt to a large organisation – the corporative, non-profit entity of MYC. Chapter 5 outlined the progressive design and development stages of the Aboriginal self-determined agency (currently HAYS – ISP), revealing design and development lessons for the stakeholders to consider and act on. Three key research lessons emerged from a description and analysis of the HAYS case.

First, the fundamental requirement and aspiration of the local Aboriginal community to be consulted and engaged in the process of establishing and developing the HAYS project – expressed here as communicative connectedness. Second, it was clear that the community wanted its Aboriginal culture preserved and maintained. There was an expressed aspiration of the people for the designers to recognise and respect Aboriginal cultural heritage and instil traditional knowledge within HAYS’s practices – expressed here as complex cultural heritage. Third, to ensure the initiative was Aboriginal community controlled, a community-based reference group was established to steer the project. Members of the local Aboriginal community clearly indicated that HAYS should be controlled by Aboriginal people, respecting their right to self-determination and self-management – expressed here as contemporary self-organisation.

Similarly, these three lessons can be educed from the research findings contained in Chapter 6, and additional lessons can be drawn from Chapter 6 as follows. It has been suggested that whereas a complete return to traditional culture is unlikely – particularly as Aboriginal peoples traditional sovereignty in Australia is still largely at best problematical and at worst ignored – it is possible to translate and transfer traditional knowledge and practices into the design and development of contemporary Aboriginal organisations such as HAYS. A transfer of traditional notions of home and culture can be expressed as being – re-claiming culture and identity – the fourth design and development lesson. Fifth, some participants expressed a desire to move away from welfare models of support into a self-generating and self-sustaining social and economic existence that provides a positive future for Aboriginal people and therefore their youth. My observations suggest that this is a deeply felt longing. I have witnessed the evocative and real attraction to what it means for Aboriginal people to engage with their heritage; a heritage that speaks of spiritual, cultural, social and economic activity that sustained Aboriginal peoples for
thousands of years prior to colonisation. Sixth, the findings reveal that the views and participation of Aboriginal communities and people, particularly of young people, can be captured through a research informed process. Research lessons can be learnt from local knowledge and learning. Most importantly, the designers should be consulting the local Aboriginal community to ascertain, learn about and instil their aspirations under a considered, authentic and agreed process.

It is evident that these six macro lessons are grounded in the traditional notion of Aboriginal people’s sense of home. Therefore, it is postulated that through recourse to a traditional understanding of ‘home’, Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) people do have the potential to counter and ameliorate the negative impacts and consequences of generational and contemporary Aboriginal youth homelessness (see Chapter 2). The idea of an Aboriginal homeland centre has emerged from this research, which encapsulates the above lessons and offers a tangible model for consideration by the HAYS’s design and development group. Consequently, this chapter includes an outline of this model. The rich and complex ideas, aspirations and actions discussed in the design and development lessons and the homeland model require a complex (holistic) framework of simultaneous conscious sense-making, decision-making and action-taking. That is, a form of coherent dialogical praxis that illuminates and gives life to the HAYS design and development project.

This chapter discusses and outlines this proposition: that there is a need for coherent dialogue, which implicates ethical action. As such, theoretical lenses and devices are necessary to assist in the process of transformative discussion, reflection and action (Freire 1970). Recourse to and the integration of theory (at this stage) with the key research findings was foreshadowed in this thesis. The process of building a substantive theory primarily from the research data (of data to theory) is based on foregrounding the actual views and experiences of research participants. Data also includes my informal reflections recorded in my research journal in the form of ideas, phrases and models, which have been woven into the interpretative fabric of this thesis. I have found theoretical explanations of my research data, findings and interpretations in the writings of classic texts. In particular, through my research on the design and development of HAYS, I have experienced a synergistic resonance of

In writing this chapter, I have at times positioned HAYS within a wider Aboriginal discourse ranging from the initial Australian colonisation period to more modern times and contemporary issues (as discussed in this thesis so far). I have sought to construct a rich and complex substantive theory, drawn from this thesis, into a holistic (integrated) arrangement of five critical design and development propositions. I invite readers to keep the notion of complexity in mind when viewing this chapter (see Chapter 1 for an outline of the Complexity terms used in this thesis).

7.2 Design and Development Lessons

7.2.1 Communicative connectedness

HAYS is being designed and developed in a complex array of processes determined and influenced by human beings. The aspirations of these people as design stakeholders have been captured, to some extent, through this research. These people belong to the organisations that have ‘come around’ HAYS for specific purposes. For instance, DoCS as the funding and administrative body, MYC as the temporary auspice, and Aboriginal people as workers and representatives from the local community. At the centre of such endeavour is the matrix that supposedly holds these organisations together – the goal (attractor) of re-establishing an Aboriginal self-determined, governed and managed entity providing services to homeless and/or at risk Aboriginal youth. There are sets of rules and guidelines that determine, as a frame of reference (see, e.g., Appendix 9 – Draft Terms of Reference for HAYS), how these entities will communicate and operate. In such a complex context communication and action function at formal and informal levels; purposefully, randomly, regularly and intermittently – there is a pattern (fractality). This pattern contains recognised organisational attributes of roles, responsibilities, identity, power, culture (and sub-cultures), administration and so on. To a large extent these characteristics govern the design and development process and are monitored, theoretically, by the design and development group. This can therefore be described as a design system or system of design networks. This system is ‘tightly coupled’ (Stacey 2003), as the decisions and
actions of one member of the group have immediate implications for other members of the design group.

Under such a systemic approach order, compliance and control are the drivers of activity to produce the project’s goals. Deviation from such order is not well tolerated, as it is capable of producing disorder and tension. It is not surprising that humans seek to control their organisations – disturbances or significant perturbation can produce outcomes that threaten the viability of an entity or project. So, there is a tendency to maintain the organisational life, operating systems and established networks of an entity in known and stable zones. In a sense people become slaves to their organisations; energy is focused on maintaining the entity which was, however, originally established to serve human purposes such as caring for homeless Aboriginal youth in the case of HAYS. In this schema, as the organisational energy and creativity are channelled into the entity’s structure, there may be a blurring of its purpose, thus detracting from its service responsiveness and adaptability. These same principles are present and visible in all organisations – at varying levels of magnitude and scale – as they are designed, governed and managed by human beings.

When different organisations (e.g., DoCS, MYC and a local Aboriginal community) come together for some purpose, the intersection of their expectations requires coherence if co-ordinated activity is to be achieved in the service of its goal trajectory. It requires a greater degree of coherent communicative connectedness between the communication and activity networks. In this intersection people are governed by their organisation’s rules, but also by their wider cultural, social and economic milieus. This is particularly the case in HAYS where the Aboriginal participants have long-standing cultures that, now to varying degrees, influence their beliefs, thoughts, practices and actions. Such established cultural organisation was originally localised in nature. For example, an important question for Radcliffe-Brown was how did Aborigines apparently manage ‘to develop a wide-ranging and complex social order without an overarching apparatus of authority [government]’ (cited in Hiatt 1996:90). He believed that the answer lay ‘in their deployment of family

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2 However, in regard to the organisation and direction of public affairs, Hiatt (1996:93) found that: ‘Decisions about community movements were reached by an informal consensus. The organization of public rituals, such as initiation and death ceremonies, proceeded in accordance with clearly defined kinship responsibilities which changed from one occasion to another’, but were subject to regulation under tribal laws and customs.
kinship as a conceptual microcosm for the social universe at large’ (ibid). This microcosm, what could be described as a fractal proposition, subsequently became a key theory in the study of Aboriginal Australia, particularly in anthropology, though it has been subjected to further research, debate and revision. Recognition and accommodation of such cultural and social organisation – its resonance with limited hierarchy, self-organisation and localness – is therefore of vital consideration in the HAYS design process.

It is of vital importance to recognise that in ancient small-scale Aboriginal cultures most people were inextricably bound together in spatial propinquity through shared religious, political, economic and social systems. These people spoke the same language (Prozesky 2003) and shared common symbols, which continue to live and resonate in modern Aboriginal people’s affairs (as seen in Chapter 6). Therefore, any design initiative needs to recognise and honour these bonds of transcendent culture. Real listening and communication enables designers to connect with the people’s identity, aspirations and needs. Awareness of vastly different cultural ‘ways of seeing and experiencing the world’ – which leads to different ‘ways of knowing’ – is required when engaging in organisational design and development functions in Aboriginal settings. To continue without this knowledge is a form of secondary cultural invasion, at least an arrogant form of continued colonisation.

Designers and developers should understand the historical and structural conditions that they are operating within. Therefore, they need to develop a critical awareness of how these conditions were laid down and built upon. That is, the structural conditions of oppression and the oppressed. Secondly, a critical awareness is required of the energy that is either put into imposing, maintaining or deconstructing the structures, as such energy rightly or more appropriately is needed in creating or transforming the structures into serving the best interests of the oppressed, which serves wider society as it is a project for humanity (Freire 1970). In this, however, the oppressors (colonisers) may have difficulty in transcending the limitations of their ideological, theoretical and experiential boundaries; they simply may have no desire to transcend them for a multitude of reasons. For instance,

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3 This is the process that I embarked upon in the critical reflection of Aboriginal youth homelessness (Chapter 2) and in the examination of traditional Aboriginal occupation sites to develop cultural sensitivity (Chapter 4).
perceived loss of power, privileges, benefits and so on that they ‘rightfully’ claim as being theirs and not for others, as obtained under colonisation.

Unlocking and moving beyond seemingly intractable problems – the oppression of Aboriginal peoples – requires courage from all parties; the courage to admit uncertainty and seek coherence and wisdom through dialogue to explore what change is possible. It implies and requires sincerity and respect from the dialogue partners (Freire 1992). If such conversations, where one’s beliefs and assumptions are at least temporarily suspended (Senge 1990), are not conducted then marginalised Aboriginal peoples will continue to experience oppression, and the likely disintegration of their complex cultures. As expressed by some research participants, sites of Aboriginal desperation in Australia must come to an end. Desmond Tutu (2004:118), Nobel Laureate, said: ‘Inevitably it is when people sit down and talk that desperation ends.’ I concur with the participants and Tutu, and suggest that cross-cultural awareness and ameliorative action needs to be part of any transformative process.

7.2.2 Complex cultural heritage

Aboriginal peoples have survived for thousands of years based on relatively stable, common, shared and fundamental organisational principles (see, e.g., Malinowski 1963; Elkin 1979; Hiatt 1996; Broome 2001). These include: the Dreaming handed down through the generations; interpreting changes in their environmental conditions – land, fauna and flora; changing their natural environment (e.g., burning to allow ease of hunting) and responding to changes in their environment (e.g., seasonal variations); and, living on their homelands and growing in their spiritual, cultural, economic, social and family (kinship) practices – what can be classed as their knowledge and organisational systems (i.e., how they consciously organise themselves to live).

Therefore, Aboriginal life can be organisationally described as a network of complex, cultural and adaptive human activity systems (HASs). It can be seen though that their way of life, on the whole, was relatively stable (Broome 2001), therefore not being over-sensitive to change. Their HASs could be described as having the properties or characteristics of balance or equilibrium. As Elkin (1979:31) suggests, ‘instead of exploiting it [their environment] they adapted themselves to and reached an
equilibrium with it’. Broome (2001:19) says: ‘There was change in Aboriginal society, but continuity was valued above change’. They were adaptors to, not imposers on or over, their world. They were mainly a part of their environment, not the controllers of it. These notions tend to be profoundly alien to the European way of colonial and post-colonial existence. This knowledge is usually submerged in colonialism (Freire 1970), and mostly overlooked when designing specific organisations or programs for Aboriginal peoples. This is why imposed organisational design has often failed: ‘because their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality’ (ibid:94) without seeking the views of oppressed (Aboriginal) people.

The initial contact with Western European human activity systems produced an immediate local perturbation (e.g., the introduced disease of smallpox) which became a cumulative effect, resulting in widespread destruction of Aboriginal peoples traditional way of life across Australia. There was though a correlation of magnitude depending on proximity to the spread of colonial peoples throughout Australia. Thus an externally imposed change, at the time Captain Cook planted the English flag on Australian soil in 1770 and incorrectly claiming *terra nullius* – ‘land of no one’ – (see Stanner 1968), has subsequently had a profound impact on this group of relatively stable cultures. Interestingly, Cook’s instructions included the directive to look for a large land mass that was believed to exist west of New Zealand and develop friendly relations with its inhabitants. That is:

You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the name of the King of Great Britain; or, if you find the Country uninhabited take Possession for His Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors. (Beaglehole cited in Hiatt 1996:17)

Cook neither sought nor obtained such consent (Stanner 1968; Hiatt 1996). What started as a minor incursion on Gamaraigal (Sydney) land (Broome 2001), gradually spread out through the nation to reach and adversely impact on all Aboriginal peoples, as noted above. Hiatt (1996:103) indicates that after only fifty years of British settlement, ‘the Aboriginal tribes of Sydney area were virtually extinct’. The decimation of a number of Aboriginal groups (see, e.g., Broome 2001) has not led to a complete cultural extinction of their ways – the legacy of their ancestors lives on in
their descendants, including the children of Aboriginal and European genealogy. Though perhaps in a modified way as traditional knowledge-holders (Elders) became increasingly wary of passing on their sacred knowledge to the uninitiated (Broome 2001). In many cases, traditional language was suppressed under orders from the colonial ‘authorities’. Evidently, some authority figures experienced a ‘loss of power’ when Aboriginal people conversed in their traditional language. An Indigenous friend of mine tells the story of being severely disciplined, as a child, by her grandmother for speaking in her people’s first language. Apparently, the grandmother still feared reprisals. Sensitive design lessons are evident; traditional Aboriginal knowledges and practices transcend time and imposed change. Respectful consideration of the research participants’ aspirations of an incorporation of Aboriginal complex cultural heritage into HAYS is required.

7.2.3 Contemporary self-organisation

As noted above, in many respects Aboriginal cultures changed little, until Western European people mainly (initially) from England, Ireland Scotland and Wales settled in Australia, commencing 217 years ago. In 1788, when Captain Phillip arrived to be the governor of the new settlement in Sydney, the Union Jack was raised once again, which stands as a lasting symbol of destruction by alien forces, laws and customs to Aboriginal peoples. It would have been impossible to predict the extent of this initial incursion, but as time and the colonisers marched on impact evidence of this change was emerging – some saw it, some ignored it. For example, Stanner (1968) said after visiting a remote tribe of Aboriginal people in 1932 ravaged by poverty and exploited by European interests, the authorities knew what was going on, but ignored it by ‘turning a blind eye’. However, Stanner does indicate that while no one approved of the situation, it was only devoted mission societies that were attempting to remedy the situation. In essence, Aboriginal peoples were largely powerless to exert reversionary influences on the imposed changes. Sadly, they were not considered to be citizens in their own country until 1967. These examples make up the fractal story of colonisation.

However, it should be noted that traditional knowledge and culture might be subject to ‘memes mutation’. Dawkins (1986, 2004) indicates that replicated units of
cultural inheritance (memes) are transmitted through teaching and imitation. Therefore, it could be argued that cultural practices are potentiality subject to distortion, through the senders and/or receivers of information, passed between individuals and across generations and thus may gradually mutate through time and space. This recognises the distinct possibility of knowledge and/or culture transmission, application and practice drifts. It also recognises the possibility of conscious, adaptive memes mutation. As memes are subject to mutation, such as unintended miscommunication or learning errors, the importance of traditional ‘knowledge-holders’ is evident in cultures that seek to preserve and maintain their traditions. It is also evident, therefore, that cultures which are subjected to invasion will experience externally driven memes’ mutation. So the ability to preserve traditional memes through time and space is thus diminished, or at least under constant mutative pressure by dominant cultures. It is in such a complex space that knowledge-holders or power elites seek to maintain control and order of their culture (mostly for good intentions), which may have served them well, as in the case of Australian Aborigines, but the external forces may be so great that the invaded culture may eventually implode, or at least assimilate. Alternatively, a protracted political battle may ensue around, for example, identity, rights and resources.

Aboriginal cultures may have been unwittingly subjected to varying degrees of mutative pressure, but most, if not all, Aboriginal peoples have been affected by colonisation in some way. Two examples discussed in this thesis spring to mind immediately: removal from their lands, and the removal of children from their families. Now, we can recognise the destructive process of colonisation on Aboriginal cultures. Have we yet recognised the lasting effects of colonisation on their organisational life and entities? In recent history, government officials sought to ‘do good’ and remove Aboriginal children from what they considered to be inappropriate living conditions. It is now clear that such a policy was ill developed, lacking any real consideration of the complexity of Aboriginal kinship and family systems of childcare. It is evident that there was in operation a ‘white’ interpretation of what constituted stable and unstable care systems. The removal policy failed miserably, literally, as those in power failed to recognise a different system of social organisation.
to that of the one they had been socialised into and apparently accepted as being best for not only themselves, but also for Aboriginal peoples.

This scenario portrays a lack of sensitivity to a human activity system that had existed for many generations; one that was intimately connected through land and kinship laws. Neither Aboriginal aggression nor passivity seemed to be able to withstand the tsunamis and avalanches of colonial invasion. In this context, the benefits go to the colonisers – the acquisition of land with its resources for exploitation, development and recreation. New cultures and organisations replace existing ones – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Aboriginal peoples may adopt the systems of ‘white’ organisation for their purposes – in many respects these mutated systems display, at first glance, the structural form and characteristics of Western European entities. A deeper analysis of HAYS as a case study reveals, however, that there might be more traditional practices of conducting business in operation, or at least a strong desire to do so as this research found.

What sort of fit exists between the surface and depth structures of Aboriginal organisational life? Can traditional cultural notions and practices be incorporated into more contemporary organisational forms? Are Aboriginal organisations in need of re-design? How might Aboriginal aspirations, rights, responsibilities and welfare be dealt with in our institutions? Designers of Aboriginal organisations, such as HAYS, have an opportunity to seriously consider these questions. This is an ethical issue that Prozesky (2003:4) laid before us when he said, ‘contact with the cultures and values of others and with powerful new ideas have impacted on traditional codes of behaviour’. Prozesky goes on to suggest that some people still hold to their traditional moral laws, others are not sure who and what to follow, and some wonder whether it is best for them to make their own decisions. A moral malaise has generated and resulted in Aboriginal peoples experiencing a cultural continuum of diverse practices.

Today, it is possible to recognise an Aboriginal cultural continuum from traditionally oriented practices through to modernist (contemporary) oriented practices. How should the HAYS designers respond to this scenario? One way is to listen to the ‘fractal voices’ of the past and present people speaking in this thesis. The ‘voices’ are calling for modern Aboriginal self-determination and self-management. A more creative response could be to consider the incorporation of traditional memes.
into contemporary contexts, as was inferred by some research participants, which can be expressed as *contemporary self-organisation*.

### 7.2.4 Re-claiming culture and identity

It has been suggested by some research participants that taking responsibility for problems within Aboriginal communities rests with Aboriginal peoples themselves. In this struggle for well-being and justice it has also been suggested that Aboriginal young people become involved – this could therefore be described as a ‘whole of community’ justice approach. A further step is to suggest that this becomes an Aboriginal nation-wide justice approach. In my view, it is in co-ordinated local, state and national action that change becomes more possible. In this process, one’s sense of heritage, culture and identity is (re)forged[^4] – it creates a sense of existential purpose, belonging and connectedness. As one participant said: ‘It is making a public statement of who you are’. This can be expressed as *re-claiming culture and identity*.

The process of stating or re-claiming one’s suppressed ancestral identity can be seen as an act of liberation towards freedom and justice. Freire (1970:44) in his classic text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, suggests that the great task of the oppressed (colonised), in liberating themselves, is also to ‘liberate their oppressors [colonisers] as well’. Freire asserts that this is necessary as the oppressors cannot find ‘the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves’ (ibid:44). If this is true, the Aboriginal peoples in Australia have an enormous responsibility requiring what history would record as one of the greatest and most generous acts of humanity. Aboriginal peoples would need to teach Westernised Australians how to understand and practice nurturance of our spiritual, physical and human environments – their practices of reverence for the gift of life, self-sufficiency, self-organisation, reciprocity and relatively harmonious human affairs. There could be a shared and collective reversion to traditional Aboriginal cultures’ most noble forms of family and social organisation. If this is desired, then the HAYS designers are charged with the responsibility of designing and developing its services along the pathways of these principles.

In some cases, Aboriginal Elders would need to (re)train their own people in traditional laws, customs and practices. In this process, an opportunity emerges for an

[^4]: I make this statement cautiously, but with the authority as narrator of inquiry participants’ expressed aspirations. I recognise my ‘white’ position in this statement.
examination of how the oppressed have become entwined and influenced by the oppressor’s cultures and systems. However, there is a danger that traditional knowledge holders become ‘cultural enforcers’, an imposition that one participant suggested HAYS should avoid. To do so, requires a critical awareness of how their cultures in the first place were oppressed. I have attempted such an open dialogical space – a conscientization process (Freire 1970) \(^5\) – by asking all research participants what they consider to be the meaning of home and homelessness and the causes of Aboriginal youth homelessness. It is through the verbalised expression of their constructs of oppression that they have become more aware of their situation and so can reflect on their further responses and actions. This shows that it is vital to facilitate dialogue in a safe ‘open space’ to allow emergence of meaning for reflection and shared, wise action. This is a collective process and it is the designers’ responsibility to listen to the Aboriginal people’s truth. In this process, Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people are naming and claiming their cultures and identities.

Through such a process information becomes available to participants and designers as they collaboratively transform HAYS into the organisation they want it to be – they have information and the freedom to design HAYS in a way that they believe will best meet the needs of young people. Such communicative action (Habermas 1990) makes visible to the designers and stakeholders their own and others aspirations for critical analysis, sense-making and action-taking. Of course, these aspirations contain the filtered distortions of humanity – how can they not. Making these visible promotes humility and the development of trust (Woog, Levick and Knox 2004), as people risk revealing their humanity. Therefore, the design and development process becomes a shared space of reality. Involving Aboriginal people and their youth in the design process mitigates against past organisational design failures of not including these people in the process. As the HAYS designers include non-Aboriginal people, through such conversational engagement these people are being liberated from their own imposed Westernised and internalised cultural constructs of how organisations should be configured. Theoretically, they are letting go of the controls that bind them and consequently any controls that they impose over their Aboriginal co-designers. In this context, Aboriginal rights, responsibilities and

\(^5\) ‘Conscientization’ is Freire’s concept of learning to perceive political, social and economic contradictions and taking action against the oppressive elements of this reality.
welfare provision emerge as issues for design consideration. Designers need to facilitate such a discussion at local organisational levels, though in the context of wider political, social and economic conditions and processes.

7.2.5 Self-generating and self-sustaining existence

A number of research participants spoke about the devastating impact of passive welfare on Aboriginal communities and families, and the need for a reversion to traditional economic practices. Would a return to traditional ways imply a separation from government welfare entitlements, benefits and support? After all, an awareness of pre-colonial Aboriginal existence highlights that people survived by local self-organisation and adaptation, as through communing, hunting and gathering generally within the precinct of their territory. This can be described as a local self-generating and self-sustaining existence.

A critical observation here reveals that such social and economic well-being was based on Aboriginal peoples link with their lands – their source of life in its fullest sense. The forced displacement and alienation from their lands, their source of welfare and well-being, has profoundly re-shaped their existence. Freire (1970) implies that in such a structure of domination, oppressed people may become resigned to it and are therefore somewhat inhibited from seeking justice – they may be fearful of further oppression. There are Aboriginal activists who of course speak up, but they are entangled in a complex web of competing interests. For instance, the desire to preserve traditional ways, the desire to attract modern resources for their people’s aspirations and well-being, the desire for justice, the desire to be recognised as the initial occupants of Australia, and so on. These desires can be encapsulated in the notion of Aboriginal rights. What national Aboriginal consensus exists on the form of these rights? What about their responsibilities?

Aboriginal people speak and write passionately and rationally about the project of Aboriginal cultural, social and economic justice in Australia. Behrendt (2003:179) calls for a transformation in Australia’s legal and political institutions to offer fairer and improved rights, protections, opportunities and inclusion for Indigenous peoples, leading to the ‘creation of institutions that benefit all members of Australian society’. Dodson (2003) argues strongly for the right of a people to pursue their own cultural,
social and economic development, which is enshrined in international law\(^6\) and prominent in international Indigenous struggles. There are other visible activists and numerous local people who are engaged in forms of activism that is less visible, but nonetheless who provide leadership in Aboriginal affairs. For example, by invitation I am involved in a local (Mount Druitt) Aboriginal self-organising initiative to establish a model of leadership and governance of Aboriginal affairs (see Appendix 10 – Draft Terms of Reference for Durali). The aim of the initiative is for the local people to identify their needs and aspirations and develop strategies to meet these needs and aspirations – a form of local dialogue and action to promote well-being.

Aboriginal people are taking action at all scales of focus: local, state, national and international. However in this process, how are non-Aboriginal people coming to terms with their past and present role in the oppression of Aboriginal peoples? Behrendt (2003:5) suggests that it is ‘easier for [non-Indigenous] Australians to see the context and legacies of conflicts in other countries rather than in their own’. She refers to the ‘politics of guilt’ as being a way to ‘distance Australians from their past’; meaning it is easier to be critical of other countries’ colonial atrocities than in a people’s own country. This prevents coherent understanding of the injustices meted out on Aboriginal peoples. There is a convenient denial of localised Aboriginal sovereignty, together with their sophisticated religious, cultural, social and economic existence and practices. One form of purging the guilt, following the destruction of their way of life, is for a benevolent form of welfare – where Aboriginal people are granted rights and entitlements to certain social benefits. This ‘act of kindness’ can be described as practical reconciliation. It is necessary ‘in breaking the cycle of poverty by injecting funds into areas of need’ (ibid:9). HAYS is a service that benefits from the welfare model of reconciliation. However, ‘white’ institutions may retain ownership and power over traditional Aboriginal lands, such as the tract of land that HAYS is situated on.

A second process in dealing with socio-economic disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians is to consider a rights framework that focuses on altering the institutions that continue the colonisation process (ibid). In this model, Behrendt speaks not only for equality, but argues for special equality of Aboriginal

\(^6\) For example, Dodson cites the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.

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people in the light of their situation under a policy shift ‘away from welfare mentality’ (ibid:9). A third process is that Aboriginal people take local responsibility for their rights and welfare, a view suggested in Chapter 6. In this view Aboriginal people would still engage with the political, social and economic processes in Australia to advocate for and acquire rights and resources required to preserve their local cultural structures. In this process they are also acquiring resources for the development of their present and future social and economic well-being. They become involved in designing and developing their own self-generating and self-sustaining structures and organisations.

A radical position for non-Aboriginal designers is to stand in solidarity with local Aboriginal peoples (with their permission) and work alongside and with them as they design and/or transform their local organisations into the forms, structures and institutions they wish them to be. True solidarity is found in this praxis of love where sentiment and words become action (Freire 1970). To truly engage with Aboriginal peoples as equals, and recognise that they are capable of organising and conducting their own affairs, is to really come to terms with the essence of their freedom, as well as the freedom of non-Aboriginal people in Australia. It is accepting the concept of Aboriginal self-determination and self-management so strongly expressed by the research participants, based on their local aspirations and knowledge of youth needs.

7.2.6 Local knowledge and learning

The design and development aspirations of local Aboriginal communities, particularly of young people, can be captured through a research informed process. Such research can be elicited from local knowledge and learning. The participants in this doctoral research clearly called for their views to be considered and addressed in the design and development of HAYS, indicating that HAYS needs to create a safe and empowering place for homeless Aboriginal youth. This implicates communication between the design parties as they continue to construct HAYS’ philosophies, goals, processes, services, evaluation and feedback mechanisms. Fundamentally, the designers should be engaging with the local Aboriginal community to ascertain and instil its members’ aspirations under a considered, authentic and agreed process.
In my view, Aboriginal people have had their aspirations ignored for too long. Their authentic sense of agency and identity has been oppressed. Their interaction around the symbolic and real attractors that have meaning for them have been divided and perhaps operated at less than visible perspectives. The liberating project of making their local aspirations visible and incorporating them into a service is a powerful and empowering process of celebrating their agency and identity. This informs the development of themselves (their agency) and HAYS (organisational agency) as an entity based on local Aboriginal ‘ways of being, knowing and doing’. A considered approach requires that local Aboriginal people, researchers, designers, government administrators and funders come together and transform the local community through catalytic organisations such as HAYS. HAYS acts to create community conversations, organisation and unity to facilitate ‘whole of community’ involvement in its affairs and caring for its youth. In this process local leaders emerge to take their place in continuing the Aboriginal liberation project. This is a learning project towards shared consciousness of their reality, grounded in the spatial dimensions of the past, present and future.

Learning about the transformation project occurs in the process of coherent dialogue between the HAYS designers and the community. The participants are equipped to critically explore and consider development options of relevance to the local Aboriginal community. In this dynamic process, the designers research, model and present their design findings to a range of internal and external people for new insight, testing, verification and revision. The multiple constructions, perceptions and realities are captured and analysed for the HAYS design and development iterations. The emergent learning, from analysing the responses, transforms into shared design knowledge, in turn expanding a shared consciousness of local Aboriginal issues – not only issues of Aboriginal youth homelessness, but also wider issues that contextualise the situation and needs of local youth.

Consequently, designers are better placed to make decisions about what holistic processes and services should be developed and provided by HAYS. There is a responsible move away from ‘blind compliance’ with imposed SAAP models to service models that are respectful and tailored to meet the identified needs of the community, including its youth. Therefore, the local community learns to trust HAYS.
and HAYS learns to trust its community – authentic Aboriginal reciprocity would emerge in such a relationship. Strengthened by this relationship, the community comes around HAYS and develops a sense of ownership, keeping a positive watching brief on its activities. Community people seek to take a leadership role in its affairs, which is moving with the trajectory of the HAYS goal of becoming an Aboriginal self-determined and governed entity. The next step is to either design its new legal auspice entity or transfer its operations to an existing Aboriginal organisation. However, at this stage caution is needed, as the design process never really ceases if an organisation is truly responsive to its community. The handover of HAYS to its new auspice should not be seen as the end of its designers’ responsibility. On the contrary, they have a responsibility, as partners in the liberation of Aboriginal peoples, to maintain a supportive role in the new organisation’s activities in their local area.

Emerging from this local knowledge and learning process to date, drawn from the research participants’ views, is the concept of transforming HAYS into a ‘centre of learning’ for Aboriginal culture, education, employment, support, and youth empowerment to equip them as future leaders of their peoples. Its philosophy, as ‘a learning ground’, could be to design and incorporate a holistic approach to promote the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of the local Aboriginal community. Thus the ‘centre’ is established in the present, but with recourse to past traditional culture, recognising that the future culture is evolving and becoming a place of and for the local people. In a sense, its designers would be contemporary prophets drawing on lessons from the past and present – making these dialogically visible – and stating to the community and governments what is needed, and therefore what should be done to empower and liberate Aboriginal peoples. As Freire (1970:85) writes: ‘A deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend their situation as an historical reality susceptible [to] transformation.’ That is, the ‘centre’ becomes the local people’s catalytic organisation of change; an organisation of the community’s consciousness. HAYS as it potentially transforms into such a ‘centre’ will be, however, subject to further design and development iterations to accommodate the expanding and changing consciousness and reality of the people it serves. The next section further discusses the development of such an organisation.
7.3 Mount Druitt Aboriginal Homeland Centre (MDAHC)

7.3.1 A gathering place

HAYS is a powerful attractant to the young people interviewed in this research. The findings clearly indicate that they are drawn to it for activities, learning, celebrations, relationships, empowerment and mutual support. As one young person said: ‘HAYS [acts/becomes] as a gathering place’. The designers should take the implications of this aspiration seriously. Without being expressly stated, these young people are suggesting that HAYS is acting as a traditional place where Aboriginal peoples express themselves in relationship to their land, groups and families. Other participants were more explicit in their aspirations; they wanted their community people, including youth and children, to gather at HAYS. A number of participants expressed a desire to get the young people involved in a safe place away, for example, from drugs and alcohol. Participants have a desire for HAYS to act as a community development project that aims to restore homeless youth with their families and communities.

Numerous participants spoke about involving young people, their families and their communities in education and employment activities at HAYS. As one participant said: ‘Being a gathering point for Aboriginal interest groups ... Aboriginal programs could meet there to generate solutions to common problems’. In summary, HAYS was seen as potentially becoming a central program of Aboriginal cultural, community and family development. In this process, positive role models, mentors and peer support people would have a purpose and presence at HAYS in contributing to the empowerment of youth in their spiritual, cultural and identity formation. Thus, HAYS would act as a ‘modern-day tribal ground’, which in essence is a learning centre where every member of the community has a role to play in developing, managing and sustaining their community and organisations.

One participant insightfully asked, when considering if we had no youth homelessness: ‘What would that world look like then? What would Mount Druitt look like and how would Aboriginal kids or what would Aboriginal kids look like that were no longer homeless?’ One possibility has been expressed by the research participants in their call for a return to traditional culture, with HAYS taking the form of the modern-day tribal ground or a contemporary homeland, which could be based on...
traditional notions as identified in this thesis. That is, HAYS becomes the **Mount Druitt Aboriginal Homeland Centre**; a concept developed from this research and in partnership with HAYS staff and young people. MDAHC is a model that holistically addresses Aboriginal youth homelessness. The following section outlines this model.

### 7.3.2 The MDAHC model

As the research proceeded, preliminary findings and models were provided to the HAYS design team for consideration. In a HAYS planning meeting held late June 2005, I presented the MDAHC concept based on the preliminary research findings. The design group endorsed the concept. MDAHC is based on the philosophy of the local Aboriginal community, wider-society and all levels of government sharing responsibility for nurturing Aboriginal youth. It recognises that all parties have certain rights and responsibilities to create and promote an environment that cares for the young people. This partnership approach requires individuals, communities, families, businesses and governments to work together. In this, the MDAHC concept is based on: the recognition, acceptance, promotion and practice of Aboriginal cultures and affairs; and, Aboriginal self-determination, self-organisation, knowledge systems and local leadership. The model requires that all parties commit to these principles.

The goals of MDAHC are:

1. To become an Aboriginal ‘gathering place’ that promotes the spiritual, cultural and identity empowerment of Aboriginal young people.
2. To become a ‘spare room’ of the Aboriginal community that cares for and promotes the well-being of at-risk/homeless Aboriginal young people.
3. To become a ‘voice’ for Aboriginal young people and a service that helps them discover their own ‘voice(s)’.
4. To become a service that assists Aboriginal young people to position themselves in Aboriginal cultural and community development.

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7 I acknowledge the contribution of Winsome Matthews, Shondelle Bolt and Margaret Leonard in initially discussing and developing this model from preliminary research findings that I presented to them. In particular, Winsome Matthews significantly expanded the MDAHC concept, from an Aboriginal person’s perspective, to promote its visibility and acceptance by local and wider Aboriginal audiences.

8 The concept of the ‘spare room’ of the community emerged during an interview with a research participant.
To achieve these goals, it is proposed that equitable representation of people from the Aboriginal community be drawn from the following groups: Elders, young people, children, women, men and families. To govern MDAHC, Leaders of Affairs (or their advocates) are drawn from each represented grouping as depicted in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: MDAHC leadership and governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Leaders of Affairs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Project manager (elected by Elders’ Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders</td>
<td>Elders council/self-representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>Aboriginal Community Youth Justice Group, advocate or self-representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Advocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Self-representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Self-representation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Issues and needs would be identified from the perspective of people (groups) and/or their advocates, relevant literature on Aboriginal affairs, and research (including this thesis) for incorporation into the Homeland Centre. It is envisaged that MDAHC would become an incorporated entity – thus meeting the originally proposed self-determined service aim (see Chapter 5) – auspicing and administering projects such as cultural empowerment, language and kinship, education, employment, and SAAP (continuum) services.

Resources for MDAHC would be drawn from the inputs of the local Aboriginal community, local Aboriginal knowledge, SAAP and other funding sources, and other support agencies, which enable the initiative to operate. To ensure that MDAHC is adaptive, information would be sought and obtained from the represented Aboriginal groups, support agencies (non-government and government) to inform the ongoing design, development and delivery of processes and services that best meet the needs of Aboriginal youth and their communities. At a minimum, the support services would include advocacy (national, state and local), early intervention (family work), holistic case management (including links to identity, ‘place’, family and community) and SAAP services. For example, the SAAP component would include a residential unit – the ‘spare room’ of community concept – and non-residential outreach and ongoing support.
Evaluation systems would be developed to monitor the MDAHC model and its projects’ outputs and outcomes. For example, measures of efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness would need to be devised. Most importantly, the ultimate measures of efficacy would be agreed upon with the local Aboriginal communities, including their young people. Feedback systems would be developed to ensure *communicative connectedness* and *communicative action* between all parties, facilitating ongoing dialogue in the design and development of MDAHC with the aim of better meeting the needs of young people and the aspirations of local Aboriginal people. It is recognised that achieving improved arrangements in the affairs of local Aboriginal people will take time.

Interestingly, in regard to the needs of young Aboriginal people living in the Mount Druitt area of Blacktown LGA, the Blacktown City Council identified that this population has particular issues and needs to be addressed, including:

- a general requirement for increased culturally appropriate support services, particularly in the areas of alcohol and other drugs, homelessness support, accommodation for ex-offenders, sport and recreation, and health education
- a refuge for young pregnant women
- an Aboriginal ‘community centre’ possibly with a focus on young people
- an Aboriginal gathering place for meetings and cultural activities
- an Aboriginal Community Consultative group to include youth representation
- a need to investigate the need for the provision of a suitable multi-purpose community centre to provide services such as family support, and services to young people
- an increase in resources and finances for crisis services to meet needs.\(^9\)

The above needs’ information was accessed after the fieldwork and conceptualisation of the MDAHC model was completed in this research. It is therefore evident that similar aspirations have been expressed by local Aboriginal people in two research projects: this thesis and the Council’s earlier needs’ analysis. The MDAHC model clearly addresses the issues and needs expressed in the Council’s findings, which were documented in 2000. It is noteworthy that local people are expressing similar needs in my research conducted some four years later, suggesting that little progress has been achieved in meeting the needs of Aboriginal youth in the area.

\(^9\) These seven needs have been sourced from Blacktown City Council’s *Social Plan – Needs Assessment* (2006a On-line 25 January) prepared by BBC Consulting Planners, November 2000.
In August 2005, the MDAHC concept was presented to the SAAP Information Sub-committee (ISC). Also in August 2005, the model was presented to a group of Aboriginal people who are seeking to design and develop a model of local (Mount Druitt and surrounds) leadership and governance in Aboriginal affairs. The group’s vision is to establish an Aboriginal self-determined local representative model within a framework that recognises the need for Aboriginal rights, responsibilities and well-being. I had the privilege of drafting the terms of reference for this group’s aspirations (see Appendix 10). The open group, known as ‘This Place’ (Durali), aims to identify local Aboriginal ideas, aspirations and needs, and develop strategies to meet those needs. This is to be achieved by working together with people, communities, government and non-government agencies. The Durali initiative commenced independently and after the work being done on MDAHC, but there is clearly a similar and parallel aspiration emerging with the MDAHC model. However, government and community aspirations on Durali are yet to become an actuality. Nonetheless, an exciting opportunity exists to position MDAHC in Durali’s field of activity. MDAHC could become a Durali project.

7.3.3 Local sovereignty

Durali is initially being supported and resourced by the Sydney Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC) under the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC). The Australian Government, after abolishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), now has an agenda of administering Indigenous programs by mainstream agencies under what it describes as a ‘whole-of-government’ approach (DIMIA 2005). ‘The New Arrangements in Indigenous Affairs’ publication specifies that:

Through these new arrangements, the Australian Government is committed to ensuring that funding for Indigenous people from all sources is coordinated and effective, and that Indigenous communities at the local and regional level will have a say in how it is spent. Cooperative working with the States and

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10 The ISC is an advisory committee to the National SAAP Coordination and Development Committee (CAD) on homelessness data, research and information issues. The Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services chairs the ISC.

11 Durali members granted permission to include the ToR for Durali in this thesis on 22 November 2005.
Territories and local government is also critical, given their important role in servicing Indigenous Australians. The new arrangements combine a bottom-up and top-down approach. Leadership, strategy and accountability will be provided at the top of the structure, but the same qualities will be emphasised at the local and regional level in active partnership with Indigenous people. (DIMIA 2005:1)

The publication (ibid) goes on to state that in delivering Indigenous services, the concepts that underpin the new approach include shared responsibility, partnership, regional focus, flexibility, and outcomes. Further, the five principles in the new whole-of-government approach are collaboration, regional need, flexibility, accountability, and leadership. It is evident that MDAHC would figure well in this landscape.

However, whereas the publication (ibid) appears to express a practical reconciliation philosophy, as well as to recognise the right to local Aboriginal self-determination and self-organisation, it is silent on the issue of Aboriginal sovereignty. The present Australian Government sees itself ‘playing a leadership role, working with Indigenous people and through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)’ (ibid:2), under a paradigm of shared responsibility to ‘fix Indigenous problems’ (ibid:1). Indeed, the publication (ibid) is full of noble rhetoric from a senior politician and heads of government departments extolling the virtues and hopes of the new approach. Their ‘voices’ speak of shared responsibility, commitment, generational change, reducing dependency on passive welfare, effective communication, participation, adequate resources, and so on. These ‘voices’ do not speak of the past: the removal of Aboriginal people from their lands and families. There is no statement that recognises that the well-being of Aboriginal peoples has been inextricably linked and related to their traditional homelands. There is no statement of responsibility, guilt or sorrow for these past, yet presently experienced, devastating policies that severed this traditional relationship in many instances.

In my view, Aboriginal peoples of Australia have a justifiable right to special resources and welfare as part of the implementation of the new regime of Aboriginal affairs in Australia. In particular, they have a right to raise questions about their sovereignty. The place of non-Aboriginal peoples in such a discourse is to enter into coherent dialogue with Aboriginal peoples in local, state and national settings. The following section is an idealistic vision for an Aboriginal self-determined youth
service as a model of local sovereignty – which I will refer to as MDAHC – and a substantive theory of Aboriginal organisational design and development.

### 7.4 Coherent Dialogue: A Substantive Theory

#### 7.4.1 An idealistic vision

The central exploratory question in this thesis is: *How should a service for homeless Aboriginal youth be designed and developed?* In this thesis, I have suggested that the way to design and develop an Aboriginal community service organisation is through a deeper (than present) form of communicative connectedness and action: *coherent dialogue*. The dialogue between design stakeholders occurs in a constant dialectic of their emergent differences and similarities for comparison and sense-making, decision-making and action-taking. It is within this process that the aspirations of Aboriginal people, such as those ‘voiced’ in this thesis, can be consciously (re)validated and (re)authenticated for considered (re)invigoration into their organisations. Habermas’s (1990) theory of moral consciousness and communicative action and Freire’s (1970) theory of dialogics provide a powerful framework in which to position an idealistic vision of stakeholders collaboratively (and I suggest more profoundly) designing and developing an Aboriginal self-determined service such as MDAHC. Drawing firstly on Habermas’s and then Freire’s theories, and integrating these theories with my research analysis and interpretations, I outline a five-stage process of coherent dialogue that has the potential to build MDAHC.

1. **Perspective taking**

   Habermas’s (1990) theory of moral consciousness suggests that people should move beyond their individual perspectives into the perspectives of others in coming to reasoned agreements of fairness for all parties in, for example, questions of justice. This as McCarthy (1990:vii) writes, ‘shifts the frame of reference from solitary [Kant’s view], reflecting moral consciousness to the community of moral subjects [people] in dialogue [Habermas’s view]’. In other words, an individual person or

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12 See Appendix 11 for an outline of Freire’s dialogical theory (from my interpretation) applied to the colonisation of Aboriginal peoples in Australia. The Appendix summarises and briefly discusses the characteristic actions of the oppressor and responses of the oppressed (in Tables 7.2 – 7.5 and Figures 7.1 & 7.2); the historical and modern context that the design and development of HAYS is situated within.
group should not determine a social justice norm. In the case of HAYS, an individual person or group should not determine how it is to be designed and developed. Rather, norms of perspective-taking and claims-making should be progressively discussed and agreed between all relevant parties. Further, such discourse should be publicly (ibid) and visibly played out. Healthy and robust discourse promotes movement from communicative connectedness to communicative action where

actors are prepared to harmonize their plans of action through internal means, committing themselves to pursuing their goals only on the condition of an agreement—one that already exists or one to be negotiated—about definitions of the situation and prospective outcomes. (Habermas 1990:134)

In this process, understanding is forged when parties genuinely seek to converse and listen, rather than strategically positioning or manipulating each other for their own ends or goals. Authentic agreement can be achieved through mutual truth, honesty and integrity. To this end, however, the individual parties may need to initially conduct their own internal discussions and form reasoned agreements of fairness for presentation and negotiation with the other party(s). For example, in the case of local Aboriginal peoples, their ‘common good’ questions to be addressed could be:

- What issues need to be addressed for our present and future well-being?
- Similarly, what issues need to be addressed for the present and future well-being of our young people?
- What unifying principles bind us together in order for us to act in solidarity and continue with our involvement in projects like HAYS?
- How can we achieve our collective goals?

In addressing such questions, a pedagogical project would need to be implemented, given the oppression experienced by Aboriginal peoples under colonisation.

Freire (1970:54) says there are two stages in the pedagogy of oppressed people, such as Australian Aborigines. First, oppressed people make visible the oppression and take action to transform their situation. Second, once the oppression is made visible, the transformation extends beyond the oppressed; liberation becomes the responsibility of the oppressors as well. The project therefore includes the pedagogy of the oppressor, requiring a rejection of any remnant oppressive colonial ideology. A de-colonisation of symbols and language that shifts the frame of reference from the
dominator group’s hegemonic power is discussed and instituted. As Freire (1992:67) suggests, ‘the re-creation of language, is part of the possible dream’ of changing the world.\(^{13}\)

Out of this hope and the praxis of thoughts, awareness, words and action (communicative connectedness and action) is the potential of a renewed or new sovereignty and culture (that does not replace traditional Aboriginal cultures). A culture that allows and embraces sub-cultural diversity. This cultural pluralism celebrates traditional forms of Aboriginal culture and knowledge for it to be translated and transferred into contemporary organisational settings; an urban organisational setting in the case of MDAHC. The opportunity to maintain, return to or adopt traditional forms of complex, adaptive human activity systems (as organisation) therefore becomes a choice that local Aboriginal communities may make – a form of freedom, a form of self-determination – to self-organise, govern and manage at a local level.

Fractally, this freedom can be replicated at all scales of focus – local, state and national, even globally if this is an aspiration of the world’s Aboriginal peoples. In this suggestion, the democratic process of collective decision-making becomes an imperative. However, there are further questions to be addressed. For instance:

- Which people decide?
- How do these people decide?
- What structures need to be (re)established to facilitate movement in such a project?
- How are local, state, national, global representation processes of participation achieved?

The answers to these questions belong with the Aboriginal peoples initially in the first stage of the liberation project. Non-Aboriginal people may then enter the dialogue, by invitation, which creates another series of similar questions to be addressed under

\(^{13}\) In Chapter 3, I suggested that people derive meaning through symbols, particularly through language and observations – the theory of symbolic interactionism. It is partially through the meanings we derive from our communication and interaction with other people and our communities that we come to be the persons we are. And as also suggested in Chapter 3, it is possible that meaning, knowledge and/or systems can be collectively re-constructed or re-shaped/changed when they are found to be problematic or inadequate in appropriately responding to a social issue like homelessness. Therefore, ameliorative action can be taken, such as re-designing an organisation or creating a new organisation to better respond to a social problem.
coherent dialogue. Drawing further on Freire’s theory of dialogics, I continue to develop the idealistic vision of MDAHC through the process of coherent dialogue as follows.

2. Co-operation
The different stakeholder groups continue to meet in a spirit of co-operation and dialogue, as part of HAYS’s transformation process to MDAHC. Through dialogue, issues of concern (from all parties) emerge and become visible for further dialogue and action. Such unveiling is ‘opened’ by and from the perspective of each party’s reality (again it is not assumed). This unveiling process has a fractal like trajectory – it begins with local dialogue and has the potential to spread to state then national realms and then reverberates back to the local realm. That is, lessons from the local design and development process are transmitted to wider audiences for comment and feedback. Subsequent information from the wider sources can be considered for incorporation into the local MDAHC model.

3. Unity
As the MDAHC project leaders maintain communication and encourage unity with local people, this leads to increased trust and affirmed leadership. Leaders dedicate themselves to untiring efforts for unity with and understanding of local people. Community people are encouraged by the leaders to come around MDAHC, support it and gather in solidarity. In this process the people are able to express their views such as the option of (re)instilling traditional notions of culture that promote their ‘sense of place’ and identity – who they are (or at least wish to be), as some participants expressed in this research. This process is not about adhering or binding the Aboriginal peoples into conformity, rather it is to free them from an unjust past, present and future reality and allow them to (re)experience and share their existential attractors.

4. Organisation
Organisation of people around the MDAHC project requires concrete places and entities for gathering and discussion. The praxis of ideas and actions, to come alive and to survive, requires resources, physical places and infrastructure. Conceptual
attractors of Aboriginal sovereignty, justice, peace, cultural reversion, well-being, and so on require organisational structures for gathering and discussion to promote action and change that demonstrates that such hopes (attractors) can be achieved in existential reality. At present, the HAYS project with its location, land, buildings and resources has the capacity to transform into such an organisation (MDAHC) of hope and reality.

MDAHC may come to be seen as an authentic entity that allows gathering, culture, dialogue, and activities that preserve and instil the symbolic and real attractors of Aboriginality at the local level. As people move in other and wider spheres of activity, the authenticated individuals (Freire 1970) influence others at wider and wider scales of engagement. People involved in MDAHC become catalytic agents of reality, hope and change within Aboriginal Australia. In some ways MDAHC becomes a resource to other Aboriginal organisations and regions, as people migrate in and out of MDAHC’s fields of activity – returning to their homelands with hope and ideas of change that they have seen converted into actions of liberation – they have been part of this actuality. ‘Resource one person, resource their family, resource their local community, resource their society’ is a statement that I often heard mentioned by HAYS Aboriginal staff.

In this vision, we could envisage MDAHC becoming more than an entity of localness. It is an organisation of the Australian Aborigines. It is for the young people, yes, but also for their local people and extended families that live outside Mount Druitt. Therefore MDAHC is a fractal organisation and fractal organiser of liberation, justice and support. Thus MDAHC becomes a ‘knowledge and learning centre’. Again, however, MDAHC is an organisation of the people, not an imposing organisation and therefore its leaders/designers would converse with and seek to incorporate the aspirations of the community that MDAHC serves. Its leaders would stay in coherent dialogue with their own people. The authority for MDAHC to operate and act is granted from the local people; not governments, funding bodies or administrators. Its legitimacy is not constituted just under law, but primarily under the will of its local people. MDAHC becomes the Aboriginal people’s catalytic organisation of transformation towards local sovereignty.
5. Organisational synthesis

Potentially, an organisational synthesis of re-combined traditional local self-organisation and cultural beliefs, customs and practices emerges into a ‘complex whole’ to constitute MDAHC. In part, this synthetic form is produced from cultural action. Freire (1970) says:

Cultural action is always a systematic and deliberate form of action which operates upon the social structure, either with the objective of preserving that structure or of transforming it. As a form of deliberate and systematic action, all cultural action has its theory which determines its ends and thereby defines its methods. Cultural action either serves domination (consciously or unconsciously) or it serves the liberation of men and women. As these dialectically opposed types of cultural action operate in and upon the social structure, they create dialectical relations of permanence and change. (p179)

As noted by Freire, cultural action can either serve the interests of the oppressor or the oppressed. The act of colonisation in Australia has deconstructed the fabric of Aboriginal cultures, with varying degrees of magnitude. Re-claiming culture, seeks re-integration of traditional ways into contemporary Aboriginal organisations that give life and meaning to Aboriginal people. This project acts as an attractor of hope, dialogue and action towards justice, self-determination and self-organisation of local Aboriginal people. The culture(s) that they wish to (re)create and the reforms needed to current legal, political, social and economic structures that prohibit authentic expression of their Aboriginality are discussed through coherent dialogue. People come around MDAHC not as invaders, but as respectful people open to learning about and working with Aboriginal peoples.

The project of organisational synthesis allows Aboriginal customs and practices to be re-incorporated (with conscious inclusion) into the religious, legal, political, social and economic structures of their existence that subsist independently of, but as part of, Australian society without this society’s anti-dialogical vestiges manifest within the Aboriginal organisational synthesis. The emergent themes from my thesis are elements of a local organisational synthesis that could be included in the MDAHC project. However, whereas this thesis is based on an original inquiry, the ideas and creativity for such an initiative to some extent already exist with Aboriginal people. This thesis may though have contributed to their heightened consciousness-raising by asking strategic questions that promote reflection on sub-conscious and conscious
thoughts and feelings, but not yet fully visible to the participants – they may be still fuzzy.

The MDAHC vision may incorporate the aspirations of other Aboriginal people. It need not be confined to local people – as other people from other areas may have ideas and experiences that can contribute to and enrich the local design and development of organisations such as MDAHC. At times, local leaders and people benefit from aligning with the greater aspirations of their nation’s people. For example, national agendas of change that positively influence local aspirations (such as the ICC initiative above). At times, this may mean a sacrifice of local aspirations in the service of more national aspirations in the project of organisational synthesis. This opens up the possibility of a holistic synthesis at local, state and national levels – and perhaps a global organisational Aboriginal synthesis. That is, fractal organisation operating at all scales and levels in the service of Aboriginal identity, freedom, liberation – the authentic expression of their cultures alive in their organisations.

7.4.2 Design and development propositions
This idealistic vision, as outlined above, can be seen as a theory of and for Aboriginal people – not a theory imposed on these people. It is a complex (whole) theory of human connectivity, communication, aspirations and action – an Aboriginal self-governed, self-organised, self-determined and self-managed human activity system. It is a theory constructed from the ‘voices’ in this thesis encapsulated in an idealistic vision of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal designers creating ‘a modern-day tribal ground’ called the Mount Druitt Aboriginal Homeland Centre. I now outline design and developed propositions contained within the substantive theory.

The term ‘theory’ refers to a set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship and connectedness, which together form a ‘complex whole’ that can be used to make sense of and explain phenomena (see Chapter 3). Further, inferences may be extracted from the theory that have the power to influence the behaviour of the agents within the ‘complex whole’, as well as providing information for decision-making and action-taking. The theory developed in this thesis is a set of coherent propositions specific to a case, a group of people, a place, and timeframe – the Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (as a human activity system) initiative
within its context and attendant systems, agents, design and development interactions, and timeframe. The developed theory can be described as being substantive as it has the property of independence, belonging to the nature and essential parts of the case (HAYS) studied to draw out and form specific propositions.

Whereas this emergent substantive theory is specific to the HAYS case, its contribution to the general study, design and development of Aboriginal organisations should not be overlooked. Indeed, this substantive theory can contribute to more formal theories, as it is grounded in data from Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) people who are responding to a nation-wide phenomenon, that of Aboriginal youth homelessness, albeit within a local context. Therefore, this thesis makes a contribution to theorising about Aboriginal organisational design and development. In offering practical insights into actual events, processes and decisions at play in the HAYS case, the thesis educes lessons for policy-makers, service designers, service deliverers, and communities.

Let me further explain and support these assertions. As a Complexity Theory (CT) informed researcher, I believe that it is possible to see the ‘whole’ while researching and working with its ‘parts’. Theoretically, the part is also a whole and the whole is also a part and so on (fractality). Therefore, I postulate that HAYS is simultaneously a part and a whole of Aboriginal Australia. In this view, HAYS can be seen to contain and convey fractals (similar patterns) of the complex story of Aboriginal Australia from pre-colonial, through colonial, to modern times. In this framework, the emergent substantive theory can be seen as having the capacity to inform general theory that is capable of explaining complex and self-similar phenomenon at increasing scales of focus, and accordingly has the capacity to make more general propositions.

Complexity Theory, as referred to in Chapter 1, describes a set of inter-related theories that share the view that while certain phenomena may appear to be localised or specific, they often form part of a larger interconnected coherent process. Aboriginal people actually form part of a local, yet more coherent national, adaptive and self-organising process. Accordingly, I have used the language of CT to introduce theoretical and metaphysical concepts to make sense of complex issues within the thesis, and build a substantive theory of organisational design and development.
specific to the HAYS case study, yet as demonstrated simultaneously drawing out
generalisations for Aboriginal organisational theory. I now outline my substantive
theory in the form of five critical design and development propositions (CDDPs),
educed from my analysis and cumulative interpretations of the research. Most
importantly, the CDDPs contain and express the ‘voices’ in this thesis.

Proposition 1
Aboriginal peoples have survived for thousands of years based on relatively stable and
common organisational principles. Designers and developers of Aboriginal SAAP
agencies need to understand that such human activity systems, while experiencing
mutation, are still alive in the affairs of modern Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal
knowledges and practices transcend time and imposed change. In a traditional sense,
Aboriginal peoples are intimately connected to their homelands as defined by their
local spirituality, laws, customs, and language boundaries. In pre-colonial times,
whereas Aboriginal peoples may have been banished from their homelands, they
were never ‘homeless’ as spiritually they always ‘returned’ to their places of origin.
Aboriginal homelessness is a post-colonial imposed phenomenon experienced through
the loss of connection to their homelands, cultures, communities and families.

CDDP 1 Aboriginal homelessness should be re-defined as being the loss of
traditional Aboriginal sovereignty.

Proposition 2
The traditional Aboriginal notion of ‘home’ is a complex ‘whole’ of local physical
and metaphysical associations including adaptive cultural mores and practices. An
Aboriginal person’s construct of ‘home’ may have been characterised by his/her sense
of spiritual, custodial, identity, connection and belonging in association with a
particular place. There is an apparent lack of attention given to the traditional (and
contemporary) concept of Aboriginal ‘home’ in the design and development of their
SAAP organisations.

CDDP 2 Conceptualising an Aboriginal ‘sense of home’ should take into
account the complex local Aboriginal notions of ‘home’, being mindful
of the contemporaneously divergent and shifting character of ‘home’.
Proposition 3
The development and implementation of a national plan against Aboriginal homelessness is required, facilitated between Aboriginal communities and their homeless people, governments, businesses, peak bodies, service providers, and researchers. National, state and local policy development, strategic planning and support responses to homeless Aboriginal youth should take into account that SAAP is one component of a necessary ‘whole of community, whole of government’ programmatic response to Aboriginal youth homelessness.

CDDP 3 A local Aboriginal SAAP organisation and services’ system should form component parts of a ‘whole of community, whole of government’ plan and response in alleviating the homelessness of Aboriginal young people.

Proposition 4
The ideal system of Aboriginal service provision is a ‘whole of family, whole of community’ philosophy and approach where the ‘homeless’ and ‘non-homeless’ gather, thus creating a community of inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness. This is a more traditional form of participation, belonging and connectedness. An inclusive system promotes, builds and maintains learning, training and skills development for well-being. Aboriginal SAAP service systems and organisations require enhanced human and financial resources to effectively achieve this goal. Any local services’ system for homeless Aboriginal youth should be designed, developed and resourced based on the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. Therefore, appropriate resources and support are required for Aboriginal communities (not just funding for SAAP agencies), recognising that placement of a young person in a standard SAAP agency is a last resort support option. Aboriginal SAAP support systems and services should be governed, managed and delivered with the direct involvement of local Aboriginal people.

CDDP 4 A local Aboriginal SAAP service organisation should be designed and developed with recourse to the principles of traditional local self-
Proposition 5
There is an abundant corpus of SAAP and homelessness research literature, indicating that there is a relatively robust homelessness discourse in Australia. In addition, there is a growing body of research focusing on Aboriginal homelessness. The literature, however, lacks a focus on the design and development of Aboriginal support systems and service organisations. Concerted effort is needed to engage local Aboriginal communities, as this doctoral research has done, to listen and act on their local knowledge and aspirations in the design and development of their SAAP services’ systems and organisations. This requires consultation with and commitment to these communities. The nature of the engagement matters to Aboriginal people.

CDDP 5 Coherent dialogue amongst and with local Aboriginal people is required to determine what ultimately constitutes an appropriate and culturally sensitive local Aboriginal SAAP service organisation.

7.5 Conclusion
My research has shown that Aboriginal homelessness can be described as a loss of traditional sovereignty: the loss of localised self-government, self-organisation, self-determination and self-management. Aboriginal youth homelessness is inextricably bound in this complex issue, requiring holistic ameliorative organisational design and development, and service delivery responses.

It is clear that HAYS, as an interim SAAP service, is an initiative that seeks to innovatively address Aboriginal youth homelessness. It is, theoretically, being designed and developed under a partnership including the NSW Department of Community Services, Marist Youth Care and the local Mount Druitt Aboriginal community. In order to successfully achieve the goal of an autonomous Aboriginal self-determined youth SAAP service, a coherent and high degree of partner communicative connectedness is required, recognising the unique and complex adaptive cultures of Aboriginal peoples. An awareness of the historical and structural conditions of Aboriginal oppression, and the desire to transcend such conditions, will
assist design partners to effectively create an agency in the interests of homeless Aboriginal youth, and their families and communities.

However, traditional cultures are subject to internal mutation and therefore may gradually change through time and space. This recognises the possibility of conscious adaptive mutation. It has been argued that in the case of Australian Aborigines, the externally imposed force of colonisation has largely driven the contemporary mutation of their cultures. Two devastating impact examples are discussed in this thesis: the removal of Aboriginal peoples from their homelands in many cases, and the removal of children from their families now known as ‘the stolen generation’. I have suggested that today, there is an Aboriginal cultural continuum of traditionally oriented practices through to more contemporary constructed practices, based on what are considered to be traditional customs.

I have shown that the initial and progressive acquisition of Aboriginal lands under colonisation – with resources for exploitation, development and recreation – has enormously benefited the colonisers’ descendants. Many Aboriginal people have been removed from their homelands and marginalised, and forced to adapt and compete in ‘white’ systems and organisations. In many respects Aboriginal organisations now display a structural form of ‘white’ organisation. A deeper analysis, as revealed in this thesis, indicates that there are still traditionally oriented practices in place, or at least a strong desire for the reversion to more traditional ways of organising and caring for Aboriginal communities’ members, such as their vulnerable youth. The design of Aboriginal community services’ systems and organisations would be enhanced under a more concerted effort of listening to the ‘voices’ of Aboriginal people.

However, taking responsibility for improving the well-being of Aboriginal peoples is a shared project. Aboriginal peoples can claim or re-claim their suppressed ancestral identities as an act of liberation towards freedom. In doing this, their task is to liberate their internal and external agents of oppression as well. Such a project is about teaching their own people and Westernised Australians how to understand and nurture spiritual and physical environments of human existence. The task of the oppressors is to come to terms with their power, privilege and guilt by listening to and working with Aboriginal peoples in the process of their liberation. In this, there would be a shared and collective reversion to the noblest forms of human existence such as:
spirituality, self-sufficiency, self-organisation, generosity, kindness, reciprocity and so on.

This liberation project requires a deliberate shift away from passive welfare dependency to local self-generating and self-sustaining social and economic development opportunities for Aboriginal people. This project requires an engagement with the political, legal, social and economic processes in Australia to advocate for and acquire rights and resources to preserve Aboriginal cultural, organisational and caring systems. In this, Aboriginal people become involved in designing and developing their own community service organisations. Their aspirations can be captured through a research process that honours local knowledge and the lessons and implications gained from learning about this knowledge for organisational endeavours. This recognises local Aboriginal sovereignty.

This learning project is not necessarily about Aboriginal integration or assimilation into mainstream Australian society. Rather, it is about transforming the institutions and structures that oppress these peoples so they can experience self-organisation and self-determination locally, state-wide and nationally. At a local level, learning about this change agenda occurs in the process of coherent dialogue between, for example, HAYS designers and the local Aboriginal community. Again, the aspirations of these local people should be considered for incorporation into the design and development of HAYS.

Emerging from this thesis is the concept of transforming HAYS into the Mount Druitt Aboriginal Homeland Centre (MDAHC), as a model that encapsulates the research participants’ expressed aspirations. MDAHC is a proposed centre of learning for Aboriginal culture and creativity, education and employment opportunities, family and community development. MDAHC would have a role in supporting, developing and empowering young people to become future leaders of their peoples. It is apparent that the MDAHC model would fit well into the new arrangement of Aboriginal affairs in Australia. However, it remains to be seen how Aboriginal sovereignty and justice will be dealt with, as the new regime appears to be ideologically conservative in that its authors mainly talk about ‘fixing Aboriginal problems’ through service delivery systems, rather than wider structural, institutional and organisational change.
Drawing on Habermas, ideologically driven change by one group should not determine an ameliorative approach to social and economic problems; rather norms of perspective-taking, claims-making and decision-making processes should be discussed and agreed between all relevant parties. Such discourse should be publicly and visibly played out – from communicative connectedness to communicative action. Such discourse shifts from anti-dialogical oppressive action to dialogical action of liberation, as suggested by Freire. MDAHC evolves as a place of gathering for dialogue, culture, activities, and community exchange and support. It is a model that seeks to re-integrate traditional ontologies and practices that give life and meaning to Aboriginal people. I suggest that the MDAHC model has the potential to be replicated in other Aboriginal organisational settings at local, state and national levels.

Design and development processes require coherent dialogue between stakeholders to elicit information on their different histories, cultures, organisational systems, and expectations for consideration, critical analysis and selective incorporation into the structures or systems that they are designing. Coherent conversation is the initial step in dialogue, which carries the notion of developing mutually constructed understanding and shared consciousness. This communicative connectedness then facilitates the development of desired and mutually agreed states of human existence. Concomitantly, a high level of coherence through conversation reduces the oppressive use of power, as human activity is directed toward existential well-being and co-operation.

Coherent dialogue is the overarching process of diverse people coming together, suspending their policy positions and assumptions (as best they can) and discussing issues of relevance and importance to them to make decisions and take actions. As developed in this thesis, it is based on the processes of:

1. Perspective taking
2. Co-operation
3. Unity
4. Organisation
5. Organisational synthesis

In the case of HAYS, it is about its designers and the local Aboriginal communities coming together to critically explore and develop options for its design,
resourcing, development, governance, management, and program delivery in the service of its goal. Thus, through coherent dialogue, the most appropriate options emerge and become visible for selection and action. This has an expectation of all parties building a new and shared understanding, and organisational synthesis such as MDAHC.

In conclusion, the five critical propositions on how HAYS (as it potentiality transforms into MDAHC) should be designed and developed, could be similarly applied to the design and development of other Aboriginal community service organisations, as follows:

1. Aboriginal people’s experiences of colonisation should be re-defined as being the loss of their traditional sovereignty.
2. Conceptualising Aboriginal people’s ‘sense of home’ should take into account their traditional and contemporary notions of ‘home’.
3. Local Aboriginal organisations and services’ systems should form component parts of ‘whole of community, whole of government’ plans and responses in alleviating the problems Aboriginal people experience.
4. Contemporary Aboriginal service organisations should be designed and developed with recourse to the principles of traditional local self-government, self-organisation, self-determination and self-management.
5. Coherent dialogue amongst and with local Aboriginal people is required to determine what ultimately constitutes appropriate and culturally sensitive local community service organisations.
Chapter 8 – Dreaming of a Better World

8.1 Reflections

In this thesis some things are self-evident; others are contiguously circumscribed by boundaries set from literature and data. The reflections that follow in this chapter are my views in terms of personal consciousness-raising and sense-making derived from this thesis. Poignantly, Stake (1995) reflects on the art of case study research and states:

Because it is an exercise in such depth, the [case] study is an opportunity to see what others have not yet seen, to reflect the uniqueness of our own lives, to engage the best of our interpretive powers, and to make, even by its integrity alone, an advocacy for those things we cherish. (p136)

My doctoral research experience, findings and contact with Aboriginal people and places have influenced my emergent ‘interpretative knowing’. My reflections are drawn from this emergent knowing or ‘what I now know’ – my new consciousness.

This knowing has been shaped by my encounter with and impressions from studying and indeed involvement in constructing the complex initiative of Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service. I have come to know and cherish what HAYS symbolises, in its ideal state. I have had the opportunity to communicatively connect with Aboriginal people involved with HAYS whose symbolic interaction comes from a different heritage to that of mine. The HAYS project presents a symbolic and actual opportunity for Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people to ‘come together’ in coherent dialogue to deal with Australia’s colonial past, which has rendered a number of Aboriginal communities homeless – their loss of traditional local sovereignty.

Aboriginal homelessness has been generated and experienced since colonisation. Its contumely form is experienced from Aboriginal generation to generation due to the original and continuous displacement of these peoples, under the cycle of colonial rule, retention of land, power and resources. That is, the original oppressors have transmitted their material legacy to their descendants under the protection of laws alien to the Aboriginal people and thus barring many of them from their homelands. The retention of Aboriginal lands and resources has enabled the oppressors to
capitalise on these assets and acquire further resources, wealth and power, thereby deeply embedding and celebrating their growth of material wealth. The original European colonisers did not seek permission to occupy, take, nor use or share these lands. Instead of sharing ‘ownership’ of the ‘assets’, the oppressors mostly provide ‘philanthropic generosity’ to the very people who were once custodians of the colonised lands. Under this mindset SAAP welfare, as practical reconciliation, becomes a component of the Aboriginal homelessness fix or panacea, but the inequity and inequality gaps continue and may become wider, serving to further marginalise and maintain Aboriginal homelessness.

I believe that SAAP, in its current configuration, is a helpful response to homeless people. However, it is a conservative treatment response in attempting to meet the needs of homeless Aboriginal youth. It fails to address the wider institutional and systemic oppression that Aboriginal peoples experience in Australia. Therefore, organisations and initiatives funded under this program are limited in their capacity to holistically respond to vulnerable Aboriginal youth, their families and communities. On the other hand, it can be reasonably argued that this is not the responsibility of SAAP alone. Indeed, there are other service systems and programmatic responses that provide, or should provide, services to Aboriginal peoples. The various systems need to work together in the interests and well-being of these marginalised people.

The Aboriginal ‘voices’ in this thesis are yearning and calling for their knowledge, customs and aspirations to be heeded – (re)creating an organisational paradigm that instils a sense of physical, metaphysical and cultural place. It would be a place of gathering and belonging imbued with a sense of traditional Aboriginal home in its deepest spiritual and physical states of sacredness, celebration, creativity, community, kinship, learning, occupation, sustenance and shelter. These aspirations of Aboriginal people’s hearts and minds have been given to me to convey in this thesis. They have been added to the contemporary message stick initially handed to the reader in Chapter 1, to carry through this thesis as a reminder of the past, present and future. I have outlined the additional messages in the form of an idealistic vision and substantive theory, containing five propositions (symbols on the message stick) for the design and development of urban Aboriginal community service organisations in Chapter 7, particularly those caring for homeless Aboriginal youth.
8.2 Towards a Critical Consciousness

The substantive theory developed from my doctoral research has been produced within the declared paradigmatic framework (see Chapter 3), influenced and informed by Complexity Theory (see Chapter 1). I recognise that there are diverse perspectives on the nature of reality and ways of constructing reality. Under the constructed paradigm, the research findings indicate that Aboriginal young people in Australia are exposed to, or may be experiencing, the harsh realities of colonisation. Aboriginal young people are increasingly at risk of being cast into an array of different cultures. These contemporary cultures may be in complex contrast with the cultures of their traditional heritage.

Aboriginal people have had a strong sense of their culture and identity, based on their traditional knowledge systems. There have been bonds of connectivity and reciprocity operating within the millennia of their complex, adaptive human activity systems. They may have beliefs, alignments and responsibilities that are neither well recognised nor accommodated by contemporary Western cultural and organisational paradigms. Their cultures have undergone enormous eviscerative processes that have forced survival within and adaptation to Western European imposed cultures and organisational systems.

It is in this mutative process that some Aboriginal people have developed resistance and rebellion, thus attempting to preserve their traditional ways of living. Some have re-invented their existence and developed ways to celebrate their identity. It is from these groups of people – who have embarked on the quest for freedom – as well as the participants in this research, that important lessons can be gained for the design and development of organisations such as HAYS. The MDAHC model and substantive theory developed in this thesis contains such lessons.

I am aware of my own, as well as other individuals, desire for identity, belonging and completeness. Some of us are inhibited in this journey as our spiritual, cultural and organisational reference points have been distorted or destroyed by factors beyond our control. This thesis touches on the struggle of Aboriginal people to claim or re-claim their identity, cultures and organisational existence – their ‘sense of home’ – as their existential essence. This struggle is an act of claiming the future well-
being of their young people. There is a delicate balance for Aboriginal peoples in designing and developing organisations for the present and future well-being of their descendants. Align with mainstream society and they will risk losing their culture and identity. Aggressively advocating and acting to claim sovereignty is a long journey through the distortions of dominance and power; those who oppress may strengthen their grip on the stolen and coveted resources, or tighten their reigns of power.

Aboriginal peoples struggle for freedom, under a justice model of obtaining rights is bound within a brutal past – and a present and probably future context of oppression. In this thesis I have at times used the terms ‘the oppressed’ and ‘the oppressor’. I drew on Freire’s theories of domination and liberation: one group of people exercising unjust power (the oppressor) over another group of people (the oppressed) that seek freedom. This story is an ancient one of humanity’s cruel and distorted existence, but in terms of history it is relatively recent for the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, as it is believed they had enjoyed a relatively harmonious existence up until 217 years ago in Australia.

Can the idealists and dreamers, of which I am one, unite and transform Australia into a place that recognises and institutes the shared sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples? Can people active in the arts, law, community services, public life and so on, take the path of discovery and illumination through research projects and dialogue with Aboriginal people? Can they develop a traditional Aboriginal consciousness? Can we all benefit from such a consciousness, rather than working to make it comply with an overarching hegemonic consciousness?

I believe the transformation is possible if we are willing to alter our desire for and conformity with modern human hegemony. Traditional Aboriginal cosmology (the Dreamtime) has important spiritual, legal and moral lessons for contemporary society. As a citizen, I am deeply humbled and have been influenced by the spirituality, kindness, generosity and love shown to me by Aboriginal peoples I encounter, particularly in my work as a researcher over the past four years. I am, though, deeply saddened that the extremes and excesses of my ‘white’ heritage have had a profound affect and effect on these people. I fear that Aboriginal young peoples are being seductively encouraged to identify with cultures foreign to that of their ancestors. However, my research and experience with the Mount Druitt Aboriginal
community and HAYS provides me with a sense of hope for their future, but can the influence of a Western legacy be transcended in the transformation project?

In my view, the Western mind tends to see things in terms of ‘ownership’, ideologically and ‘theoretically’ using resources to create a better world. In this paradigm, natural resources (including people) are extracted, manufactured and commoditised for sale in the market place. Perhaps one of the most iniquitous and disastrous actions is the move to transfer public assets (an Aboriginal model) into private assets (a Western model) – the continuing process of transferring public resources into privatised resources under Western economic rationalist ideology. In agreement with Leonard (1997:xii), there has been a ‘reckless scramble to institute market economies’. There has been a deliberate capitalist agenda of replacing the more egalitarian social democratic state regime that intervenes in and regulates the recklessness of personal and corporate self-interest over the ‘common good’.

It is in such a paradigm that Aboriginal peoples have lost some of their homelands. It is in such a world that they are being encouraged to take responsibility for their own well-being through their communities and organisations. However, the freedom to really design and develop their organisations is bound within an immoral past and controlling present. For example, legislation, standards, protocols, set outputs and outcomes which are prescribed in social and economic systems and services mainly designed and developed by non-Aboriginal people, driven by government policies and privatised market agendas.

Whilst the rhetoric of privatisation suggests that social and economic liberty is obtained under one’s freedom to enter the market and compete, the reality is that some competitors are more ‘fit’ than others (social Darwinism). They have been able to receive the inherited benefits of the early cycle of resource transmission away from Aboriginal peoples; an action that has built a significant well-established platform of well-being for some of the colonisers and their descendants. Aboriginal people’s platforms – their traditional homelands – may have been taken from them, becoming the ‘property’ of the colonisers and their descendants. What base or platform do urban Aboriginal people really have to develop their collective social and economic well-being? How can they design and develop their organisations for ‘fitness’ in such a landscape? Designers of projects such as HAYS are being confronted by dominant
‘white’ organisational paradigms, from which they are influenced, identify with and are part of. As such, they unconsciously and perhaps at times consciously bring to the design and development process ontological and epistemological positions that may not be well received nor helpful. My own personal reflections have brought this issue into my consciousness for consideration during the research journey. I have observed a process of ‘white’ imposition on the Aboriginal HAYS designers.

In countering such an imposition under the transformation project, a critical consciousness is required – a form of reflexive and reflective thinking about one’s beliefs, motives and expectations. However, it is not easy to re-examine oneself; it is generally easier to examine others. Aboriginal peoples know full well what it is like to be observed, examined, directed, organised and controlled, and then re-examined, re-directed and so on. A radical response to this scenario calls for an end to ‘we know what is best for you’ and a conversion to ‘we trust you, how can we help you?’

This is truly an act of organisational design and development enlightenment towards solidarity. This is an act of searching for new reference points on the ‘map of societal consciousness’. Distant observation is at first acceptable, but soon true solidarity requires movement toward the ethical attractor of working with Aboriginal peoples. It may mean working for Aboriginal peoples, trusting rather than controlling the engagement process and seeking emergence, rather than fixed outcomes. Ultimately, only good can come from this mutuality, and it is an act of faith, not certainty, and it requires developmental time. This association, once established, is ideally maintained as a permanent dialectical relationship.

Such a dynamic response and relationship serves to maintain a mutual intention to never return to the forms of past domination of Aboriginal peoples in Australia. It allows for and promotes a co-operative organisational design and development ethic that incorporates an emerging consciousness of what is in the best interests of these people. This is the praxis of love – the conscience and action of caring. My journey of praxis has iterated between theory and practice, growing into a new awareness of the Aboriginal situation in Australia. My thesis journey is grounded in the struggles of an ever-increasing cycle of knowing and unknowing, of thinking and feeling, of theorising and applying, of deeply aware moments to confused states of consciousness. I am ‘becoming’ through the communion with Aboriginal people. This
‘becoming’ speaks of reciprocity and responsibility to be part of their liberation. It now requires a move beyond the research journey, deeper into action with these people as they (re)create their future. It is a step of transformative action.

Those non-Aboriginal people that consider themselves not to be oppressors may need to develop a critical consciousness of Aboriginal affairs in Australia. To deny there is oppression is to literally deny that Aboriginal lands have been taken, that Aboriginal children were stolen. To ignore the Aboriginal situation in Australia is to accept past and current oppressor practices as being acceptable without critically examining the impact of these practices. To do nothing is also an active acceptance of current affairs and continued dominance by the oppressors. To argue for equal rights, compensation, welfare and so on is noble. To argue, in our local cafes, that the Australian Prime Minister should say sorry for past actions against Aborigines is recognising a terrible colonial history.

I suggest that regret is not enough. It is not praxis where awareness is transformed into critical consciousness that gives life to ameliorative deeds – acts of working with, or at least seeking to work with, the Aboriginal liberation project in Australia. In my vision, this is the responsibility of all Australians. As the colonisers and their descendants have substantially contributed to the social and economic reality of current Aboriginal affairs in Australia, then we can substantially contribute to the re-thinking and re-working of a better future in partnership with Aboriginal peoples, but we need to accept and be led by these peoples in this process.

We may need to develop an Aboriginal consciousness. (Re)creating an Aboriginal consciousness and freedom in Australia should not be about overturning one form of dominance into another oppressive regime. It is rather about critically examining our past and present institutions and organisations and re-thinking ‘the way we do business’. An opportunity exists to create new guidelines – what about a new Australian Constitution that permanently imbeds a place or places for Aboriginal ‘voices’ in our Parliamentary processes of policy and legislative formation? Imagine a citizenry willingness to accept Aboriginal leadership in this country. Perhaps liberation will come when we have an Aboriginal Prime Minister; a real symbol of national Aboriginal reconciliation. Alternatively, imagine an independent Australian Aboriginal nation (Reynolds 1996) with its own Prime Minister. Or perhaps we move
to resolve issues of sovereignty, governance, leadership and well-being at the localised ‘modern-day tribal ground’ (such as the MDAHC model).

Continuing with a local welfare model of reconciliation in Australia has its place, but how should we hear the aspirations of Aboriginal people in determining their needs? How do we effectively engage Aboriginal peoples in this process? I believe the answers to such questions lie in opening up coherent dialogue at local, state and national levels. The multiple realities of dialogue participants are expressed and heard in an open forum of meaning-making, sense-making, decision-making for action-taking towards the attractors of recognised and accepted Aboriginal local, state and national self-determination and self-organisation. This is the process of moving to liberation. This is the process of moving to freedom – diversity of freedom, not just freedom for some – for all to exercise their humanity. ‘Coming home’ to our spiritual and cultural places is freedom. Aboriginal peoples designing and developing their structures and organisations along traditional knowledges and practices is part of this journey.

In this journey, Aboriginal people’s situation should cease to be one that ‘requires fixing’. This rhetoric tends to treat their situation as that of their own making and arrogantly fails to position such targeting within its historical context; it categorises and de-humanises these people into clients in need of psychological and social repair and conformity. Thus, it does not deal with the root causes of their ‘existential malady’. This ‘repair’ mindset continues to fit within colonial and paternalistic ideological oppression of these peoples. Granted, there are risks for those willing to change their minds and enter into coherent dialogue. They may be transformed by the renewal of their minds and hearts. They may risk being criticised by their own people as they break away from, or at least start loosening, the colonial chains of conformity with the comfortable and known (and perhaps unknown) cultures that bind them.

Joining with others and improving society – a society with a renewed conscience – may mean temporarily or permanently leaving behind established relationships, friendships, ‘places’, and resources. It may be a lonely landscape, sparsely populated by those who share the dream, but rich in understanding, communication and purpose. As these people find each other, there will be a union of conscience, hope and action
towards Aboriginal justice. There could be a spiritual, just and compassionate awakening in humanity for a better world. In my view, ignoring the contemporary signs that such an awakening is needed will prove tragic.

As the walkabout guide suggested in Chapter 1: ‘We need to be ready in our hearts for a spiritual awakening and a new song-line to receive the message stick of hope.’ I believe the Mount Druitt Aboriginal Homeland Centre could be a fractal symbol of hope and action that has the capacity to become a new leadership and organisational reality as part of a better world for Aboriginal people, and therefore Australian society.

8.3 In the Meantime

In the meantime, as I finalise this thesis, I pause and reflect on my journey with the people who have been involved in the design and development of HAYS since 1999. The latter part of 2005 at HAYS was tinged with conflict. One of the most inspirational and committed members of the design and development group, the Aboriginal Project Manager, left HAYS following what appear to be unfortunate misunderstandings. Consequently, I am even more convinced of the need for coherent dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Generally speaking, I have learnt that there is a profound and deeply disturbing ignorance of Aboriginal peoples existence and issues in this country; an ignorance of their pre-colonial and post-colonial life that continues today.

When asked by various people – friends, acquaintances, professionals, citizens – what my thesis is about, I told them it is a study on the design and development of an Aboriginal organisation in an urban setting. I was often astounded at the attitudes and theories expounded by some of these people on how to solve the ‘Aboriginal problem’ in Australia. Many of them appeared to be ‘experts’ with solutions. On the other hand, some people were deeply aware of the profound issues to be considered and discussed. Indeed, people with and without sensitivity have been involved in HAYS. For me, in a real way, HAYS is a symbol of the contemporary relationship amongst Aboriginal people, and the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (mainly from colonial ancestry).
Well-intentioned people initially came around the HAYS project to assist. I believe that genuine listening and working together emerged in the service of the project’s goal. However, people move on from their organisations and roles into different positions. At times, they have competing demands to juggle. At times, some people are forced to move on. These things happened at HAYS, and sadly, these people take with them knowledge and history of the project. New people enter the design and development process. Mostly, they have limited knowledge of the project and, perhaps ignorantly, influence the process in unhelpful ways without realising this – good intentions do not necessarily lead to good outcomes. However, this is a snapshot of the complexity of human affairs.

During the conduct of my fieldwork at HAYS numerous exciting initiatives were being implemented. Many young people were coming to HAYS and were being assisted. Unfortunately, after July 2005 things changed: conflict emerged between some people, young people seemed to disappear, the presence of community people declined, and HAYS seemed to revert to a conservative model of service delivery. In other words, it appeared to lose its community development philosophy and practice. It seemed that the very aspirations I heard from research participants had ceased to be the focus of some of the designers and developers. Yes, they endorsed the concept of a ‘modern-day tribal ground’ – ‘a homeland centre’ such as MDAHC – but their decisions and actions did not seem to support their rhetoric. It appeared that the energy was channelled into establishing a residential SAAP service; a service model that participants asked for, but not as the primary service.

Perhaps this is too harsh a criticism, on the other hand, perhaps not. My observation is that some stakeholders did not continue the process of patient design and development conversations. Critically, I realise that this is my constructed perception that other people may not share. In the meantime, a small group of local Aboriginal people have banded together to (re)take charge of the HAYS project and move it towards its goal of becoming an Aboriginal self-determined, governed and managed organisation. My concern is, however, that the trust and goodwill legacy developed over the years between the initial stakeholders may have been extinguished. My plea to the current designers is for them to (re)enter into respectful coherent dialogue with the local Aboriginal community.
I am now faced with pondering my final thesis comments. I recall reading a deeply moving statement made by Emeritus Professor Adolphus Elkin after addressing a group of Aboriginal people about their culture:

They were enthused, yet sad. They realized that they no longer held and cherished the heritage that should have been theirs—that spiritual affinity and communion with their country which had been a spiritual and life-giving bond to their forefathers. Moreover, nothing they did for, or learnt from, the white man took its place. In their hearts they wanted, as many Aborigines everywhere today are wanting, to grasp once again the meaning of life and the richness of thought, which inspired their ancestors. (1979:vi)

I believe Elkin is talking about the love and respect Aboriginal peoples had for their countries and for one another, and it reminds me of Evan Yana Muru’s poem recited on the walkabout (see Chapter 1). I believe the sentiment conveyed by Elkin is similar to that expressed in this thesis: ‘Our people, yearning for a HAYS’ as a ‘modern-day tribal ground’.

In my heart, I hope that the HAYS designers grasp the meaning of traditional Aboriginal life and the richness of thought, love and respect that inspired the ancestors. I hope that any arrogance is stripped away and the non-Aboriginal designers listen to and honour the aspirations of the past and contemporary Aboriginal ‘voices’ that speak in this thesis. I hope that the conveyed symbols conferred in this thesis are notched on and continue to be carried on the contemporary message stick of Aboriginal organisational design and development.

Finally, I am reminded of the words that an Aboriginal woman from Wreck Bay, NSW once said to me in a conversation about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations: ‘We know who loves us and who doesn’t.’ In essence, love is not complex. Human affairs and experience may be complex, but love is intuitively simple. Love has the power to reduce the complexity of history to shared experiences of awareness, acceptance, compassion and transformation by the renewal of our minds and hearts. This is a journey of consciousness towards human emancipation.

In the meantime, the journey of certain people working together to establish an Aboriginal self-determined youth SAAP agency, in Mount Druitt, continues as an ‘organisational design and development conversation in action’. Whether HAYS becomes MDAHC remains to be seen.
Epilogue – An Epiphany

The start of something new, the start of something good, the feeling of being fresh and this is where I’ll be understood.

Fighting for our rights, fighting for our mob, now we can finally better ourselves and even create more jobs.

Being around friends and family, experiencing something new; finally finding something else interesting to do.

Being empowered, fighting all the way, looking out for my people every minute of the day.

People of different races coming together bettering ourselves through education, it gives me great pleasure.

Finally getting the chance to do what I know best, making it a better future for all the rest.

This is where the change starts, this is something strong, my young people with the help from me will live very long.¹

Our people, Your people, Black people.

¹ This untitled poem was read to me during the conduct of the research interviewing. Its author, an Aboriginal participant in this research (the same person quoted in the Prologue of this thesis), has granted permission for its inclusion and use by me and is subject to the copyright clause outlined in this thesis.
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Appendices

1. Building a Substantive Theory from HAYS
2. Recruitment Letter
3. Consent Form
4. Observation Protocol for Participants
5. Researcher’s Observation Notes
6. Interview Protocol for Participants
7. Interview Questions for Participants
8. Follow-up Interview Questions for Participants
9. Draft Terms of Reference for HAYS
10. Draft Terms of Reference for Durali
11. Theory of Dialogics and Anti-dialogics
Appendix 1

Building a Substantive Theory from HAYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Activity/reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Getting started              | • An initial, broad research question is defined  
• A priori specification of constructs is outlined, sub-questions or potential categories for exploration, providing a frame of relevance  
• Recognise tentative nature of research questions and constructs; as they may not be relevant to emergent theory  
• Most importantly, theory-building inquiry puts aside existing theory and hypotheses (as much as possible)\(^1\) |
| Selecting the case(s) (sampling) | • Select appropriate population to control extraneous variation, which also assists to set limits for generalising the findings  
• Use of theoretical sampling to recruit crucial HAYS design and development stakeholders |
| Crafting instruments and protocols | • Combination of multiple data collection methods for triangulation, leading to substantiation of constructs and propositions  
• Incorporate quantitative and qualitative methods for synergistic view of evidence |
| Fieldwork                    | • Conduct parallel data collection and analysis as research proceeds  
• Maintain journal or field notes for observations and ongoing commentary on research issues, events and reflections  
• Ask questions of emerging data and notes  
• Make adjustments, such as, modifications to questions and methods for appropriateness and theory development\(^2\) |
| Analysing within-case data   | • Describe case for insight  
• Describe analytical techniques  
• Augment case narrative with displays and tabulated data |
| Searching for case patterns  | • Select categories and look for similarities and differences  
• Incorporate a matrices or cell designs to compare several categories  
• Divide data by source to exploit unique insights and emergence |
| Shaping hypothesis/propositions | • Display the data methods and findings that led to propositional constructs so that the reader can apply their own measures/standards |

\(^1\) That is, theory on organisational design and development of Aboriginal service organisations in the case of this thesis.

\(^2\) For a justification of this technique, see Eisenhardt (2002). Essentially, investigators are trying to understand the case in as much depth as possible and ‘it makes sense to take advantage by altering data collection, if such an alteration is likely to better ground the theory or to provide new theoretical insight’ (p16).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Activity/reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continued</td>
<td>• Constantly compare theory with data – iterating toward a theory that represents the data and constructs yielding an empirically valid theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfolding Literature</td>
<td>• Compare the emergent concepts, constructs and theory with extant literature for two main reasons: (a) contrast with other (conflicting/confirming) findings to test generalisations; (b) the opportunity for juxta-positioning results forces the researcher into more creative thinking, leading to deeper insight into the emerging theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching Closure</td>
<td>• Data analysis and literature reviewing end when marginal improvement in theory development becomes evident – theoretical saturation and emergence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear [Name]

Re: Consent to Participate in Research under a Doctor of Philosophy Degree

I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr Robert Woog and staff from the University of Western Sydney with Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (HAYS) 26 Pringle Road Hebersham NSW 2770.

On [date] your agency, [name], granted permission for me to contact you. On 9 December 2003 the HAYS Reference Group endorsed my research project. I have a copy of the agreement that you can sight.

The main aims of my research project are to:
- Explore the issue of Aboriginal youth homelessness
- Develop knowledge to inform policy and service delivery
- Form a theory to inform culturally sensitive service development
- Contribute to improved organisational responses to homeless Aboriginal youth.

I am seeking your interest and permission to become a participant (as a stakeholder) in my research to conduct a number of open interviews and conversations with you about your experiences and views of Aboriginal youth homelessness and the design and development of HAYS. The interviews (minimum of 2) will last about 1 hour, which will be taped and written up for analysis. Meeting place and time can be flexible to suit your needs.

[1] If the potential respondent was not an employee of an organisation (e.g., a community person or young person) this sentence was omitted from the consent letter.
The information you provide will be treated confidentially and securely stored at UWS. It will not be passed on to any other people in your organisation, unless you want to do this. Individuals will not be identified in the research report.

You have the right to decline or withdraw from the research at any time. No reasons for such a decision will be required nor will you be subject to any adverse consequences as a result of your withdrawal. If you do withdraw from the project, information collected will be used unless you state otherwise. If you don’t want your information used, it will either be returned to you or destroyed.

Participants will not receive any financial or other compensation for their involvement in the study as an inducement. The consent of any person to participate in the research will not be subject to any influence that could impair its voluntary nature. Each participant will be entitled to access interim and final research reports.

In the research, I commit to:
- Honest and open communication
- Not discriminating in the selection of participants on the grounds of race, sex, disability or spiritual beliefs
- Respecting the welfare, rights, beliefs, views, values, customs and culture of all participants
- Reviewing the research design or process if there is a risk of harm to any participants.

If you experience distress as a result of your participation in the research, please contact the researcher or your agency immediately for a referral to a counsellor or support service.

I now invite you to become a participant in this research project. Please complete and return the Consent Form to me. Should you require more information prior to or during the course of the project, I can be contacted as below.

Yours faithfully

Kel Knox
P  4570 1647
M  0408 025 473
E  k.knox@uws.edu.au

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (Tel: 02 4570 1136). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 3

Participant Consent Form

Research Project – [Title]

Re: Consent to Participate in Research

I ___________________________ have read the Information Sheet under the above research project and agree to become a participant in the study.

Organisation ______________________________________

Position ______________________________________

Signature ______________________________________

Date  ______________________________________

Please keep a copy and return original to:

Kel Knox
Project Researcher
C/- UWS
P  4570 1647
M  0408 025 473
E  k.knox@uws.edu.au

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (Tel: 02 4570 1136). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 4

Observation Protocol for Participants

Thank participants for agreeing to allow me to attend the activity/meeting.

My research will explore the design and development process of the HAYS project.

The HAYS Reference Group, including representatives from the Aboriginal community, has granted permission for me to conduct this research.

The main aim of my research project is to contribute to improved responses to homeless Aboriginal youth.

The research procedure will be based on a qualitative approach to information collection and analysis. This is mainly done through interviewing people, but also through observation, then developing and comparing data categories of collected information – a theory emerges from the ‘stories’ of people participating in the research.

The theory, directly related to the issue of Aboriginal youth homelessness, is expressed toward the end of the study and can be in the form of, for example, a narrative statement (story), series of explanations or a framework of ideas (theory).

Discussion in observed activities and specific comments made by people are confidential, in terms of their source.

Aboriginal people and their communities have the right to maintain ownership of ‘traditional knowledge’ discussed in this research project and this will be acknowledged in my work (the thesis).

The information provided will be treated confidentially and securely stored at UWS. It will not be passed on to any other people in your organisation, unless you want to do this. A Research Assistant may be engaged in the project for transcription services and will sign a confidentiality agreement. Individuals will not be identified in the research report.

Each person has the right to request that I cease to observe HAYS meetings/initiatives at any time.

Each person has the right to decline or withdraw from the research at any time. No reasons for such a decision will be required nor will you be subject to any unfavourable consequences if you withdraw.
If you do withdraw from the project, information collected will be used unless you state otherwise. If you don’t want your information used, it will either be returned to you or destroyed.

Your organisation and each participant will be entitled to access the research thesis.

If you experience distress as a result of your participation in the research, please contact me or your agency immediately for a referral to a counsellor or support service.

My presence and observation helps me to gain people’s experience and views of Aboriginal youth homelessness and service design/development, and not about any particular young person.

I will make some notes during the observations.

Some meetings, with agreement, may be taped to ensure I do not miss comments, and for further analysis.

Further observations, if necessary, are a follow-up to see all areas are covered as part of my selected research process.

The expected benefits associated with your participation are:
- the possibility of new, or at least revised, ways of understanding Aboriginal youth homelessness
- information leading to Aboriginal ways of thinking and forming ideas about the design of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services for Aboriginal youth
- development of knowledge to inform SAAP policy and practices
- contribution to the improvement in organisational responses to at risk/homeless Aboriginal youth.

Are there any questions about your participation in the project, before we proceed?

Is it OK for me to be present and observe meetings?
Appendix 5

Researcher’s Observation Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity:</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Present:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity Arrangement:</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6

Interview Protocol for Participants

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my PhD research project. This interview should take about one hour.

The research will explore the design and development process of the HAYS project.

The HAYS Reference Group, including representatives from the Aboriginal community, has granted permission for me to conduct this research.

The main aim of my research project is to contribute to improved responses to homeless Aboriginal youth.

The research procedure will be based on a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. This is mainly done through interviewing people, then developing and comparing data categories of collected information – a theory emerges from the ‘stories’ of people participating in the research.

The theory, directly related to the issue of Aboriginal youth homelessness, is expressed toward the end of the study and can be in the form of, for example, a narrative statement (story), series of explanations or a framework of ideas (theory).

Specific comments you make are confidential, in terms of their source.

Aboriginal participants and their communities have the right to maintain ownership of ‘traditional knowledge’ discussed in this research project and this will be acknowledged in the research report (thesis).

The information you provide will be treated confidentially and securely stored at UWS. It will not be passed on to any other people in your organisation, unless you want to do this. A Research Assistant may be engaged in the project for transcription services and will sign a confidentiality agreement. Individuals will not be identified in the research report.

You have the right to decline or withdraw from the research at any time. No reasons for such a decision will be required nor will you be subject to any unfavourable consequences as a result of your withdrawal.

If you do withdraw from the project, information collected will be used unless you state otherwise. If you don’t want your information used, it will either be returned to you or destroyed.
Your organisation and each participant will be entitled to access the research thesis.

If you experience distress as a result of your participation in the research, please contact me or your agency immediately for a referral to a counsellor or support service.

The interview includes questions and discussion to gain your experience and views of Aboriginal youth homelessness and service design/development, and is not about any particular young person.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions.

I would like to make some notes during the interview.

If acceptable to you, interviews are taped to ensure I do not miss comments, and for subsequent analysis.

Further interviews, if necessary, are a follow-up to see all areas are covered as part of my selected research process.

The expected benefits associated with your participation are:

- the possibility of new, or at least revised, ways of understanding Aboriginal youth homelessness
- information leading to Aboriginal ways of thinking and forming ideas about the design of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services for Aboriginal youth
- development of knowledge to inform SAAP policy and practices
- contribution to the improvement in organisational responses to at risk/homeless Aboriginal youth.

Do you have any questions about your participation in the project before we proceed?

Is it OK to proceed?

If no, can we discuss this further and agree on action?
Appendix 7

Interview Questions for Participant

Start recorder.

Thanks for reading the interview protocol and agreeing to participate in my research project.

I’ll begin the interview by recording some details, and then ask some questions.

Participant……………………………….Interview #……………………………

Date…………………..Time………………..Place………………………………..

Agency………………………………………….……………………………………

Role Title:……………………………………………………………………………

Time in Role……………………………………

Time in Youthwork………………………………

Age Group:
<21  21-29  30-39  40-49  50-59  60+

Sex/Gender  …………………………………

Identify as an Aborigine?……………………

1 This appendix is a minimised version of the actual questionnaire template.
1. What does “home” mean to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Response</th>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
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2. What does “homelessness” mean to you?

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<th>Participant’s Response</th>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
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3. What do you believe creates Aboriginal youth homelessness?

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<th>Participant’s Response</th>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
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4. What do you believe HAYS is trying to achieve?

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<th>Participant’s Response</th>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
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5. How is this happening?

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<tr>
<th>Participant’s Response</th>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
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6. What ideas do you have on how HAYS should be designed and developed?

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<th>Participant’s Response</th>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
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Designing and Developing Aboriginal Service Organisations
7. Is there anything you want to add?

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<tr>
<th>Participant’s Response</th>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
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8. Do you have any questions for me?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Response</th>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Please let me know if you have any concerns about the conduct of this interview. Alternatively, please contact your agency for advice. Thank person for participating in interview.
Appendix 8

Follow-up Interview Questions for Participant

Start recorder.

Thanks for agreeing to meet with me again as a participant in my research project.

I'll begin the interview by recording some details, and then we can continue with our conversation.

Participant………………………………… Interview #………………………………

Date…………………Time…………….Place………………………………………

In the last interview we discussed:
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To cover in this interview:
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As advised in last interview, please let me know if you have any concerns about the conduct of this interview. Alternatively, please contact your agency for advice. Thank person for participating in interview.
Appendix 9

Draft Terms of Reference
for the
Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (HAYS Project)
Aboriginal Reference Group

1. Vision Statement of the Aboriginal Reference Group:

The HAYS Aboriginal Reference Group is a group of Aboriginal people representing different groups committed to the provision and development of high quality accommodation service and program for Aboriginal Youth.

This is achieved through:

• The Aboriginal Reference Group, together with Marist and DoCS, working collaboratively in providing direction and expertise in the development of the service and its programs.
• Participation in consultation, negotiation and collaboration, with Aboriginal communities and other stakeholders based on the principle of self-determination.

2. The Role of the Reference Group:

• The Reference Group will work in partnership with DoCS and Marist in the development for [establishing] a self-determining Aboriginal Youth Accommodation Service.
• To listen and acknowledge the needs of Aboriginal young people.
• To represent and reflect the views of the wider Aboriginal community.

3. Stakeholders:

• Aboriginal Young People
• Aboriginal community
• Aboriginal Reference Group
• Marist
• DoCS.

4. Responsibilities of the Reference Group:

• Strive to ensure effective communication.
• Commitment that communication happens, both to the Reference Group and to its stakeholders.
• To listen to advice and direction from other Stakeholders.
• Ensure relevant issues are brought to the Reference Group.

5. DoCS’ Responsibilities:

• To listen to advice from the Reference Group and follow through on issues.
• Acknowledge the various skills, knowledge and expertise of the Reference Group members.
• To provide secretariat support and resources the Reference Group’s operations.
• To inform the Reference Group of Departmental processes.

6. Marist’s Responsibilities:

• To auspice the interim program.
• To bring to the Reference Group their expertise in SAAP service provision.
• To listen to advise and direction from the Reference Group.
• Acknowledge the various skills, knowledge and expertise of the Reference Group members also to provide appropriate training of reference group members.

7. The Guiding Principles:

• Partnerships
• Equity
• Respect
• Trust – both from within the group and from the community
• Commitment to Reference Group: the purpose of the group and to the completion of task
• Acknowledgment of each other’s work commitments
• Open communication
• Acknowledgment of each other’s skills and knowledge.

8. Reference Group Structure:

• Members will consist of a diverse group of Aboriginal people with a variety of skills and knowledge.
• The Reference Group will consist of 12 Aboriginal people.
• If direct involvement of Aboriginal young people on the Reference Group is not possible, then an alternative avenue of regular consultation and participation from Aboriginal young people will be established.
9. Quorum:

- The quorum for meetings will be -----------------------------

10. Frequency and Venue of Meetings:

- Meetings will be held monthly or more frequently as needed.
- Meeting dates, times and responsibilities to be organised in blocks in advance.
- Meeting venue will be at the HAYS premises - 26 Pringle Street Hebersham.

11. Nominations and Selection Process:

- Nominations for vacancies will be called for through mail out and through networks when vacancies occur.
- Selection onto the Reference Group will be based on knowledge, commitment and skills.

12. Reporting Mechanisms:

- Minutes of meetings to be prepared by Aboriginal Project Manager member and distributed with any supporting documentation by e-mail and hard copy to:
  - All Reference Group members
  - Marist
  - DoCS.
- Reference Group members to use the Aboriginal networks to communicate and to liaise with Aboriginal communities.
- Production and distribution of a ‘newsletter’ to give regular updates of the program to the Aboriginal community.
Appendix 10

“This Place” – Durali
Draft Terms of Reference, August 2005

1 Background
The Sydney Indigenous Co-ordination Centre (ICC), Sydney Regional Council (SRC) and the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) have held community consultations throughout the Sydney region to:
   o provide information on the new arrangements in Indigenous affairs
   o consult with communities about their needs in relation to proposed regional arrangements.¹

Some people from Mt Druitt area requested another meeting to further discuss engaging with community and the new servicing arrangements. On 2 August 2005, a meeting of mainly Aboriginal people was held at the Holy Family Centre in Mt Druitt. At this meeting, those present discussed the possibility of establishing a local model of Aboriginal governance to:
   o engage Aboriginal people at the local level to look at their ideas, aspirations and needs
   o provide oversight and leadership of local Aboriginal affairs
   o support the ongoing development of local Aboriginal agencies, services and programs
   o preserve and promote local Aboriginal cultures and practices.

It was agreed that:
   o the group should continue to meet and discuss representation and governance options
   o the meetings will be open to Aboriginal organisations and peoples

¹ See ‘New Arrangements in Indigenous Affairs’, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, 2005. This publication outlines the new model of Australian Government arrangements for Indigenous affairs. Also see ‘Two Ways Together’, NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 2003. This publication outlines DAA’s 10 year plan to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities.
o those present will encourage other people to participate in the meeting and the initiative
o the ICC and DAA will continue to support and stimulate interest in the initiative
o other Aboriginal community members and/or their organisations have a right to participate.

A number of people met again on 16 August 2005 at Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (HAYS) to:

o continue discussing a model of governance
o explore the development of a terms of reference (ToR)

A number of people met again on 16 August 2005 at Hebersham Aboriginal Youth Service (HAYS) to:

o view a PowerPoint presentation of the Mt Druitt Aboriginal Homeland Centre (MDAHC) as an example of a governance model currently being designed and developed by HAYS in support of at risk and homeless Aboriginal youth
o set future directions for the group’s activities.

It was agreed that:

o a ToR for the group (currently known as “This Place” – TP) be developed
o the ToR should reflect the discussions minuted in the two meetings held so far.

2 Vision Statement

“This Place” (TP) is a group of people committed to designing and developing a local model of leadership and governance of Aboriginal affairs. It seeks to establish a self-determined local representative model within a framework that recognises the need for Aboriginal rights, responsibilities and well-being.

---

2 Vision Statement

“This Place” (TP) is a group of people committed to designing and developing a local model of leadership and governance of Aboriginal affairs. It seeks to establish a self-determined local representative model within a framework that recognises the need for Aboriginal rights, responsibilities and well-being.

---

2 The MDAHC concept has emerged from a collaborative research project between HAYS and Kel Knox, a UWS PhD candidate.
3 Agreed interim name of the initiative.
3  **Purpose Statement**
TP will establish an open group to identify local Aboriginal ideas, aspirations and needs. TP will develop strategies that aim to meet these aspirations and needs. This will be achieved by working together with community people, non-government (including Aboriginal organisations) and government agencies. Participation in consultation, collaboration and negotiation with all entities and people will be based on the principles of Aboriginal self-determination and self-organisation.

4  **Boundaries**
Defining TP’s boundaries is a ‘work in progress’. One of the initial philosophies of TP is to accept and include people who have a connection to the local area, but not just in a physical sense. Therefore, boundaries will be based on a flexible Aboriginal ‘relational principle’. The boundaries will be based on flexible Aboriginal kinship principles.

5  **Roles**
(Insert description of This Place and individual responsibilities)
- TP participants will attend meetings and discuss local ideas, issues and needs for action.
- The ICC will be the main ‘engine’ for co-ordination of Indigenous specific programs in the regions where the new Indigenous arrangements are focused. It will work with local Indigenous communities and negotiate regional and local agreements, effective partnerships and shared responsibilities.
- The DAA will continue its work under *Two Ways Together* to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities under its 10 year plan of helping Aboriginal people to do well in school, having a supportive family, a safe home in a safe community, being healthy and having a valued cultural identity, through the development of better ways to deliver services to these people.
The Australian Government through the ICC and the State Government through DAA will co-operate in the execution of their responsibilities to achieve improved outcomes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the region.

6 Responsibilities
All parties will:
- strive to ensure effective communication
- listen to and respect the views of others
- acknowledge the various knowledges, skills and expertise of others
- contribute to the development of TP's plans
- establish systems to monitor, evaluate and report on TP’s processes and activities
- accept and act on any responsibilities to which they have agreed.

7 Guiding Principles
TP’s guiding principles of operation are based on leadership, partnerships, working together, advocacy, flexibility, accountability, respect and trust. TP will:
- act as a catalyst group representative of the area that endeavours to undertake the development of systems and structures of community consolidation
- act as a catalyst for the community to ‘get organised’
- address the concerns raised by the Aboriginal community
- be a flexible, adaptive and fluid in our undertakings to develop initiatives
- be ‘holistic’ to present and future needs in the community
- frame its activities and actions in a culturally sensitive, appropriate and competent manner
- incorporate a ‘user-friendly’ process to involve young Aboriginal people
- seek help from ‘experts’ if it believes such expertise is not available from anyone involved in its activities.
8 Statement of Practice Values
TP has identified the following broad-based values\(^4\) as necessary for its practice in and with the community:

- commitment to the primary importance of Aboriginal identity and people in society, respecting Aboriginal peoples traditions (this dot point will be reworked for report back at the next meeting)
- commitment to Aboriginal rights, responsibilities and well-being
- protection of the intellectual and cultural property rights of Aboriginal peoples
- commitment to economic and social change to meet recognised needs
- respect the confidentiality of people’s private affairs
- willingness to reflect on one’s own feelings and needs in comparison to the group needs when participating in TP activities (notion of ‘greater good’ over ‘individual good’) – integrity of the group
- willingness to share knowledge and skills with others
- respect and appreciation for individual and group differences
- willingness to persist in efforts on behalf of the community despite possible frustrations
- commitment to a high standard of cultural, community, family, personal and professional conduct.

9 Protocols of Engagement
TP recognises that there are a number of existing Aboriginal services and service systems in place. TP does not wish to duplicate such services, rather support and enhance them by working together to promote the spiritual, cultural and physical well-being of Aboriginal peoples. In this way, everyone concentrates on the same goals identified by local people. Therefore, TP aims to foster a spirit of equality, reciprocity and partnership with and within:

- community peoples

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Designing and Developing Aboriginal Service Organisations

- non-government agencies (including Aboriginal organisations), services and programs
- government entities.

10 **Membership**
- TP seeks to be open and inclusive – ‘the door is always open’.
- Participation is open to people and agencies who are willing to contribute to the purpose of TP.
- TP recognises that ‘being present’ is a form of contribution.
- Aboriginal people from the local district are and will be encouraged to attend and participate in TP meetings and activities.
- TP recognises that people’s contribution and participation will vary depending on their availability and other commitments.

11 **Frequency, Venue and Chairperson of Meetings**
- TP meetings will generally be held every second Tuesday evening (commencing 2 August 2005), or as otherwise agreed, at a time and place agreed to by those present at each meeting.
- Initially, meetings are being held at HAYS, 26 Pringle Road Hebersham.
- People are encouraged to arrive at 5.30 pm for a 6.00 pm start.
- TP participants will decide who will be the Chairperson for each meeting.

12 **Communication**
The ICC will act as the TP secretariat by:
- issuing notices of community meetings to participants, the community and other relevant organisations
- recording and issuing minutes of meetings
- retaining a copy of all TP documents for archival purposes
TP participants will promote and broadcast its activities and encourage Aboriginal people to attend meetings.
13 Feedback

As TP is committed to continuous learning and improvement, it welcomes any feedback on this ToR, and its vision, purpose and activities. This can be provided by:

- attending and speaking at meetings (which is highly valued)
- passing on your comments to an advocate who attends TP meetings.

In particular, TP is always interested to hear and know about:

- What will help people to continue in the initiative?
- What will attract people to the initiative?
- What do you want to see happen in your community?
- How will this be achieved?
- What can you do?
- What do you want to do?
- What are you willing to do?
Appendix 11

Theory of Dialogics and Anti-dialogics

Freire (1970) outlines a matrix of opposing theories of cultural action: *anti-dialogics* as an instrument of oppression, and *dialogics* as a theory of liberation. The theory of *anti-dialogics* is modelled in the following diagram.

**Figure 7.1: Trajectory of oppressive action (anti-dialogical)**

Table 7.2: Invasion and conquest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions of Oppressor</th>
<th>Responses of Oppressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imposition of objectives of the oppressor over the oppressed</td>
<td>Confusion, bewilderment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjugation of the oppressed through non-recognition of their sovereign rights</td>
<td>Resistance to loss of homelands and cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition of new religious, legal, political, cultural, social and economic structures</td>
<td>Commencement of the oppressed losing their religious, cultural, legal, political, social and economic structures/codes, or at least experiencing mutative pressure, leading to the beginning of the oppressed ‘internalising’ the oppressor’s views</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.3: Colonisation, divide and rule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions of Oppressor</th>
<th>Responses of Oppressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divide any collective, unifying action by the oppressed as a way of maintaining power and control</td>
<td>Existential uncertainty and insecurity leads to further unrest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppressors present themselves as ‘righteous’, well-intentioned people, e.g., through the provision of welfare</td>
<td>The creation and beginning of passive welfare dependency and competition for resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppressor calls for ‘harmony’ between oppressed interest/advocacy groups</td>
<td>Competition between oppressed peoples on material aid and other forms of support from the oppressor intensifies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4: Domination and manipulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions of Oppressor</th>
<th>Responses of Oppressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further attempts to have the oppressed conform to oppressor’s objectives</td>
<td>Intensified suppression of the oppressed in the oppressor’s reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestration of ‘pacts’ (agreements) between the dominator and dominated people, including certain rights/support</td>
<td>The oppressor becomes ‘housed’ in the oppressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of oppressed into oppressor’s structures and systems</td>
<td>Mutation of traditional Aboriginal self-organisation into oppressor’s organisational structures and systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of Aboriginal oppressed groups into ‘urban settings’</td>
<td>Emergence of urbanised oppressed groups around oppressor’s attractors (new cultures, employment, education, benefits, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowance of certain oppressed leaders into oppressor’s systems (under certain controls)</td>
<td>Further and growing dependence on the oppressor and the oppressor’s systems may intensify unrest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible use of physical restraint by oppressor to curb any unrest by oppressed</td>
<td>Toxic urban environments create internal/external expression of loss of Aboriginal humanity, breeding further resistance, aggression, discontent, community implosion and explosion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions of Oppressor</td>
<td>Responses of Oppressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invaders penetrate the core cultural context of the oppressed, disrespecting the latter’s potentiality and impose their own culture(s)</td>
<td>Oppressed cultures mutate under the imposed pressure, thus losing traditions; diffused awareness of cultural mores leads to break-down in the existential fabric of the oppressed; new and distorted cultures emerge; delusion about cultural practices due to mutations and distortions; pseudo traditional cultural practices emerge; cultural non-authenticity with diffused cultural duality emerges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further molding to oppressor’s ways</td>
<td>Some of the oppressed adopt the values, standards and goals of the invaders due to alienation or loss of their traditional culture; some question whether there is authentic culture being practiced; some question whether there ever was authentic culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invaders continue with the role as a ‘helping friend’ with the mission to liberate the oppressed people from their ‘ignorance’ and ‘backward’ ways</td>
<td>Some may internalise a ‘sense of inferiority’, desiring to be ‘better’ like the oppressed are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More programs are developed to ‘cast off’ and ‘fix’ the perceived laziness of the oppressed</td>
<td>Extensive dependence on the welfare state, but growing discontent and discomfort with the imposed systems, e.g., employment, education, etc, develops resulting in a heightened consciousness of the need for radical changes – cultural and organisational re-invigoration is considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invaders continue to conduct research on invaded peoples and their cultures, treating them and their artifacts as specimens to be scientifically observed and described – this adds further ‘evidence’ of the need to educate the oppressed into the oppressor’s systems, and it further develops a sense of the oppressor’s ‘superiority’</td>
<td>Some allow oppressor to do thinking for them; others begin to take initiative in critical research and knowledge development – a form of conscientization; others become national, state or local activists; others become involved in their local Aboriginal affairs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is in the intersection of heightened consciousness, born out an awareness of the increasingly and seemingly intractable social implosive and explosive problems,
that some of the oppressors and the oppressed begin to critically question their existence and relationship. Critically aware oppressors begin to question the system that they have been born into and (unconsciously perhaps) maintain. The oppressed see their cultures and people disintegrating. A critical juncture exists here: What do such parties do with their deepening awareness of the situation? Divesting themselves of the ‘privileges’ of colonisation (for both) requires courage, and one’s continued existence becomes uncertain. On the other hand, re-affirmation of and retreat to the privileges is revealing their oppressor allegiance (Freire 1970). In my thesis, I argue that the way forward is through coherent dialogue between these people in a constant dialectic of emergent differences and similarities for comparison and sense-making, decision-making and action-taking towards the re-humanisation of both groups away from the structures of dominance and oppression to shared and co-operative action for the well-being of all peoples.

It is at this juncture that the best from traditional Aboriginal culture can be consciously re-validated and re-authenticated in discussion between the people for re-invigoration into Aboriginal organisations such as HAYS. It is also at this juncture that the best from the oppressor’s cultures can be likewise initiated. Conscious choice of selecting the ‘best’ is an option for whom though? All of society? The Aboriginal community? The local community? How can these propositions be dealt with? Who holds the locus of decision-making power? Perhaps Prozesky’s (2003:118) ethic of global convergence – developing a shared moral conscience – is the answer, which is similar to Habermas’s (1990) position. Freire’s (1992:151) call for ‘oneness in difference’ and ‘unity in diversity’ may overcome humanity’s cruel, at times, treatment of marginalised peoples. Perhaps Jesus of Nazareth has the answer – to be restored to humanity’s Creator. In any scenario, a dialogical space for atheists and secular/religious humanists (as leaders) is required to discuss this and bring forth ‘a way ahead’; developing a moral consciousness towards shared global conscience.

The re-humanisation project becomes one of shifting the pattern of ‘power over’ to ‘power to’ and ‘power for and with others’; commencing with the local community, (not just its leaders) participating in the design, governance, management and service delivery of organisations such as HAYS. It is an organisation ‘belonging’ to the local people. Until Aboriginal people are authentically involved in the design and
development of their self-determined organisations, they will remain largely structures of secondary oppression.\(^1\) The responsibility of the oppressed is to continue ‘holding up the mirror’ and openly seeking dialogue with the oppressor – people from the oppressor groups will join them and collaboratively create the attractors of hope, and the words and actions of change. Equally, there is a case for the oppressed ‘holding up the mirror’ within their own cultures to make visible any dominating practices that inhibit freedom and authentic existence.

Freedom of choice of the oppressed to join their leaders of change is fundamental – not imposed adherence to their agenda. And the leaders must be willing to enter into dialogue with their own people, not only with the oppressor. They need to be prepared to change the trajectory of their agenda and efforts to reflect their people’s aspirations. Trust is the matrix that holds this together and parities maintain a critical awareness of the issues, but trust emerges through coherent dialogue. Here there are two forms of leadership. First, Freire (1970:16) refers to horizontal leadership where revolutionary leaders have the mandate from their people, and the people work alongside them in the liberation project. Second, vertex leadership where the leaders (metaphorically) occupy the vertex of the triangle. That is, they have an occupational mandate, but limited people are sharing the project at this level (either by choice or under-developed conscientization – they have not yet developed a critical perception of oppressive reality). Such leaders adhere to the theory of dialogics (Freire 1970) that promotes action, which has significantly influenced the substantive theory developed in this thesis. It is modelled in the following diagram and process.

**Figure 7.2: Trajectory of action towards liberation (dialogical)**

\[\text{Cooperation} \rightarrow \text{Unity} \rightarrow \text{Organisation} \rightarrow \text{Organisational Synthesis}\]

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\(^{1}\) Primary oppression being the act of invasion and conquest.