



## Evaluation

### **Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons & Community Program**

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### **COMMISSIONED BY THE TORCH PROJECT 2012**

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**Australian Government**

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# 1. Introduction & Context

## a. The Torch Project

The Torch Project is a cross-cultural arts organisation that works in partnership with Victorian communities and individuals from all walks of life. The vision for The Torch Project is to offer a responsive, creative and culturally contextualised applied educational service to Victorian communities sitting on the edge of the mainstream. Their program responses aim to be relational, conversational and driven by collaborative processes. Established and trialed as modes of strengthening and supporting positive exchanges across Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities within Victoria, The Torch values a collective and shared response to redressing disadvantage.

## b. The Social & Political Context

*Indigenous people represent 2.5 per cent of the Australian population; yet constitute 24 per cent of the total prisoner population in Australia. The rate of imprisonment for Indigenous people is 14 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous prisoners (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008).*

Colonisation, the subsequent dispossession of land and culture and the forced removal of generations of Aboriginal children from their families and communities have had a devastating impact on the overall wellbeing of Indigenous Australians (Victorian Department of Justice, 2003). Although there are many factors that contribute to the over-representation of Indigenous people in Australian prisons, the loss of positive identity and connection to culture is central to the problem (Jones, Masters, Griffiths & Moulday, 2002). Existing research has found that imprisonment perpetuates social exclusion and social disadvantage, and does nothing to reduce the alienation of Indigenous people from their culture (Gilbert & Wilson, 2009). In addition, the current and dominant paradigm around Indigenous affairs reduces the autonomy of Aboriginal communities and prevents self-determination. This undermines the role of community elders and family structures and subsequently fuels the cycle of reoffending (Foley, 1999).

The Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA) was established in 2000 to address the inequality experienced by the Koorie community in the Australian criminal justice system and to respond to the issues raised in the final report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (RCIADIC). The AJA aims to ‘minimise Koori over-representation in the criminal justice system by improving accessibility, utilisation and effectiveness of justice-related programs and services in partnership with the Koori community’ (Victorian Department of Justice, 2012).

The AJA (Phase 2) launched in 2006, highlighted the need for stronger and more sustainable approaches to addressing the complex issues associated with over-representation of Koories in the Victorian justice system. More specifically, the report stated that:

- People often return to prison quickly because they have limited options after release
- Family and community bonds serve as protective agents that assist individuals to manage economic, personal and social challenges
- There is a need for targeted approaches that focus on connecting service systems at the local level (Victorian Department of Justice, 2003).

The AJA2 emphasised that the Koorie community must be central to the development and implementation of justice initiatives.

*Regardless of whether the programs are community or government-based, there must be maximum participation by the Koori community if the initiative is to be successful.*

(Victorian Department of Justice, 2012)

The 1995 Australian Institute of Criminology's (AIC) report 'Reintegration of Indigenous Prisoners' advised that future programs should:

- Enhance those elements that appear to make programs effective, such as skill development and education, by making them more directly relevant to the life experiences and circumstances of Indigenous people and their communities
- Make programs more enjoyable and engaging through visual content
- Involve elders and Indigenous facilitators in the development and delivery of programs (Walker & McDonald, 1995).
- Alongside the AJA2 and RCIADIC, several academics have observed that reconnecting people with their culture, particularly through the arts, has a number of positive effects on communities and individuals (Cheng, 2009; Djurichkovic, 2011; Gussak, 2007). Djurichkovic examines the current limited field of literature relating to arts practices within prisons in Australia. She argues that while the merits of prison art programs have not been widely accepted by decision makers within government and corrective services, there are clear benefits to such programs.

In Australia, a number of strategic cultural arts initiatives have been developed to address problems affecting Indigenous prisoners. This includes, but is not exclusive to, the J Block Women of Art Project in Darwin Correctional Centre; The 3CR NAIDOC Week Broadcasts in Victorian Prisons; CORE Aboriginal Cultural Immersion Program in Victorian Prisons; and Greenbush Arts Group in Alice Springs Prison. In addition to this, the 2011 *People We Know – Places We've Been* exhibition, curated by Djon Mundine at Goulburn Regional Art Gallery in N.S.W. saw professional Aboriginal artists mentoring Aboriginal prisoners serving time at Goulburn Correctional Centre. Many of these programs were conducted by Government Departments, with some utilising external artists and program delivery organisations and staff. It is not known if any programs currently exist in Australia with an inside/ outside, vocational arts focus, that are not government initiatives.

Several Victorian prisons have art programs, coordinated by TAFE and other external partners, but these are not run in every prison. Some prisons have no formal art programs. Others have occasional spaces available for painting, and are reliant on levels of prisoner self-motivation, peer learning advice and support, and the enthusiasm of the ALOs and AWOs or other associated program staff.

Rates of expected average Indigenous return to prison recidivism are hard to qualify in Victoria, but a 2007 Corrections Victoria commissioned research paper entitled *Who returns to prison? Patterns of recidivism among prisoners released from custody in Victoria in 2002-03*, (Holland, Ponton & Ross, 2007) indicates a return to prison rates of 20% of Aboriginal adults released within the first 6 months (as a result of re-offending, thus precluding parole breeches). Over a two-year period this figure rises to a 50% return to prison rate, 15.3 % higher than that of non-Indigenous prisoners.

## 2. The Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community Program

### a. Program Rationale

The Torch's Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community (SIAOPC) program was born out of the absence of initiatives that provide support both inside prison and post-release, that exists in the majority of prisons across the state, and that function at the community level.

It is set within the context of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (VAJA) and its focus on the role of culture and cultural identity in the rehabilitative process of Indigenous prisoners. The SIAOPC program accords with research highlighting the significant role arts programs can play in reconnecting prisoners with their culture. With its focus on building sustainable post-release pathways, The Torch hopes to address the disproportionately high rates of Indigenous recidivism by increasing the confidence and participation of prisoners and former prisoners, with the arts industry. There has been a particular focus on generating opportunities for people to foster new networks and to sell find vocational art opportunities to increase levels of legitimate and self generated income.

### b. Program Design

The Torch began working with the Aboriginal prison community in 2010 under the banner of the Yalukit Willam Ngargee Festival. The Torch coordinated an exhibition for the festival entitled *Confined* 2, which featured artworks by emerging Aboriginal artists held in custody in Victoria. On the strength of the exhibition, which launched in January 2010, The Torch approached the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet seeking a funding partnership to aid the design and delivery of a more engaged, developmental cultural program across Victorian prisons, and with ex-prisoners keen to pursue arts career opportunities upon release. The application was partially successful, with triennial funds being granted, providing enough income to confirm a third *Confined* exhibition, which featured Aboriginal artist Brian McKinnon as guest curator.

On the suggestion of the Indigenous Policy and Services Unit (Corrections Victoria), The Torch applied for a Statewide position, under the Attorney General's Proceeds of Crime Act Grant. In early 2011, the Attorney General's Office granted The Torch 18 months pilot funding for a Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community program. As a practising artist with Barkindji lineage and a sound knowledge of the Victorian Aboriginal arts and cultural sectors, Kent Morris was appointed to the Statewide Arts Officer role to work with Indigenous prisoners across Victoria, while also offering peer and network support to artists.

Feedback from a number of Victorian prisons assisted The Torch in the initial design of the program, and how best to apply The Torch's broader action learning approach. The Torch Project believes an action-learning model of trial, reflection and refinement is the key to remaining relevant and responsive to community needs and interests. A flexible and responsive approach aims to allow community collaborators to have varying levels of engagement including the option to join and leave projects as determined by their changing need or life circumstances. From the outset, the program intended to provide flexible delivery in a way that met the changing needs of stakeholders. The Torch explained:

*It had become apparent that many of the prisoners we had established a relationship with through the Confined exhibitions were now released or due to be released. These prisoners were keen to make stay connected to the program and get career support. We chose to be flexible, and go where the demand was.*

In keeping with the recommendations of the AJA and AIC, the project strove to deliver positive, culturally appropriate outcomes that benefit wider regional and metropolitan communities by supporting Aboriginal leadership, project ownership and community wellbeing through the arts. The project aimed to extend positive bridges between prisoners and the wider community and to

intensify the level of cultural maintenance, transfer, promotion and education support for Aboriginal emerging artists in Victorian correctional facilities and upon their release back to community.

In order to achieve this, The Torch worked on giving inmates access to the knowledge and tools to engage in vocational arts activities upon their release from prison. Vital to the project was connecting these individuals to community arts networks and professional arts industry contacts to support their transition back to community life. The Torch began supporting this diversion and prevention initiative because they believe that arts participation is linked to social, cultural and economic benefits for communities. Throughout their 18 months of work, The Torch identified the need to improve support during transition back into the community through the involvement of family and community, and has evolved to increase contact and support for Indigenous prisoners post-release.

### c. Program Components

Working within a community development framework, the Torch's Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community program has worked with Indigenous prisoners across 10 Victorian correctional facilities to develop skills and enhance their arts practices in the following ways:

- Strengthening cultural connection and learning about country as a premise for arts development activities.
- Shifting participants to move beyond the generation of generic work.
- Helping prisoner's gain an understanding of different arms of the contemporary Indigenous arts market and where their work sits within this.
- Supporting post release diversion opportunities including arts mentoring, vocational education, building marketing skills and local exhibition opportunities, coordination of group activities for released artists, and tours of galleries and other Victorian cultural institutes.
- Collaborating with small community arts and cultural programs to value add to outcomes for released artists. This has including encouraging released artists to build their confidence by developing new networks and participating within new creative environments.
- Building an allied network of other support organisations to assist with increasing resources for the prisons component of the program, in particular the Koorie Heritage Trust have been involved in this.
- Organising and collecting artworks from across Victoria to be exhibited in the annual *Confined* exhibition.

The position has joined with other stakeholders to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal offenders. This includes:

- Working in partnership with Victoria Police, Corrections Victoria, and Aboriginal Cooperatives across the State on joint public outcome initiatives.
- Meeting with Corrections staff, being responsive to their program needs, supporting them in their delivery approach where possible, and aiding their awareness of the sector.
- Forming an Indigenous Steering group consisting of Koori artists, Elders, program participant (a former prisoner), Corrections Victoria's Indigenous Policy Unit and post release community support workers (Brosnan Centre) for the program.
- Developing greater arts and cultural resources for access by prisoners, within the prisons.
- Promoting the aims of the program broadly within the sector and being responsive to sector participation requirements when invited by Aboriginal Elders.

### **3. Evaluation**

#### **a. Period of Evaluation**

The evaluation covers the eighteen-month period during which the Federal Attorney General provided funding that allowed for an integrated community position, the Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer, to work across Victorian prisons and into the community. This partnership added value to the annual Confined exhibition that had previously been supported as an annual event by both The City of Port Phillip's Yalukit Willem festival and the Office for the Arts Indigenous Cultural Support Scheme.

#### **b. Evaluation Parameters**

In this 18-month funding period, The Torch's program put into place approaches they thought would address four key objectives established with The Federal Office of the Attorney General. They included:

1. Addressing over-representation
2. Building sustainable post release cultural partnerships
3. Supporting Aboriginal leadership and community wellbeing
4. Intensifying the level of cultural maintenance, transfer, and promotion and education support post release.

Key deliverables of the program are reported on directly to the departments who fund the program, and are not analysed within the context of this evaluation.

Given the research for this evaluation occurred in short time frame, it is certain that that the sector would benefit from a longitudinal study of this dual inside/outside community development approach. Such a study would more comprehensively analyse and provide data of the economic and social benefits on investment this approach would deliver for government and the community.

#### **c. Evaluation Methodologies**

Four groups of people were surveyed and interviewed to evaluate the Torch's program. They included:

- Prisoners involved in the art program whilst serving time (prisoners)
- Emerging artists now released from prison (former prisoners)
- Prison staff involved in the program including Aboriginal Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers (ALOs/AWOS)
- Key stakeholders in the program

This methodology was deemed to be the most effective means to gain a snapshot of the program's effectiveness given the limited resources and time constraints available to the evaluation team.

This program evaluation used qualitative methods to conduct research on the effectiveness of the Torch's program in addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners in the state of Victoria, and its role in helping to reduce the disproportionately high rates of Indigenous incarceration in Australian prisons. The aim of this research was to not only explore the views and opinions of the staff, program participants and key stakeholders, but also to give a voice to all of those involved.

Questions were designed to explore, in greater depth, the effectiveness of The Torch's program in addressing cultural and vocational needs specific to Indigenous prisoners and former prisoners interested in the arts. The evaluation also incorporated a particular focus on what might strengthen the program or subsequent programs in future.

Being a heavily researched population, we wanted to ensure that the prisoners didn't feel as though they were being studied. Therefore, interviews were structured to allow the opportunity to discuss other relevant issues as they arose during the course of interviewing. Questions were also

designed to be open, to illicit a narrative from respondents rather than 'yes/no' answers. Several participants noted that having people come in and listen to their stories was really important for them.

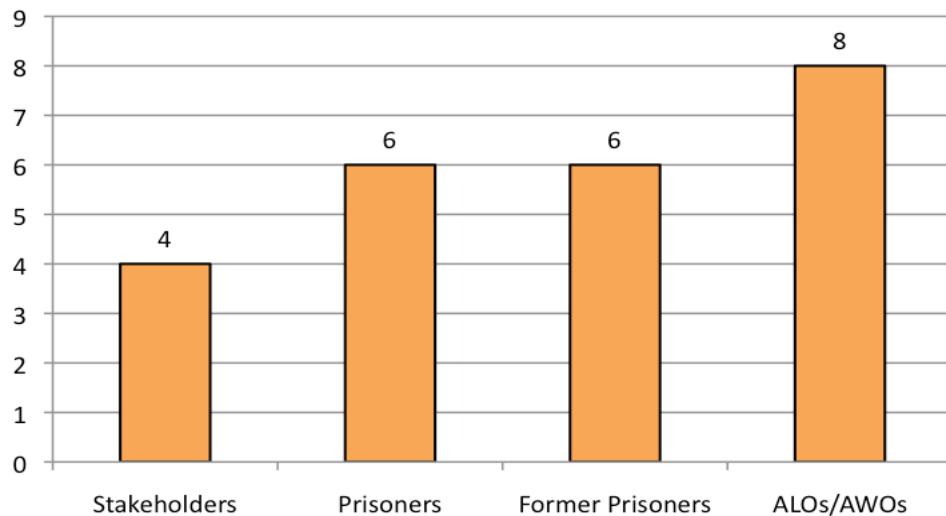
The primary areas of interest for this evaluation included whether or not the program has been effective in:

- Addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners
- Supporting a deeper understanding of arts best practice amongst prisoners, their families and prison program staff
- Increasing prisoners and former prisoners' understanding of vocational arts opportunities
- Supporting Indigenous leadership and community well being through the arts
- Supporting a connection/re-connection to culture amongst prisoners and former-prisoners
- Strengthening participants' art practice

An Aboriginal elder, Aunty Judith 'Jacko' Jackson, accompanied the researcher in two of the three prisons visited. Her involvement in the research process was crucial to the success of many of the interviews. The men seemed particularly at ease when Aunty Jacko was present in the room, and spoke to her easily and openly about their families and background. Having Aunty Jacko's support in the early interview stage was invaluable. Interviews with key stakeholders and prison staff were, with the permission of the interviewees, tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Due to prison security, interviews conducted with prisoners were not tape-recorded. Instead, the interviewer took detailed notes during the interview and recorded powerful quotes verbatim. Interviews addressed a list of relevant themes (see Evaluation Findings), and ranged in length from 15 minutes to 45 minutes. The report also includes quotes from interviews with Torch staff members who have both been involved in the program design and delivery.

#### d. Participants in the Evaluation

**Table 1: Interviewee's**



#### The Prisons

The prisons visited were purposively selected from across the state, with two rural locations (medium security) and one semi-rural location (maximum security).

#### Stakeholders

The Stakeholders consisted of key workers in:

- Post-Release Service Delivery
- Victoria Police
- Corrections Victoria; and
- Contracted Prison Program Delivery (TAFE)

## **Prisoners**

All of the participants interviewed in prison were male. Demographics and details of their sentences and time in prison were not collected, as these were not factors considered appropriate to this stage of evaluation. This is in line with The Torch's focus, which has not been to enquire about people's sentencing, rather to focus on assisting those keen to pursue arts careers and cultural expression opportunities in prison, or upon release, with skills which may enhance their future arts career, vocational or para-professional prospects. Interviews focused on identifying people's opinions on the program, its' impact on their arts practice, cultural knowledge and broader relationship and community engagement.

## **Former Prisoners**

The majority of the former-prisoners interviewed were male, with only one female program participant interviewed. The gender breakdown of our survey sample is similar to that of the overall number of male and female program participants.

## **Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALOs) & Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers (AWOs)**

The majority of the surveys were distributed during one of the monthly Correction Victoria Indigenous and Diversity Unit staff meetings. This was also the forum for the focus group. A number of absentees meant that further surveys were distributed via email to reach those that could not make the meeting. This surveyed sector includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff coming in contact with the program.

### **e. Interview Reach**

Of the 10 ALO's and AWO's in regular contact with the program, 8 were interviewed. Within this group, the sample size reflects the majority of the population, but the same cannot be said for the prisoner and former-prisoner populations. 118 prisoners have actively taken part in this program, and including those inside and released, 12 were interviewed, providing a 10% key participant population snapshot, which was within our goal range.

Time constraints restricted the number of prisons we were able to visit. Of the 10 actively involved in the program, 3 were visited. We visited prisons in regional and urban locations.

Another challenge faced when interviewing prison populations is that the population is inherently transitory, and therefore many of the prisoners who have engaged with the program, had been moved to other prison locations. Those prisoners who participated in the interviews did so on an entirely voluntary basis. Aboriginal Liaison Officers advised us that prisoners become tired of being researched and are often reluctant to participate in interviews. Despite goodwill towards the program, we were also met with disinclination by prisoners wishing to be formally interviewed, within the prisons we visited, thus prisoner responses only represent a limited snapshot of those who have taken part in the program.

Prisoners in general, and Indigenous prisoners in particular, experience economic disadvantage and upon release often live a transient lifestyle and one that involves constant changes to their personal circumstances and accommodation (Weatherburn, Snowball & Hunter, 2008). Consequently, many former-prisoners who had initially expressed an interest in being interviewed for this evaluation were difficult to contact during the designated interview timeframe, as their communication resources (mobile phones etc.) were not always accessible, and some people's whereabouts changed. As a result, we interviewed only those available during the nominated two-week interview period. A number of prisoners have since renewed contact, and given feedback on the impact the program has had on them and their communities. However these did not follow the formal interview structure, and transcripts are not provided. While getting a representative sample of former prisoners faced limitations, it should be acknowledged that this research sought to make contact with as many as possible of those now out of prison voluntarily choosing to actively engage with The Torch.

## f. Data Analysis

The surveys and interviews were analysed using a framework originally developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994) which involves; (i) familiarisation with content; (ii) identifying a thematic framework; (iii) indexing themes; (iv) charting themes; and (v) mapping and interpreting themes. The process also involved analysing The Torch's own progress reports, in order to gain a fuller picture of the program and its development.

Quotes have been used, where necessary, to capture the 'authentic voice' thoughts and opinions of those interviewed. Many of the respondents gave candid and insightful responses to the questions asked. Their language is often powerful, so quotes have been included as much as possible, without overloading the reader. Only infrequent editing occurred, in the interests of confidentiality. At no point have the respondents' intention been changed. Full transcripts are referenced and are included in Appendix.

It should also be noted that the Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALOs) and Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers (AWOs) are often referred to as 'prison staff'. They include staff from private and state managed prisons. Prisoners are referred to as emerging artists and former prisoners are referred to as 'artists' or 'program participants' interchangeably.

## g. Summary of Common Threads

Through prisoner and former prisoner interviews, four key challenges experienced by the offenders came to light:

- Systemic trust and anger issues.
- Experiences of disconnection from their cultural identity
- Estrangement from family and community
- Economic insecurity after being released from prison

Those interviewed saw that The Torch program had been effective in responding to these challenges by engendering:

- An increased sense of well-being and confidence
- New levels of trust that many of the artists had not experienced before
- Opportunities for cultural reconnection
- Pre-release skills and exploration of post-release career opportunities
- Improved participation in other prison programs
- Increased awareness of arts and culture among prison staff and the wider community
- A new level of support with its inside/outside approach
- Better relationships with family and the wider community

Of those who were interviewed through the evaluation, every respondent, without exception, expressed the complimentary value of the program, and the need for the Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community program to be expanded, in order meet strong demand. They wanted more contact, more information, more resources and more materials.

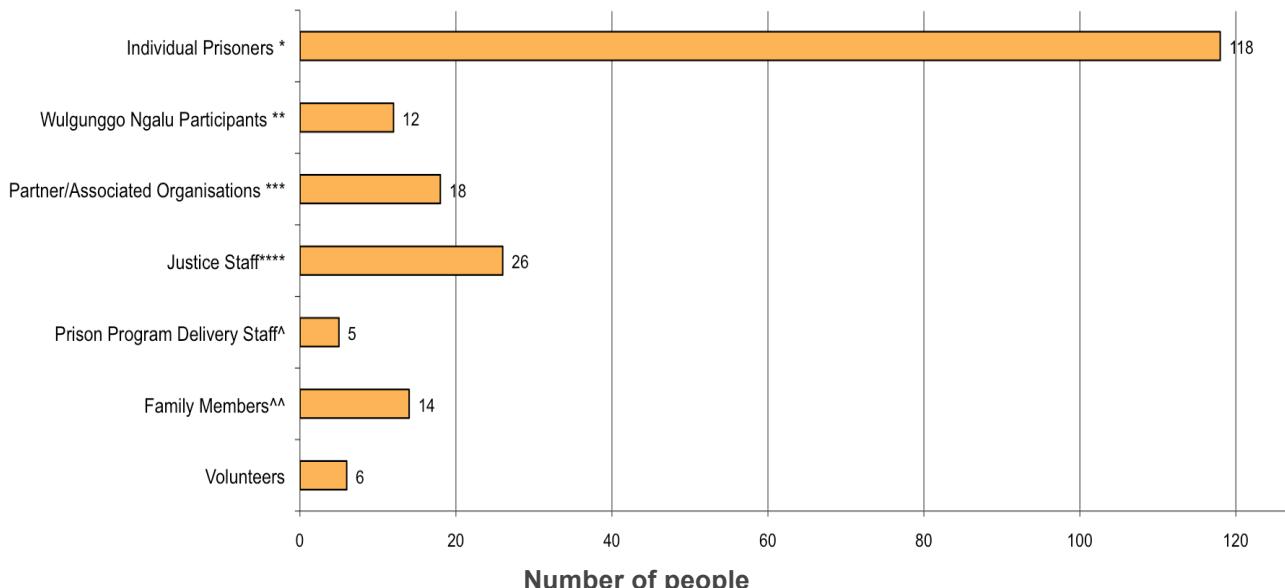
Despite strong moves and changes created through the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, there is still a considerable lack of Indigenous-specific cultural rehabilitation programs and services being delivered by Indigenous people in Victorian prisons. As a community collaboration, the Torch's Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community pilot program has received positive feedback from key stakeholders, prison staff and, perhaps most importantly, from those participants currently in prison, those who have since been released, and their families.

## 4. Evaluation Findings

### a. Number of people involved

This table presents statistics on the number of people involved in the program.

**Table 2: People involved in the program**



Note: \* Across 10 prisons over an 18 month period, includes those recently released

Note: \*\* Community Corrections participants, both at Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place and other related community projects through integrated programs.

Note: \*\*\* Includes Local Government, Aboriginal Cooperatives, Cultural Organisations, TAFEs

Note: \*\*\*\* Represents in prison staff and other members of the Indigenous and Diversity Unit

Note: ^ Represents those employed by other agencies outside of the Department of Justice

Note: ^^ Those actively engaged in the program

Of the 26 prisoners involved in the program that have been in ongoing communication with The Torch since their release, 18 are known not to have returned to prison after being released, 4 are known to have returned to prison on pre-existing charges, with the remaining 2 dying shortly after their release. There are a small number of other emerging artists who engaged with the program who have since been released, but the 26 identified above identifies those who chose to remain engaged in ongoing communication with The Torch since their release.

### b. The Economics

In 2007-2008 \$2.6 billion was spent nationally on adult corrective services. Indigenous adults make up roughly a quarter of all prisoners nationally. It can therefore be estimated that at least one quarter of the entire imprisonment expenditure (\$650 million) is spent imprisoning Indigenous adults each year. From an economic perspective, there are clearly huge benefits if Indigenous imprisonment can be reduced (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2009).

Given the scope of The Torch's program, the cost of running the program in prison and post release is relatively low to the number of Indigenous prisoners reached (118 prisoners).

In considering the impact of Torch's outside support approach, it appears arguable when considering indicators from Corrections Victoria's study into recidivism patterns (*Holland, Ponton, Ross 2007*) that 20% of the released artists would be expected to return to jail on new charges within a 6 month period.

Within the Torch's program, as prisoners returned to the community at different stages, it is difficult to gain a thorough picture, as timelines of prisoner release varied. Based on the snapshot of the 26

prisoners engaging with the Torch, only 2 have returned to jail on new charges. So for every 10 people incarcerated 0.75% reoffended. This compares with current rates of 2 in every 10.

A conservative extrapolation of these figures indicates this program has the capacity to affect a 53% improvement on current recidivism rates. Per annum, the incarceration cost per prisoner is averaged at \$93,932 in Victoria (Corrections Victoria). This figure does not take into account the wider family economic cost burden associated with family members imprisonment, nor the public court costs. This pilot program received the equivalent of \$129,000.00 per annum in funding per annum. The Torch Project has suggested this would need to increase by around 50% to maintain effective levels post release support in tandem with the ongoing prison based work. While a full and accurate economic and social costs and benefits analysis is outside the scope of this evaluation it would seem this program has the ability to deliver economic as well as social returns for Victorians.

Combined with feedback from the interviews, our findings recommend the benefits of the program expanding. Given the outside program focus is just one component of the program, there are clear cost benefits to the public. A future more thorough longitudinal study of the economic indicators would assist in identifying other contributing economic factors (earned income, value of community work etc.), and may assist in better identify a case for this approach.

### c. Issues effecting Indigenous prisoners and former prisoners

This section presents the key findings from the interviews and surveys gathered from prisoners, former-prisoners, stakeholders and prison staff involved in the program. The data has been organised into three sections to provide an overview of relevant issues and challenges affecting prisoners and their identified needs; the ways in which the Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community program has addressed these issues and needs; and recommendations for the future. The responses across all of the interviews were overwhelmingly similar, and so individual participant/stakeholder responses have not been separated by their respective backgrounds.

#### **Challenges**

The following challenges were identified as problematic for the prisoners both before and after release. These themes emerged through most of the interviews, and varied in complexity.

#### **Trust and anger**

Many of the program participants identified that they had issues with trusting people, not only during their time inside but also outside the prison system. This was seen as a factor in their willingness and capacity to explore new opportunities and build networks. One of the participants discussed how a lack of trust in others had prevented him from doing basic things outside. Several participants identified that they felt they had no outlet to express their anger before their involvement in the program. These issues indicate some of the challenges prisoners face in re-establishing themselves back into the community, and the need for programs to help prisoners address these issues in a non-threatening, culturally appropriate way both inside and out of prison.

#### **Disconnection from cultural identity**

Numerous reports have identified that cultural-identity, or lack thereof, is a crucial factor in the disproportionately high rates of Indigenous incarceration and recidivism. As one prison staff worker said:

*It can be argued that this lack of culture or anomie is why the men commit crimes in the first place.*

9.3.8 Participant 8

A number of participants discussed their previous feeling of disconnect to their culture, and the impact they have now come to realise that that had on their own identity and confidence. In one participant's words:

*I haven't been taught traditionally how or what to paint – it's hard to know what to do. Nothing has really been passed down to me.*

9.1.1 Participant 1

Another participant acknowledged that he wished he had learnt more about his country and culture earlier in his life, as he now recognises its significance for his personal identity. Almost all of the prisoners identified the need for more culturally relevant programs, both in prison and upon release, that involve Indigenous community members in the delivery of the program.

### **Estrangement from family and community**

Another theme that emerged throughout the interviews was the sense of isolation the prisoners felt from the world outside. Mulligan et al. (2006) argue that, 'as a mountain of indisputable evidence now indicates, a sense of community belonging is crucial to the maintenance of individual health and wellbeing and, would add to the ability of individuals to deal with change itself' (p. 145). This points to the need for more programs that bridge the social dislocation wrought by the hostility of the prison environment.

*Once you're in prison it's easy to lose contact with people. You can get absorbed in jail culture.*

9.2.3 Participant 3

### **Economic insecurity on released**

*When we get out we're always battling financially... blokes and women crave being stable when they're outside. It's so expensive.*

9.2.5 Participant 5

Across all of the groups interviewed, respondents articulated that financial stability after release is crucial to the success of breaking the cycle of reoffending. Walker and McDonald of the AIC (2011) state that: 'the pursuit of economic self-determination for Indigenous people will greatly assist in solving the crime problems in Indigenous communities and the palpable inequities in rates of imprisonment'.

A stakeholder from the Victorian Police, who collaborated with the program offered:

*I believe if we can give ex-inmates the opportunity to make a living, of course this may reduce repeat offending behaviour. Generally repeat offending is a livelihood issue.*

9.5.3 Participant 3

## d. Findings

### Wellbeing and confidence

Across all of the interviews, the respondents commented on the change in the artists/emerging artists' attitudes. Every prisoner involved in the interviews noted that they felt a significant confidence boost through their participation in the program and the *Confined* exhibitions. As one prisoner remarks:

*It's shown me that I'm not just another black fella drinking in the park, that I can do something positive too. The exhibitions give you hope.*

9.1.5 Participant 5

Another prisoner said:

*It's good to show people that you've got something, you're not just crooks, that you're able to do something positive.*

9.1.3 Participant 3

One former prisoner explained:

*Having someone outside who cared about what we were doing inside was really important. And giving us feedback. And pushing us. It showed they cared. They didn't judge. Having people care about the fellas and take an interest in what they were doing...well... it's given me hope to turn my life around, which I wasn't expecting.*

9.2.6 Participant 6

The prison staff had similar perceptions, noting that the inmates appeared happier, more relaxed and more focused:

*Any challenge that can be placed in front of these men is a positive thing. Overcoming the issues that they have in the prison follows onto the issues that they have in the community. It also has a therapeutic value on their behaviour as they are using their time constructively to create things that they can keep or give to family members. Presenting work that the prisoners know will be viewed by elders in the community and the community itself is a great honour to them.*

9.3.8 Participant 8

Several artists also noted the impact of the program on their state of mind, when they reflected back to their time in prison. One former prisoner said:

*I think the program stopped me from having a nervous breakdown and some of the fellas committing suicide or doing something stupid. Making art in prison helps take their mind off everything, all of the anger...I think Torch saved some lives. They saved a lot.*

9.2.6 Participant 6

In his experience, the program had:

*...played a big role for the boys. Now some of the boys are getting involved with the police in a positive way. What a turn around. (The Project) has made a positive impact. Definitely.*

9.2.6 Participant 6

When asked what impact the program had had on individual prisoners, one staff person noted:

*One of our program participants, who has done several prison sentences over many years, has now established himself in the community for a longer period than he has previously – he has not reoffended.*

9.3.5 Participant 5

## **Trust**

A number of the participants acknowledged that the program had enabled them to confront their aforementioned issues with trust. Several prisoners and former-prisoners attributed this to the personal qualities of The Torch facilitators, Kent Morris and Alison Brash. Identifying the greatest strengths of the program one prisoner said:

*The trust and confidence is huge. My personal demons get the better of me sometimes, and are the biggest threat...Kent had a good way of breaking the wall down. People in jail have a lot of trust issues. His way of communicating was really successful. He's easy going. An honourable fella.*

9.2.3 Participant 3

Of his participation in the program, another former prisoner explained:

*The whole trust thing has been huge. Before, I was sitting back and not trusting people. Look, I've done a lot of time in jail. I was always reluctant to get involved in jail-organised exhibitions – to part with my paintings. A lot of people have been burned. I was really reticent with Kent when I met him as well.*

9.2.5 Participant 5

A key feature of the program has been to build people's confidence in themselves, this has manifested in different ways, as a number of former prisoners explain:

*Developing the relationship with Torch pushed me more with me art for sure. But when I got out, I didn't expect to hear from them ever again. But instead, the constant contact makes me thrive with me art. Hearing from Kent and having people call, and push me on, makes me go hard now.*

9.2.6 Participant 6

## **Reconnection to culture**

Almost all of the respondents noted that the program was unique in that it recognised and promoted Indigenous people's wisdom and knowledge. One Prison staff person explained the program:

*...helps to maintain their connections with the community – in a cultural context. The program assists with ensuring that rehabilitation is not confined to welfare and treatment programs. It is a positive opportunity to increase their understanding of self and facilitates change.*

9.3.5 Participant 5

For a lot of the participants, they had never learnt about their culture or experienced a sense of identity around their culture. When asked what had been the most unexpected change as a result of their involvement in the program, one participant answered:

*I found myself. I got to know who I am through the program. The focus on culture – I'm definitely more positive. I hold my head up high now. It's true, I'm more proud of who I am. And I'm more open. Look people are telling me...they're looking at me and they're saying, 'You're growing mate. Mate you're growing'. I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you.*

9.2.6 Participant 6

### **Pre-release skills & post release future career opportunities**

The VAJA2 (2006) states with regard to the disproportionately high Indigenous prison incarceration numbers that 'much of the over representation is caused by Indigenous social and economic disadvantage' (p. 6). The majority of prisoners we interviewed wanted to pursue art once released, and said that the program had helped them realise that selling art was a realistic alternative to criminal activity. This was a major incentive for many of the prisoners. A number of participants also noted that the program had helped them develop their own unique style, and recognised the importance of this in being competitive within a contemporary Australian art setting.

Responses were mixed as to whether the program had equipped them with necessary knowledge and skills around exhibiting and marketing their work in the future. However, perhaps the most telling indication of the program's success in achieving this came from the responses of artists now released. All of the former-prisoners identified that they had been involved in exhibitions, some had even organised their own upon release, and several discussed how their work had sold and were now being commissioned to produce more artwork. They also discussed that they are now involved in other established arts and cultural networks across regional and metropolitan areas. Post-release artists who were not formally interviewed said that they had begun beginning to make contact in their local governments, with Council Officers and other potential supporters, to aid them to develop up exhibitions in their local areas. They all have in mind working towards a calendar outside the increasingly busy Indigenous cultural dates of NAIDOC, 'Invasion' and Sorry Day. This shift in confidence for people who have not previously taken similar pro-active leadership steps is considerable.

One former prisoner detailed the wider economic benefits of his ongoing involvement with the program:

*I've found work through Torch in the art and other industries. Building networks. I never expected that to happen. And great networks. Being involved – it puts you in the right place at the right time with the right crowd of people.*

He added:

*Look, the most important aspect for me has been the good guidance. Getting professional advice from the arts industry about the arts industry. To keep me enthusiastic keeps a fair few of the demons at bay.*

9.2.3 Participant 3

Another former prisoner explained:

*If I didn't meet them, I probably wouldn't be doing art. I'd still be mucking around in prison. The more I heard from them, the more I thrived for sure...I should be starting work in a couple of weeks. I've been invited by an Aboriginal Art Centre to teach wood burning, so yeah, I've picked up a job teaching art one day per week...I've been accepted in the community.*

9.2.6 Participant 6

When asked if the program's joint inside outside focus could reduce recidivism, one Corrections staff member who had been in an Aboriginal Liaison Officer role explained:

*Look it can, we can't expect miracles. What it has done is now one of our better artists who has now been released from location some time ago, he's now been living (interstate) and he's assisting (others) with art. That was never thought possible when he came to prison he had never painted before he got to (prison). It's allowed this guy to go up there and teach.*

9.5.1 Participant 1

### **Improved participation in other prison programs**

A number of ALOs/AWOS noted that the prisoners' participation in the program had given focus and motivation to other activities and programs run within the prisons. A small number of participants also expressed that the program had resulted in a re-introduction to education for them, stimulating them into pursuing further education both inside prison and upon release. One of the stakeholders currently delivering TAFE programs in prison commented on the increase in participation:

*I've had nothing but positive feedback from the guys and staff and I think since Kent's involvement I have more prisoners enrolled in programs, not everyone but a large number, which is great probably about a 90% enrolment rate. It's great because not a lot of the indigenous prisoners enrol in programs but there is a high rate as I just said that have enrolled in the ATSI program*

He added:

*...the attitude of the guys prior to the Torch program being implemented was 'I'm just doing this to fill in time while I am here' rather than it be seen as a path to the future on the outside. From a TAFE point of view...I see that as our industry link, the Torch art program.*

9.5.4 Participant 4

Though tangible outcomes were difficult to measure, one of the prison staff explained he was definitely able to see the benefits of the program:

*This program has been really positive in many ways as it has given many of the prisoners the opportunity to change their ways and state of mind. It gives them a chance to be proud of something they have done, not only this but gives them job opportunities to earn a living to support their families when released.*

They added:

*I find it has been educational to me in the way of making art and the different types of art depending on your mob – it's interesting learning about a different mob other than your own.*

9.3.4 Participant 4

Another staff member explained:

*I see positive change – the program is healing and educational. It has helped open doors to further programs within the corrections system.*

9.3.6 Participant 6

During the group discussion meeting with the ALOs and AWOS one staff member stated:

*I think generally too it comes down to the fact that a lot of programs and classes aren't voluntary whereas with this one, the prisoners want to participate yet don't necessarily have to participate... It's helping to build their identity and putting a few pieces about their culture back together and also introduce new pieces about their culture which builds them up again with knowledge that they were not necessarily aware of and this in turn is building them up as individuals.*

9.4 Appendix D

One former prisoner spoke of the outcome of his decision to participate in the program while inside:

*It was a big uplift to have people from the outside connect with and invite participation and work from the inside for a show. It kept us interested and focused and away from the drugs and the bullshit going on in there. Talking industry was*

*really important. It was a big uplift having them (the Torch) talking to us. It was like we were out of the dark and into the light.*

9.2.3 Participant 3

### **Raised awareness amongst prison staff and the wider community**

One of the key objectives of The Torch's work is to challenge social bias and encourage attitudinal change. Several respondents noted that the program had achieved this, particularly through the exhibitions and spaces that The Torch has helped to develop. One key stakeholder involved with Victoria Police noted that The Torch's collaborative community approach had aided a high profile NAIDOC exhibition and had attracted a number of prominent people from around Australia. She stated that providing prisoners with a space to share their stories is crucial to promoting public dialogue and bridging relationships.

This was supported by one of the artists now released, who commented that a number of former prisoners are now forming positive links with the police. Several artists also noted that:

*It gives everyone a different opinion on people who come to jail. Instead of just thieving, they're creative.*

9.1.6 Participant 6

### **Throughcare**

Willis (2008) argues that 'correctional approaches must involve 'throughcare' principles and engage family, community members and respected persons like elders, within the context of much broader improvements to relieve social disadvantage, if lasting change is to be realised' (p. 6). Overwhelmingly, all of the former prisoners noted that the ongoing contact and support from The Torch had been invaluable. One participant commented that the program had:

*...kept me focused and working towards a goal, rather than other stuff that could have led me to jail...Receiving out of the blue phone calls (since being out) has been really important. Keeping me in touch, motivated, involved.*

9.2.3 Participant 3

In addition to this, a number of prison staff and stakeholders highlighted the importance of programs with an 'inside/outside' focus. Several of them noted that the prisoners are at their most vulnerable immediately once released, and that there is a distinct absence of programs that provide services that address this gap. When asked what had been the most beneficial element of the program, one staff member said:

*It is a great non-statutory tool – you can talk about art and not jail, nor corrections orders. It helps workers post release to greater understand the individual.*

9.3.5 Participant 5

Almost all of those interviewed commented that the inside/outside focus is one of the most positive elements to The Torch's program. An Indigenous community resettlement worker explained:

*I have a released prisoner here and another in Wangaratta who tells me that this program helped reunite the whole family. This is very good. I have a lot of excellent talks with these families. There are things like a local café has given some space just for the Indigenous artwork to be exhibited and the artist works in the café.*

9.5.2 Participant 2

### **Improved relationships with family**

Every single person interviewed responded positively when asked what impact The Torch's program had had on families and the wider community. The majority of the prison officers interviewed noted that they had received feedback, in the form of letters and phone conversations, from family members and the prisoners themselves on the effect it had on strengthening their relations. One Officer observed that the program helped bridge the sense of separation they feel from their families. Another commented:

*There is a whole-ism there – a connectedness that wasn't there before with outside family and the wider community.*

9.5.4 Participant 4

During the group discussion meeting with the AWOs and ALOs one staff person noted:

*I cannot see any difference in regards to having more visits or more family but in general I see prisoners staying clear of drug activity or prison politics mostly they stay focused on their artwork you know because they work really hard and when they have time they go straight to their artwork and that's a good thing cause they are keeping out of trouble*

9.4 Appendix D

In addition to this, a number of the prisoners and former prisoners acknowledged a change in their relationships with their families. One former prisoner explained the impact his voluntary participation was having on his family.

*Because I'm out of jail now and doing something, my family aren't waiting for me to get on the drink all the time. That page is ripped out of the book. They feel good, rather than being stressed out 'cause I'm drinking all week.*

9.2.1 Participant 1

Another explained how the program had influenced his wider family:

*It's had an influence on my son. It's also got me parents involved and interested in the arts industry. I've got recognition from my tribe (Mutti Mutti) people because my work sticks out. It is also gives other artists in my family inspiration.*

9.2.3 Participant 3

One prisoner discussed the fact that his family now listens to him, and sees him more as an artist rather than a prisoner:

*... I've still got a lot of family in jail and this (my success/approval) will have an impact on them. I'm seen as an older boy, so if they see I've been involved it will influence their participation.*

9.2.5 Participant 5

When asked if they had seen an impact on families as a direct result of the program, one artist now released said this:

*Yes. Yes. Yes. It makes them proud of their child because of what they've become now. For families to see in their sons a softness. Their son's growth. They're blooming. There's a shine to their face, not just that evil look. Parents are looking at their kids thinking, 'It's art that's doing it'.*

9.2.6 Participant 6

## e. Recommendations for the Future

Evaluation respondents suggested that The Torch's program could be expanded, and would benefit from having multiple workers, with strong cultural and arts industry knowledge. This has also been identified by Torch staff who recognise the strong demand for the project and the limited resources currently available to them.

The emerging themes below were expressed in many interviews:

**More resources and materials** – most participants noted that the information on the artists' backgrounds and country, accessed by The Torch through The Koorie Heritage Trust was invaluable and helped them feel reconnected to their culture. Almost all prisoners wanted more of these kinds of resources, and more materials for making art, as funding constraints restrict the amount and quality of materials available to them in prison.

**More prisoners taking part** – during informal conversations, a number of other Indigenous prisoners, said that they wished they could participate in the program but weren't able to as numbers were limited. This was also expressed in interviews with prison staff and other stakeholders, suggesting that the program be opened up to all of the Koori men in prison. When asked to clarify this, Torch staff explained that the program is open to as many people as possible, but capacity to participate is ultimately determined by availability of access within the prisons, and the scheduling of visits. Where there is a coordinated Koorie Art program, there is capacity to meet with large groups, but where this is not available within the prisons, often visits are with smaller groups, or even 1:1 between Torch staff and the emerging artists. In some incidents this has included gaining access to people in solitary confinement. Program schedules and access requirements differ prison to prison.

**Increasing contact** - a number of prisoners commented that they would have liked to have more access to Kent, and increased regularity of visits from The Torch throughout the year. When asked to respond to this, Torch staff concurred that having two full time workers in the field would allow for improved program delivery and improved capacity to support the needs of individuals. The program is currently funded at 1.2 (FTE) of which .2 is managing and administering of the program.

**Expanding the program** – a number of stakeholders and prison staff suggested linking the program with TAFE courses to enhance the prisoner's vocational opportunities. All of the groups interviewed suggested organising more exhibitions throughout the year and establishing a dedicated space to display, exhibit and sell artwork. The logistics of these recommendations may not prove practical but linking post-release participants to The Torch's Leadership and Training program is something the organisation has identified as practical with proper resourcing. Finding exhibition opportunities with existing galleries and organisations could also be extended further for this group.

It should be noted that all of these recommendations propose the expansion of the program, rather than commenting on elements within the program that were lacking.

Understanding the long-term impacts of The Torch's program for Indigenous prisoners (pre and post release) was beyond the scope of the evaluation, and beyond the scope of the project itself. As one of the Torch staff explained:

*Our underlying aim all along had been that even if we managed to keep one person from re-offending and returning to prison, then the program would be worthwhile. From the feedback we've had directly from people's families, and the artists themselves, we think our program, in collaboration with peoples other support networks, has achieved this for sure. I think it's also telling, that this program makes a real impact, when we consider how often Kent's phone rings, and it's a fella whose just out of prison, choosing to touch base and connect.*

Further research is required to assess the ongoing effects of such programs on Indigenous incarceration and recidivism.

## 5. Conclusion

The Torch has been effective in responding to the vocational arts and cultural connection needs of prisoners and supporting artists once released. Any ongoing funding would benefit from the inclusion of increased Indigenous program workers. In a short time frame this program has gained recognition and respect from participants, program staff, stakeholders and many Victorian Aboriginal organisations. The program is well positioned to be attractive to highly skilled Indigenous arts and cultural practitioners were the programs to be re-funded and additional Program Officer positions appropriately resourced.

In recent years, Indigenous incarceration has been brought into focus by the steady increase of imprisonment rates among the Indigenous community nationally, and increasing national and international pressure to improve Indigenous affairs. Indigenous incarceration is a multifaceted issue, one that has obvious consequences for prisoners themselves, and less obviously for the wider community. Given the extent of Indigenous imprisonment, and the higher recidivism rates experienced by this population, it is essential that the intergenerational offending cycle is broken and people have the opportunity to integrate back into the community and lead positive and productive lives.

With an investment in programs such as Wulgunggo Ngalu Place in South Gippsland, and with support for integrated community partnership programs, such as with The Torch's Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community program, Corrections Victoria are testing new approaches to the role of culture in rehabilitation.

This evaluation identifies that the Torch's program has encouraged a number of Indigenous prisoners to engage in positive lifestyle changes and has played a significant role in reconnecting Indigenous prisoners with their culture. Research shows that very few programs and services in prisons are designed specifically with the cultural needs of Aboriginal people in mind. As one participant put it more strongly:

*There's no other form of rehabilitation in the prison; they say there is, but there isn't.  
I think that art is perfect for that.*

9.1.1 Participant 1

In responding to some of the complex and numerous issues facing Indigenous people today, The Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community program should be considered to have gone some way towards addressing several major challenges confronted by Indigenous prisoners. Participants identified that the program had been effective in responding to these challenges by engendering:

1. An increased sense of well being and confidence
2. New level of trust
3. Reconnection to culture
4. Pre-release skills and post-release career opportunities
5. Improved participation in other prison programs
6. Understanding among prison staff and the wider community
7. A new level of support with its inside/outside approach
8. Better relationships with family and the wider community

The program has recognised Indigenous people's wisdom and knowledge and encouraged self-determination and autonomy. The Torch's Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community pilot is helping to realise the changes necessary to break the cycle of reoffending:

*The main thing for the blokes in prison is to have some hope. This program said there's a better place out there. And there is. But you have to work for it. You've got to want it. You got to work at it. If you do, you can achieve anything. I've done it. I'm living proof.*

9.2.6 Participant 6

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## 9. Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix A: Prisoner Interviews

#### 9.1.1 Participant 1

##### ***Interview Icebreakers***

###### **What sort of art are you making now?**

Painting and pottery, acrylic on canvas, matchstick didgeridoos.

###### **Where do you make it? (e.g. Is there a Koorie Art program, or do you do it in your own time? Do you have an art room?)**

Pottery in Koorie Art Centre. Painting in my cell – I like it better, gets your head out of jail, go into a different world when you're painting, takes your mind off things, clears your head. It makes time go faster when you're sitting in here.

###### **When did you begin making art?**

Always been artistic, I've been interested in art since I was a kid. But it's harder on the outside, whereas in here you have the time to do it – outside you have to pay bills, there's not time to do it.

##### ***Program Specific Questions***

###### **How did you get to know Kent/The Torch?**

He just came here on Wednesday when we were doing art and told us about Confined, bought some books and pictures, encouraged us to make some work for the exhibition.

###### **Can you tell me what, if any, effect the Torch has had on you?**

Good feeling to have someone wanting to exhibit your art – I've never had that before. Bought some books in here – inspired me with what to paint and what's out there.

I haven't been taught traditionally how or what to paint – it's hard to know what to do. Nothing has really been passed down to me. I don't want to copy or offend anyone with my art. Would love to learn more about my language – while I was outside all I was doing was working, no time to think of your culture but since being inside it's given me time to think about it, and learn more about it.

###### **And do you think it's had an impact on other prisoners?**

Yeah definitely, there were a lot of boys who hadn't found art, but have found it now. Having the Koori art room has been really good – good to have the group and get together. Gives them an income – if they hadn't had this then they wouldn't know that they could earn a living off their art. It's a pity because a lot of the boys have moved on – really destroyed, you know a lot of the boys would come along to Koori art and now they can't – it brings down the morale a bit.

###### **How do you know this? Can you give me some examples?**

It opened their eyes up to realise they can make a living doing it, that they can have their culture. Teaches them a trade – see Kent on the outside. I know this because I talk to the boys about it, what they're going to do when they get out. One of the guy's aunties has been supporting him on the outside with materials, which is good for him – he gets a lot of materials. Another guy is going all right on the outside, been selling lots of work and been doing really well – heard through Kent on one of his visits. Can't speak for the other guys, but for me, it's encouraging and something to look forward to. There's no other form of rehabilitation in the prison; they say there is, but there isn't. I think that art is perfect for that.

**And what about people's families – do you think the program's made any impact there?**

Yeah the family that I talk to, they like the art that I'm doing. My fiancé went to the Confined exhibition – she likes all the art, thinks it's high quality. I love it because I can send my art to my kids, good to give them something for their birthdays. Maybe it's really better for us really, gives us a really good feeling.

**What part of your involvement with Kent, or the program, has been most valuable to you? (e.g. what's been the most important gain for you, in having this contact?)**

It's a good feeling to have your work exhibited, and that people outside can see it. And it's good to see other people's work from the Confined exhibitions in the books, and to see your name in it. Book on Victorian Koorie Art – very detailed and a lot of Koorie art from Victoria, basket weaving, painting, possum skins, carving etc. – they give you inspiration in your work.

It's hard to learn about culture inside, everything is Victorian based – the library is limited but the stuff Kent brings in is good. It's hard to learn about country without the Internet and without being on the outside. Wish I had talked more to my Grandma about our culture, learn more from my Great Grandma but it was hard to talk about it then. But I want to learn more, the children are the ones who need to learn more, teach your children now, to pass it on. I want to pass it onto my kids, I'm proud of my daughter because she got a scholarship for her art.

***Looking forward*****Do you think you'll continue to make art outside? (If so) where do you think you'll go to access support when you're out?**

I think I will – don't know where I can go, I know Kent and Dave that I've met in the system will be able to point me in the right direction. I do it because I feel good doing it. I have a web design background so want to be a part of some sort of support, help out where Indigenous inmates produce their art inside and then create a page for them to present their work. It's hard to think about it on the inside.

**Do you think the things you've learned inside, about art and exhibiting, and marketing, could help you outside? (Please explain this).**

Learnt a fair bit about art – I think it's got to help you. It's something that I didn't do enough on the outside. But now I've got to keep doing it on the outside. I haven't learnt much about exhibiting. I want to travel and see more of the country, bring my art and sell it in markets.

**What is missing in the program (e.g. How could The Torch's program improve?)**

I reckon I should be able to do it full-time but I've got to work. Would be good to have something more about my country – more books and resources about each individual's country/land/culture – but don't know how Kent would get access to that. It's kind of like jail has been a wake up call for me – before I had a monotonous life, but being in here has opened my eyes up to what I'd been doing wrong, it's my life – my journey. Something that I want to do more of once I'm out.

**Would you like to see the program continue?**

Absolutely, I reckon it's good value, not just for the prisoners but for the community as well, giving it that space. It'd be sad to see it stop.

**And if the program is still running when you get out, do you think you'll make contact with The Torch, for advice and support?**

Yeah, absolutely. I'm going to go to every exhibition – wouldn't miss it now.

## **9.1.2 Participant 2**

### ***Interview Icebreakers***

#### **What sort of art are you making now?**

Aboriginal art – painting, dot painting

#### **Where do you make it? (e.g. Is there a Koorie Art program, or do you do it in your own time? Do you have an art room?)**

My room – prefer to do it in there. You can concentrate better, no one gets to see what you're doing, I like it more like that.

#### **When did you begin making art?**

Years ago – been doing it more since I've been inside – only did it really once while I was outside.

### ***Program Specific Questions***

#### **How did you get to know Kent/The Torch?**

He came in here for the Confined Exhibition – then we figured out that he was my cousin, from NSW.

#### **Can you tell me what, if any, effect the Torch has had on you?**

Been enjoying doing painting, want my work back though. Good having work in the exhibition.

#### **And do you think it's had an impact on other prisoners?**

Don't know, I can't speak for them – it might of.

#### **And what about people's families – do you think the program's made any impact there?**

Family has seen my paintings – they like it. They like all of my work but I've only shown my Mum and my brothers.

#### **How do you know this?**

Through talking to them.

#### **What part of your involvement with Kent, or the program, has been most valuable to you? (e.g. what's been the most important gain for you, in having this contact?)**

Getting some photos of my great grandmother off Kent – loved seeing her. Learnt a bit about my country and culture through my connection with him.

### ***Looking forward***

#### **Do you think you'll continue to make art outside? (If so) where do you think you'll go to access support when you're out?**

Don't know – yeah I guess I want to, I probably will. Just myself – get in contact with Kent, got him on my visitors list as well so that he can visit me whenever he wants to. Been good having Kent – really helped with my culture and learning stuff. Kent also gave me a recording of my grandmother which was great – really helped me. Want to use one of the words she uses in a recording for a song.

**Do you think the things you've learned inside, about art and exhibiting, and marketing, could help you outside? (Please explain this).**

Probably – don't really know. More just about painting for myself, just expressing myself. I did a painting of my great-grandmother and I want to find it from my brother and give it to Kent.

**What is missing in the program (e.g. How could The Torch's program improve?)**

More pictures of my great-grandmother, find out more about her and my family. Would like more books – more with my family in them, and I really want to learn more about my great-grandmother. More time with Kent – more visits.

**Would you like to see the program continue?**

Yep it's good to have someone there so that we can learn more and they can help us with our art.

**And if the program is still running when you get out, do you think you'll make contact with The Torch, for advice and support?**

Yep I'd definitely contact Kent, find him and track him down.

### **9.1.3 Participant 3**

#### ***Interview Icebreakers***

##### **What sort of art are you making now?**

Draw, pencil, pen. Wanting to do something different – lot of painting out there so just wanted to draw.

##### **Where do you make it? (e.g. Is there a Koorie Art program, or do you do it in your own time? Do you have an art room?)**

In my past time – sometimes down at Koorie art room but mostly just at home (in cell).

##### **When did you begin making art?**

Primary school – started but doing it much more in jail – free time let's you do it.

#### ***Program Specific Questions***

##### **How did you get to know Kent/The Torch?**

Met him in the Koorie Centre. He rarely comes up here – so it was a bit of a fluke to meet him. He asked me if I wanted to put something into the Confined exhibition.

##### **Can you tell me what, if any, effect the Torch has had on you?**

It was all right – got good feedback. I'd do it again if they asked me, kind of encouraged me to do more since the exhibition. Good angle to make a bit of money and have an impact – especially on the community.

##### **And do you think it's had an impact on other prisoners?**

Gives the boys another avenue to go down – jobs or just for recreation. Don't have much of these kinds of programs on the outside – good to have them to learn about drawing and culture.

##### **And what about people's families – do you think the program's made any impact there?**

Done a fair few for my son and for my sister – I've picked up some skills to teach my son. Good for families I think – bit of culture. They are happy that I am putting my mind to something, looking into my culture.

##### **How do you know this?**

Talking to my Mum and sister about it – didn't get raised around culture, so it's hard but this time giving me a chance to look into it more.

##### **What part of your involvement with Kent, or the program, has been most valuable to you? (e.g. what's been the most important gain for you, in having this contact?)**

Mainly just getting my artwork out there – it's not very easy to get your artwork in galleries, especially for the boys inside, you kind of get forgotten. It's good to show people that you've got something, you're not just crooks, that you're able to do something positive.

#### ***Looking forward***

**Do you think you'll continue to make art outside? (If so) where do you think you'll go to access support when you're out?**

I won't stop now, it's not something I want to lose, but I probably won't be doing it all the time unless I make a habit of it and can get a job through it. I'd go to Kent once I'm out, if he offered. Artwork is different, drawing is something different, I don't want to copy anyone – that's my biggest thing. For me it just flows.

**Do you think the things you've learned inside, about art and exhibiting, and marketing, could help you outside? (Please explain this).**

If I was going to make it into a career, I probably would use the things I've learnt on the inside. If I was told I was good enough I probably would, I need to get better/improve.

**What is missing in the program (e.g. How could The Torch's program improve?)**

It would be a lot better to see more of Kent, and for all of the boys to get their artwork out there – Kent's trustworthy, I think everything is safe in his hands. Good to have more books – the more stuff we can learn about our culture, the better. That'd be great.

**Would you like to see the program continue?**

Yep, definitely.

**And if the program is still running when you get out, do you think you'll make contact with The Torch, for advice and support?**

If Kent wanted me to, I'd do it 100%. Most of us boys just want to know if our art can get valued etc. and it's hard so if he can help us with that it'd be great. If he wanted to catch up and talk I would love to. Kent seems like a good guy – for me to trust someone with my works, it's something. He's very straight, I like that.

## **9.1.4 Participant 4**

### ***Interview Icebreakers***

#### **What sort of art are you making now?**

Tattoo stuff – flowers. Doing a book for Kent, a book with illustrations etc. of what each flower means, what they are.

#### **Where do you make it? (e.g. Is there a Koorie Art program, or do you do it in your own time? Do you have an art room?)**

Koorie centre and in my cell. It's better in the day room, more space, because the cells are pretty small.

#### **When did you begin making art?**

Been doing drawing for 3-4 years but I've been getting right into it in the past year because I've been able to get more access to indigenous stuff, more access to pictures of flowers, some of them out in the garden – been able to see them more.

### ***Program Specific Questions***

#### **How did you get to know Kent/The Torch?**

Through doing art, at the start at Port Phillip, then at different jails I've been in. He used to come down to the cells, and in the day rooms. In Port Phillip there was no room, but out here it's different – there's more space.

#### **Can you tell me what, if any, effect the Torch has had on you?**

Given me more and provided me with feedback. Inspired me to continue making artwork and expand on my style. Helped with materials – giving resources about different plants and different stuff about Indigenous culture. Encouraged me to focus on my art, been doing art all day – it's given me a focus.

#### **And do you think it's had an impact on other prisoners?**

Encouraged a few of the young fellas in here – they're learning, expanding their style and giving them something to do. Reconnecting them back to their culture – it's also helping the younger fellas experiment a bit more through contact with the older fellas.

#### **How do you know this? Can you give me some examples?**

Just seeing the guys doing it – painting, doing different stuff, they're changing.

#### **And what about people's families – do you think the program's made any impact there?**

Yeah – the guys that are doing it are getting along way better with their families, giving them something to do, something to be proud of. It's given them a place to channel their feelings into something different.

#### **How do you know this?**

I have a lot of communication with the young fellas – they come to me with stuff that's going on with their families so we talk about it.

**What part of your involvement with Kent, or the program, has been most valuable to you? (e.g. what's been the most important gain for you, in having this contact?)**

The resources and the advice.

***Looking forward***

**Do you think you'll continue to make art outside? (If so) where do you think you'll go to access support when you're out?**

Yeah for sure – be living in Fitzroy so will be in contact with Kent because he will be able to hook me up with people to sell my artwork.

**Do you think the things you've learned inside, about art and exhibiting, and marketing, could help you outside? (Please explain this).**

Yeah it's advanced my horizons, given me something to do – I think I'll just keep jumping from one thing to another, try new things – plants and animals.

**What is missing in the program (e.g. How could The Torch's program improve?)**

Like to get Kent in here more often – for more advice. I think it's decent advice about who to go see, more for the younger fellas so that they're distracted and doing something different. Maybe they could organise a jail competition for the best art. More resources, more art supplies, more books.

**Would you like to see the program continue?**

Yeah very much so – it's given me an idea of where to go from here. Got some sorry business to do once I get out, but once that's done I'll put my head down and get drawing. Given me more of a focus, not just with painting, it will give me some focus once I get out – I'm not going to go back to drugs and alcohol.

**And if the program is still running when you get out, do you think you'll make contact with The Torch, for advice and support?**

Yep – already got Kent's card. I'll do the book of all Indigenous plants and what materials for what – maybe get a book published. See how Kent can help me from there.

## **9.1.5 Participant 5**

### ***Interview Icebreakers***

#### **What sort of art are you making now?**

Painting from the Gippsland area. Dots and lines – always trying new styles and changing it up. Used to do a lot of wall art – changing it up now, using different animals. Want to come up with my own style – at least then I can say it's my own. Seen a lot of the same style of painting in books and across the prisons, I want to do something different.

#### **Where do you make it? (e.g. Is there a Koorie Art program, or do you do it in your own time? Do you have an art room?)**

Paint in my cell – I'll get a couple of garbage bags out on my bed and then away we go. Prefer to do it in there, can kick back and paint all night then sleep in the next day. Only on weekends, because I'm working during the week and cleaning.

#### **When did you begin making art?**

Never did it on the outside, only when I came in 2007. Wasn't right into it then, but now I am. When Kent comes in and gives you feedback about the Confined exhibitions, it lifts your spirits to know that you've been acknowledged even when you're incarcerated – it's nice to have someone to go to when I get out. Kent's just got that way about him, makes you feel comfortable.

### ***Program Specific Questions***

#### **How did you get to know Kent/The Torch?**

Alison used to come in – I met Alison ages ago back in 2007. Didn't have much work to put in back then but I have put work in every exhibition. Met Kent when Alison left for Confined 4. I got along with him straight away.

#### **Can you tell me what, if any, effect the Torch has had on you?**

Given me more hope for the future. There's a financial side to it too – I know if I need money when I'm out, then I can just knock up a painting. It's shown me that I'm not just another black fella drinking in the park, that I can do something positive too. The exhibitions give you hope. Never used to have a story about my paintings – now I have developed that through Kent. It's been a stressful year – but it helps me express myself. I was bored stress, and worried so I just take it out on a big piece of canvas, and this is what I got. I never used to enjoy it – Kent is encouraging me to meet people and sell my stuff when I get out. I've painted over 60 pieces in three years – you think about how much time you've got.

#### **And do you think it's had an impact on other prisoners?**

Don't really have much to do with the other Koorie prisoners doing the program (they're all in different blocks, difficult to meet other prisoners).

#### **And what about people's families – do you think the program's made any impact there?**

They are really excited – to hear that my art is in the exhibitions. They want me to keep doing it. They don't come to Melbourne much but they want me to keep it up so that they can suss it out, something new for them to come to the exhibitions. Then they also want me to paint things for them. They listen to me not too – they're proud of me, some of them play up but not I say I don't want you to turn out like me. One of us could be the next Prime Minister you know? Only time will tell. They now know that you can make a living out of making art – and it makes them happy.

**How do you know this?**

Through conversations with them.

**What part of your involvement with Kent, or the program, has been most valuable to you? (e.g. what's been the most important gain for you, in having this contact?)**

When they come in – they give me feedback on the exhibitions. When they give me different books and the Confined booklets – I just close my eyes and imagine I'm there, with the people at the exhibition. I get images in my head. It's built a lot of trust – given us that bond. First off I didn't trust Kent, but the more he came back and with the different exhibitions, made me trust them. I'll catch up with him on the day I get out – pop into his office and surprise him. Got a few books on Lake Tyres, information on my own clan and the different techniques I should use. I think the only style you should have though is your own.

***Looking forward*****Do you think you'll continue to make art outside? (If so) where do you think you'll go to access support when you're out?**

Don't know – going to go see my Mum's ex so that I can get all my paintings. Can't trust my family with them. Want to keep making art and start carving (can't do it inside). Get into TAFE, start studying properly, go back to school you know? I think I'll meet up with Kent for all of that kind of support.

**Do you think the things you've learned inside, about art and exhibiting, and marketing, could help you outside? (Please explain this).**

Yeah – it gets your name around, people will recognise your name.

**What is missing in the program (e.g. How could The Torch's program improve?)**

Framing them in jail – we could put all of the wood together and make it ourselves. It'll be cheaper that way too.

**Would you like to see the program continue?**

Yep it's good. When we're in prison, there's not much you can do, but this program lets the world see what you're doing, so that we're not forgotten. It passes the time, keeps me connected to our culture, and the way to stay connected is through our art and the stories behind them.

**And if the program is still running when you get out, do you think you'll make contact with The Torch, for advice and support?**

Yes – I'll ask Kent about framing when I get out too. I trust him.

## **9.1.6 Participant 6**

### ***Interview Icebreakers***

**What sort of art are you making now?**

Painting.

**Where do you make it? (e.g. Is there a Koorie Art program, or do you do it in your own time? Do you have an art room?)**

Cell, down on the table in the common area. Doesn't bother me where I paint.

**When did you begin making art?**

Starting doing it on and off in boys homes – then needed money while doing my sentence, so started painting more in prison (around 2003). I can do four paintings in 7 days now – I prefer to paint on canvas. I don't really sleep so I end up making them all night. The bigger ones take me around 3.5 days.

### ***Program Specific Questions***

**How did you get to know Kent/The Torch?**

Spoke to him, asked him if he's a relative to my foster Mother. He came and visited and saw some of my artwork and we went from there. He's family you know.

**Can you tell me what, if any, effect the Torch has had on you?**

It helps the girls/my family so that they can sell it. It's just for me to pass the time. I don't mind doing it – I dabble in a lot of things.

**And do you think it's had an impact on other prisoners?**

Yeah it helps out their families too.

**How do you know this? Can you give me some examples?**

Through conversations.

**And what about people's families – do you think the program's made any impact there?**

My family are always telling me – stick with your painting. They're proud of me, done one bigger than a single bed for a Christmas present and done lots for wedding gifts. Dad has been working a lot with some Koorie guys – he tells me off if I haven't been painting.

**How do you know this?**

Chatting to them over the phone.

**What part of your involvement with Kent, or the program, has been most valuable to you? (e.g. what's been the most important gain for you, in having this contact?)**

Just catching up with Kent – seeing how he's doing. When he has a go at me, I tell him I'll tell my foster Mother. When he found out who my cousin was we got on. The books have been helpful – already been over it in school though. The exhibitions – now they want more of my paintings which feels good.

## ***Looking forward***

**Do you think you'll continue to make art outside? (If so) where do you think you'll go to access support when you're out?**

Who knows. I'll go to Kent and get his advice – got a cousin who works in art galleries over in SA – one of my uncle's emu eggs has been photographed for her book. So my sister has been asking her for advice and stuff on prices etc. – probably contact her once I'm out too.

**Do you think the things you've learned inside, about art and exhibiting, and marketing, could help you outside? (Please explain this).**

I'm self-taught, if you like it you like it.

**What is missing in the program (e.g. How could The Torch's program improve?)**

If they could sell it on the outside for some of the fellas and manage their money, it could help them and his family out heaps. It'd be good if Kent came out more regularly as well – more books. Getting some large stencils would be good too – start doing some murals in here.

**Would you like to see the program continue?**

Yep – it gives everyone a different opinion on people who come to jail. Instead of just thieving, they're creative.

**And if the program is still running when you get out, do you think you'll make contact with The Torch, for advice and support?**

Yes – especially since my foster Mother is Kent's cousin.

## 9.2 Appendix B: Former Prisoner Interviews

### 9.2.1 Participant 1

#### *Reflecting back to your time in prison*

##### **While you were inside, do you think the Torch program had an impact on prisoners?**

Yes. I was painting inside but not so much until I got out. (This artist had previously chosen not to be involved with Confined exhibitions). Having The Torch on the scene outside spurred me on to paint more. Saving up money was important.

##### **How do you know this – what did you see?**

You're hearing it from the fellas. I've seen it inside.

##### **In your experience, do you think making art helped address some of the needs of Koorie Prisoners? Can you explain this?**

Yeah, but people are scared of success - they don't like to talk to people anymore that they're a good person. Many are scared to exhibit. It's like they've got stage fright.

#### **Program Specific**

##### **I'm interested in knowing what part of your involvement with Kent, and the program, has been most valuable to you?**

Just to make that connection with someone inside outside. The ongoing involvement about exhibitions. Advice and what's going on at different times of the year. Having Kent there to brainstorm is important. Working with him to forward my career. Now it's important for me to feather my own nest – to push myself. The good contacts of people I've met through Kent have been really important and will help me and the other boys down the track.

##### **Has the program/Kent had an impact on your own artwork development?**

Yeah. Yeah Yeah. Kent being an artist (and Indigenous) – we talk about different styles about different cultural styles. Including the culture of hunting and language. We understand one another's culture. We're still looking for pieces of the picture. He doesn't tell people how to do their work, but he will give his opinion on it.

##### **Do you think the support offered through the program has had an impact on people's families?**

Oh yeah yeah. Because I'm out of jail now and doing something, (the artist has parole restrictions) my family aren't waiting for me to get on the drink all the time. That page is ripped out of the book. They feel good, rather than being stressed out 'cause I'm drinking all week.

##### **Do you think the things you've learned about art, techniques, materials, exhibiting, and marketing, are helping you outside?**

Kent has been a blessing in disguise. He'll advise on exhibition opportunities. Call boys up. Visit the galleries. You get a different perspective of it (the art world). Now I realise for competition purposes, you've got to see what and how people are exhibiting – what sells. How to organise the best lighting. Having a taste of the Melbourne scenery.

##### **With The Torch's support, have you made other community links, or tapped into other programs, exhibitions or opportunities?**

Definitely. My only community currently are my family, The Brosnan Centre and Torch and Gathering Place. But it's started the ball rolling. With positive feedback from these services. You've got to work as an artist sell your product, talk to people about your work.

I first exhibited a decade ago. I don't want to be a standard prisoner out of jail back in the park. The police are the last people I want to speak to, but through Torch involvement, I have. But it's positive. You can't get of jail and be the same person. (Outside) Kent got me involved in some crowd speaking. I was shaking in my boots. But to get through the stress was important and I'm a better person having got the control and beat the nerves.

### **How could The Torch's program improve?**

Any program could go better with more funding. It should have more access to the broader community – somewhere where we can meet more freely – drop in. Getting some sort of 'Co-operative' organisation on the outside would be a priority for me. Somewhere more than 9am to 5 pm. A place for women as well, where they can meet family. People get shoved back in jail and the system, but how great if they could come to our joint, paint, talk, meet, drink coffee, talk. Perfect. In jail a lot of the fellas are painting for smokes and cigarettes inside. But outside you're on the dole; you get \$340 they don't need to paint. But if we did this, people can know what's going on. Who to talk to outside of prison. Help people a bit less reserved. A men's group to discuss what problems are going on – get advice etc. Something that's all hands on deck.

### **What are their greatest strengths?**

Just involvement of people through the prison's so they know what's going on. Involving them when they're out of prison too. I know I'm an artist. But I'm new to it. I don't know what questions to ask. But I know what I'm saying. Where I'm going. Through involvement in The Torch, I'm ahead by 5 months instead of behind by 5 months.

### **Would you like to see the program continue?**

Oh yeah.

### **Finally – what has been the most unexpected, or unplanned change for you, that's occurred either planned, or unplanned, as a direct result of your involvement with the program?**

The fact that I've got access and an outlet there. That I have interaction where I can share what I'm doing. Get involved, without the distractions of just getting on.

### **Additional Discussion Notes**

"If we get a place where all the boys and girls will come we could get publicity and build, work hard and encourage peoples involvement. Help people think outside the square, outside the welfare system. Give people an option. That the boys know there is a creative hub environment where people can get connected and get on track. A drop in where the prisoners assist to build and contribute profits from sales back into the program. Where people can get materials. And to reduce the risk of selling paintings for 'flagon' price."

"Sharing ideas creates stronger ideas. Working with creative people spawns new ideas."

"Rents are down in Melbourne. If we could get a rate rebate for landlords on dead rent, maybe this would be an option."

"Having a computer – a drop in hub environment to drop in and shoot ideas would be great."

"It would be good to see Judy Lazerous involved because she's a really active person in the prisons and is influential."

"We can have older prisoners, role models working there. Working inside the prison to".

"(On social media) We've got a new intruder in our lifestyle. It's not you fellas of 200 years ago. It's technology. Them young fellas are using it to know when the next fight is on. If we can use this technology now, to promote exhibitions that would be great. Lets get them young fellas to take photos as art instead. For exhibitions."

## **9.2.2 Participant 2**

### ***Reflecting back to your time in prison***

#### **How did you get to know Kent/The Torch?**

I met Kent in Prison. We met in Prison before that didn't we. Then on the tram when I got out. That was really good. Connecting.

#### **While you were inside, do you think the Torch program had an impact on prisoners?**

I felt I was more involved with my art inside than outside. I've been out now 3 or 4 months. The incentive I developed inside gives me more motivation outside. And I've got workers who encourage me.

#### **How do you know this – what did you see?**

Having paintings on display in art exhibitions (was really important). It has been way more positive than any other program I encountered in prison - more helpful than any others. Uplifting. Your mode brings a positive change. That's the message I get from it.

#### **In your experience, do you think making art helped address some of the needs of Koorie Prisoners? Can you explain this?**

Art in the Aboriginal community is really important. Because we identify with art, in our culture. (Inside) some pursue it, some don't, but it's an important part of our experience and getting on. Going to exhibitions and getting your work out there was really good. If they pursue it, if more people support the program and get involved then they may feel more connected. Not necessarily people just learning art – but connecting with people outside, through your culture inside.

### ***Program Specific***

#### **I'm interested in knowing what part of your involvement with Kent, and the program, has been most valuable to you?**

Probably the support. Knowing there's other avenues I can support with my art. Getting my work out there. Mainly it's the support that's really helped me.

#### **Has the program/Kent had an impact on your own artwork development?**

I've mostly just been using the same materials, and process. Acrylic and canvas. What's helped me is the art supplies Kent has organised for me. The program has helped me in a big way.

#### **Do you think the support offered through the program has had an impact on people's families?**

In my experience? My worker Robyn is very keen and interested for me to get involved in such a great incentive. I'm really happy with the program.

#### **Do you think the things you've learned about art, techniques, materials, exhibiting, and marketing, are helping you outside?**

His... what do you call it.... his campaign is very positive and uplifting. It's great knowing people do care. Not just for the art but for a career. So supporting the individuals to think ahead.

#### **With The Torch's support, have you made other community links, or tapped into other programs, exhibitions or opportunities?**

Yes. Koori's in the Hood (through the Koorie Heritage Trust).

*Minanjuka* Centre – a studio space has been set up for me. It's mainly for women and women's groups. My Uncle told me about it, but having the Torch materials has really helped. It's *Minanjuku* and Torch helping me about my art.

The Ownership project is about to start. It will be one day a week for 12 months - I got involved through Kent.

### **How could The Torch's program improve?**

Maybe a more regular newsletter to show what's going on. What programs are running, to inform us each month. Through the mail and the Internet. Sending this out to other artists outside. Through the Internet.

### **What are their greatest strengths?**

It empowers me with independence and also with confidence. The friendliness is a good one. It makes me enthusiastic and motivated.

### **Would you like to see the program continue?**

For sure, we need it for Indigenous people. And there's not enough for indigenous people. It would be good to showcase their art and this is a great opportunity and experience.

### **Finally – what has been the most unexpected, or unplanned change for you, that's occurred either planned, or unplanned, as a direct result of your involvement with the program?**

Not really. Thank you.

### **9.2.3 Participant 3**

#### ***Reflecting back to your time in prison***

##### **While you were inside, do you think the Torch program had an impact on prisoners?**

Definitely. Definitely. It was a big uplift to have people from the outside connect with and invite participation and work from the inside for a show. It kept us interested and focused and away from the drugs and the bullshit going on in there. Talking industry was really important. It was a big uplift having you guys talking to us. It was like we were out of the dark and into the light. Definitely a big uplift.

##### **How do you know this – what did you see?**

Seeing the other fellas working out where their work sits, how to make it stronger. I saw the input getting the other boys motivated. Look, the most important aspect for me has been the good guidance. Getting professional advice from the arts industry about the arts industry. To keep me enthusiastic keeps a fair few of the demons at bay.

##### **In your experience, do you think making art helped address some of the needs of Koorie Prisoners? Can you explain this?**

It keeps us in touch with our culture. Once you're in prison it's easy to lose contact with people. You can get absorbed in jail culture. This (activities which promote cultural connection) was one of the recommendations of the Black Deaths in Custody Report.

#### ***Program Specific***

##### **I'm interested in knowing what part of your involvement with Kent, and the program, has been most valuable to you?**

It's kept me focused and working towards a goal, rather than other stuff that could have led me to jail. Basically it's kept me focused. It's critical that the AWO's and the appointed Aboriginal liaison screws (support these programs). It would be hard to keep going without their support. And look, I'm hoping (these programs) get more funding. It is making a big difference and will hopefully reduce the incarceration rates. Receiving out of the blue phone calls since being out has been really important. Keeping me in touch, motivated, involved.

##### **Has the program/Kent had an impact on your own artwork development?**

Yeah. I suppose we just paint to be more marketable, and Kent has helped develop my profile (as an artist).

##### **Do you think the support offered through the program has had an impact on people's families?**

Oh yeah. It's had an influence on my son. It's also got my parents involved and interested in the arts industry. I've got recognition from my tribe (Mutti Mutti) people because my work sticks out. It is also gives other artists in my family inspiration.

##### **Do you think the things you've learned about art, techniques, materials, exhibiting, and marketing, are helping you outside?**

Sure. It gives us some guidelines to stick to, pointers to develop a unique style rather than just 'same old same old'. Look, it was so valuable when we were inside. Getting that more professional perspective of the art industry and the market. Everyone in there (prison) wanted to know what their work was worth and getting that feedback and input was really important. It inspired me to exhibit. (The artist planned his own solo exhibition soon after release).

**With The Torch's support, have you made other community links, or tapped into other programs, exhibitions or opportunities?**

I now sit on (a Torch) committee. I am involved in exhibitions and other opportunities that are coming up. And all that Jazz.

**How could The Torch's program improve?**

I just think Torch needs a couple of Kents there to keep the ball rolling, because you seem over-stretched. I'd really like to see a gallery set up in the city where the boys could exhibit. More visits and keep the boys active. I'd like to see almost a case management approach to working with the prisoners. And to see the prisoners involved in developing catalogues and stuff.

**What are their greatest strengths?**

Keeping us in touch with culture. Keeping our minds off crime. Helping make our artwork more strong, more valuable, and able to get more income from it. It's just really important work.

**Would you like to see the program continue?**

Of course! I want to see a nice big gallery set up in the city we could sell. To help (promote) our social well-being.

**Finally – what has been the most unexpected, or unplanned change for you, that's occurred either planned, or unplanned, as a direct result of your involvement with the program?**

I've found work through Torch in the art and other industries. Building networks. I never expected that to happen. And great networks. Being involved – it puts you in the right place at the right time with the right crowd of people

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## **9.2.4 Participant 4**

### ***Interview Icebreakers***

#### **How did you get to know Kent/The Torch?**

Through Fulham (Prison) when I was inside. The ALO introduced him in the lead up to Confined 4.

#### **What's your involvement with them now?**

Still ongoing, we're talking by phone. The Torch organised for the sale of one of my paintings recently and I'm grateful to him (Kent) for that. The money is handy.

#### **When did you begin making art?**

I started making in 2006, when I was inside. It's a shame really. I should have done it more outside. I was inside for 3 years, and buggered up my parole. Before I went back to jail, I was offered an exhibition at Swan Hill, but then I was (back) inside. Now that I'm out, I'll chase this up.

#### **What sort of art are you making now?**

I'm still getting 'round to it (since being out). Getting it recognised is hard work. I had images on a disk and I took this around to a few people. My sister helped me (with the technical) skills of putting it on disk. This is the first time I've ever been out there promoting my work.

### ***Reflecting back to your time in prison***

#### **While you were inside, do you think the Torch program had an impact on prisoners?**

A little bit I reckon. One guy had done a couple of paintings and made a 3D motorbike and he had really good feedback. This is the first time he'd had feedback.

#### **How do you know this – what did you see?**

There was already good word of mouth about the exhibition and Kent.

#### **In your experience, do you think making art helped address some of the needs of Koorie Prisoners? Can you explain this?**

Oh yeah. It helped me out lots. We can chat and get feedback from each other. Trying different ways and chucking ideas off each other and stuff. And trading paintings.

### ***Program Specific***

#### **I'm interested in knowing what part of your involvement with Kent, and the program, has been most valuable to you?**

Probably just helping get my paintings out there and sharing me and my work more. And word of mouth. (Since being out, the artist said that he'd been taking his work around locally in Northern Victoria).

#### **Has the program/Kent had an impact on your own artwork development? (Please explain this).**

Not really. My confidence is the same I'm really just starting to get to know Kent.

#### **Do you think the support offered through the program has had an impact on people's families?**

It felt all right knowing my Aunty came down to see my work in the (Confined) exhibition.

**Do you think the things you've learned about art, techniques, materials, exhibiting, and marketing, are helping you outside?**

We'll keep talking I reckon (Kent and I). I want to learn how to do portraits. They're very hard and it's important for me to learn (the technical skills)

(The artist explained he has a number of successful artists in his family. He is planning to catch up with his cousin who is a well-known artist/drawer – and to learn from her).

**With The Torch's support, have you made other community links, or tapped into other programs, exhibitions or opportunities?**

Not lately. But I might in the lead up to a Kerrang exhibition, which I'd like to organise. I'll chase this up with a few fellas. They can chuck up a few. (The artist explained he's keen to drum up interest in a group exhibition, and produce this).

**How could The Torch's program improve?**

I'd like to see more contact towards the blokes. Faster feedback from the exhibitions too - it took a while to come back. (The artist explained when he was inside; he wanted to see more art programs in the prison).

**What are their greatest strengths?**

Probably all around I reckon. The exhibitions have been a key feature. There are a lot of artists in town here (in Swan Hill) so talking to them will be important. Linking with the Swan Hill Aboriginal Co-op and maybe with artists in Kerrang. I'm talking and looking all the time. I want to get an exhibition up in my community. Probably Kerang.

**Would you like to see the program continue?**

Yes. Yeah. I reckon we should see it continue.

**Finally – what has been the most unexpected, or unplanned change for you, that's occurred either planned, or unplanned, as a direct result of your involvement with the program?**

Yeah Yeah Yeah. For years when I was inside people said put them (his own art work) in the Confined exhibition, but I didn't. I was afraid they might go missing. But it was all good.

## **9.2.5 Participant 5**

### ***Interview Icebreakers***

#### **How did you get to know Kent/The Torch?**

I met Kent in prison. The Koorie worker was selling the program, but I didn't want to get involved for a long time. When I first heard about the program everything (in my head) was negative. But now, I've done a complete back flip.

#### **What's your involvement with them now?**

I couldn't be happier. The whole trust thing is really important. Kent had a good way of breaking the wall down. People in jail have a lot of trust issues. His way of communicating was really successful. He's easy going, an honourable fella. I got released in April. I had a painting, which sold for \$2,000. The Torch being a community organisation, and not taking my money really earned my trust and respect even more.

#### **What sort of art are you making now?**

I'm painting at the moment. I've just moved home. Back to (Western Victoria). Doing didges as well. We're all from Heywood.

### ***Reflecting back to your time in prison***

#### **While you were inside, do you think the Torch program had an impact on prisoners?**

He's opened up a lot of doors in my mind. Being a bit more confident in asking for what prices I want for my work. The whole trust thing has been huge. Before, I was sitting back and not trusting people. Look, I've done a lot of time in jail. I was always reluctant to get involved in jail-organised exhibitions – to part with my paintings. A lot of people have been burned. I was really reticent with Kent when I met him as well.

#### **How do you know this – what did you see?**

I know "... (another of the artists) - we've done a lot of time together. From what I know it's had a real positive impact on him. It's hard to comment on what he's doing now. (We also discussed the context of the Project Officer being Indigenous. The artist said he didn't think it was crucial, but it did create more connection).

#### **In your experience, do you think making art helped address some of the needs of Koorie Prisoners? Can you explain this?**

It's a part of our healing. It helps us get through. Painting and playing guitar were really my medicines. Helping me get through.

### ***Program Specific***

#### **I'm interested in knowing what part of your involvement with Kent, and the program, has been most valuable to you?**

Trust. Definitely Trust. The response you get. The positive feedback encourages you to pursue more. Trust and confidence, which I've been building. This helps top it off. It gives me something to pursue, to do it well. And the painting on the side and extra finance comes in handy.

It's helped my confidence trusting other things too. And having trust now, it opens doors.

**Has the program/Kent had an impact on your own artwork development? (Please explain this).**

Kent rang me up. There was a lady who had a quote from years ago about 'Aboriginal Australia being the heartbeat of Australia' and she wanted a painting. So I did one and gave this to Kent to forward onto her last week. So it may lead to a commission. It's getting framed next week. I gave him the painting. A few years earlier I wouldn't have given this to him.

**Do you think the support offered through the program has had an impact on people's families?**

Definitely. Before I got out my sisters, Mum and daughter all went to the (Confined 4) exhibition and took photos and sent them to me before I got out. They posted them up on Facebook. So when I was out I (learned how to use Facebook) and posted extra paintings. And people are enquiring about them and wanting them now. All my family see the Facebook images even without me physically being there. It's so different. I'm still getting used to being out of jail.

**Do you think the things you've learned about art, techniques, materials, exhibiting, and marketing, are helping you outside?**

Yes definitely. I've had a lot of people comment on my art and how it's gotten better. It has evolved and I've had lots of people commenting on it.

**With The Torch's support, have you made other community links, or tapped into other programs, exhibitions or opportunities?**

Kent's inviting me to everything. He rings and rings and rings and invites me to things. But when I first got out, I was reluctant to get involved. But I'm making a real big effort to get involved. They had 5 of the boys meeting at the museum the other week.

**How could The Torch's program improve?**

I always sort of said we as Koorie men and women in jail - when we get out we're always battling financially. If there was a way the art could be sold by people doing time in jail and the money or a % put away for them, something like that would really help. Because blokes and women crave being stable when they're outside. It's so expensive when people get out. Looking at the return to prison rates within the first year, which are extra for Koories, and I think it comes down to finance. Hypothetically if I'd just sold a painting for a few hundred dollars each month for 12 months there'd be money for me to be stable, buy a fridge, or a car upon release, to help me get ahead.

**What are their greatest strengths?**

It would be the opportunity to be recognised as an artist. When you pursue it upon release, you can put your name to it as an artist. (The man also indicated that it meant he was no longer just known for having done time for crime – but rather – he benefitted from having a positive and empowering label – the artist).

Building confidence and my trust - the trust and confidence is huge. My personal demons get the better of me sometimes, and are the biggest threat. I think Kent's building trust and a good name in the prisons.

**Would you like to see the program continue?**

Yes definitely. Definitely, 100%. I've still got a lot of family in jail and this (my success/ approval) will have an impact on them. I'm seen as an older boy, so if they see I've been involved it will influence their participation.

**Finally – what has been the most unexpected, or unplanned change for you, that's occurred either planned, or unplanned, as a direct result of your involvement with the program?**

Other than what I've already said, I think it's helped me grow and not be impatient. I approached the Koorie Heritage Trust with (one of my paintings) and they offered me between \$600 and \$700 dollars for it, and I was disappointed because I knew it was worth more. And then, with Kent's support, I got \$2,000 for it. I used to sell didges for \$800 each. The market has changed. Knowing not to accept what someone's offering first, that's been a big change.

## **9.2.6 Participant 6**

### ***Reflecting back to your time in prison***

#### **While you were inside, do you think the Torch program had an impact on prisoners?**

Oh yeah, most definitely. Having the Torch come in there put us on a high. It gave us hope. Built our encouragement up. It was a joy really. I'm staying out of trouble.

#### **How do you know this – what did you see?**

They were always so encouraging of us. It really helped us to move forward. To keep out of trouble. It helped us take our anger and put it into art.

#### **In your experience, do you think making art helped address some of the needs of Koorie Prisoners? Can you explain this?**

Oh yeah for sure. It helps take your mind off the bullshit. It keeps them occupied. And they encouraged us to get the ideas flowing. I think the program stopped me from having a nervous breakdown and some of the fellas committing suicide or doing something stupid. Making art in prison helps take their mind off everything, all of the anger and everything. When they have access to making art in prison, they can do what they want to do. Their ideas can all go onto canvas. I think Torch saved some lives. They saved a lot.

### ***Program Specific***

#### **I'm interested in knowing what part of your involvement with Kent, and the program, has been most valuable to you?**

Torch coming in made us feel like a human being. Not scum. Their coming in and giving me help and encouragement. Advising on our work, like 'We need to see more colour etc'. It really turned my work around. Having someone outside who cared about what we were doing inside was really important. And giving us feedback, pushing us. It showed they cared. They didn't judge. Having people care about the fellas and take an interest in what they were doing...well...it's given me hope to turn my life around, which I wasn't expecting.

#### **Has the program/Kent had an impact on your own artwork development?**

Most definitely, and it had an impact on others. The guys wouldn't be pushing themselves nearly as hard otherwise.

#### **Do you think the support offered through the program has had an impact on people's families?**

Yes. Yes. Yes. It makes them proud of their child because of what they've become now. For families to see in their sons a softness. Their son's growth. They're blooming. There's a shine to their face, not just that evil look. Parents are looking at their kids thinking, 'It's art that's doing it'. It makes parents really proud. Even with the exhibitions, families were really proud.

#### **Do you think the things you've learned about art, techniques, materials, exhibiting, and marketing, are helping you outside?**

Oh look... yeah it has! The turn around has been huge: to use your imagination. The program urged me to be creative. If I didn't meet them, I probably wouldn't be doing art. I'd still be mucking around in prison. The more I heard from them, the more I thrived for sure.

Look, I'm going fantastic. I should be starting work in a couple of weeks. I've been invited by an Aboriginal Art Centre to teach wood burning, so yeah, I've picked up a job teaching art one day per

week. It's an art centre with a little art gallery and a gift store. Aboriginal run. I've been accepted in the community and I've just had fantastic support. It's awesome.

**With The Torch's support, have you made other community links, or tapped into other programs, exhibitions or opportunities?**

Developing the relationship with Torch pushed me more with me art for sure. But when I got out, I didn't expect to hear from them ever again. But instead, the constant contact makes me thrive with me art. Hearing from Kent and having people call, and push me on, makes me go hard now.

I've taken one step at a time. It's a slow process but you've got to stay positive and focused. One step at a time. Especially asking for help. Outside I thought initially I could do it all myself. It wasn't the case. I've got a wonderful caseworker. He wants me to join the men's group and to teach my art skills to the Elders. So I'm taking on a leadership role. It's overwhelming. It's awesome. I've come from a rough area and really rough background. It's given me a second chance to make a fresh start. I love it.

Youth here are getting into trouble with the law a bit. So the community have approached me about being a mentor. Taking on a mentor role with the young fellas. To encourage them not to go down the wrong path. To encourage them to re-connect to culture.

**How could The Torch's program improve?**

I'd like to see it grow – I suppose. Go to each prison more regularly. Ask the prisoners what else they would need to make things easier for them while they're inside prison.

**What are their greatest strengths?**

Being direct. Open and honest. But not nasty about it. They're not sayin' "That's shit". It's a caring way that pushes us, and puts the fellas in a line to be a stronger artist. More people are makin' art. They're (Torch staff) positive, honest and pushing us. They've played a big role for the boys. Now some of the boys are getting' involved with the police in a positive way. What a turn around. (The project) has made a positive impact. Definitely.

**Would you like to see the program continue?**

For sure. For sure. Keep it running. I've told (The interstate Aboriginal art centre where he now spends time) about the Torch project and they just think it's wonderful. So other Aboriginal groups interstate now know about the program. I'd love to see it go Australia wide. I'd love to see em' get on A current Affair – 60 minutes. Get it out there.

It turned peoples lives around. Torch gave people encouragement and hope to revitalise and to fulfil their dreams. It's 'cause they're fair dinkum. They cared. They pushed. And when I was out, always ringing with opportunities or talk and urging me on.

**Finally – what has been the most unexpected, or unplanned change for you, that's occurred either planned, or unplanned, as a direct result of your involvement with the program?**

I found myself. I got to know who I am through the program. The focus on culture – I'm definitely more positive. I hold my head up high now. It's true, I'm more proud of who I am. And I'm more open. Look people are telling me...they're looking at me and they're saying, 'You're growing mate. Mate you're growing'. I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you.

The main thing for the blokes in prison is to have some hope. This program said there's a better place out there. And there is. But you have to work for it. You've got to want it. You got to work at it. If you do, you can achieve anything. I've done it. I'm living proof.

## 9.3 Appendix C: Prison Staff Surveys (ALOs/AWOS)

### 9.3.1 Participant 1

**How has the program assisted in addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners?**

Good outlet for expression

Good hobby

**Do you think the program has had a positive or a negative impact on individual prisoners? Have you noticed a change in them? Please provide details.**

Positive – sense of pride

**Do you think the program has had any educational value for the prisoners you have been working with? Please provide details.**

Yes – focus their attention on research

**Have the prisoners you have worked with been keen to explore art careers as a consequence of this program? If so, what have they expressed a desire to do?**

Not really

**Has the program had any impact on your own work in the prisons? Has there been any educational value of the program to you?**

Gives focus to activities

**In your opinion, what have been the most positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

Materials and sense of purpose

**In your opinion, what have been the least positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

Need more residents taking part

**If the program continues in the future, in your opinion how could it be improved?**

As many materials supplied as possible

**Do you think there is value in the program continuing? If so, why?**

Yes – great outlet for offenders.

**Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to add?**

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### **9.3.2 Participant 2**

**How has the program assisted in addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners?**

Support with their art career  
Methods of painting  
Support in regards to transition after leaving prison  
Connection to culture  
Identity  
Self-esteem/confidence

**Do you think the program has had a positive or a negative impact on individual prisoners?  
Have you noticed a change in them? Please provide details.**

Positive – the prisoners have been very happy to be involved in the program.

**Do you think the program has had any educational value for the prisoners you have been working with? Please provide details.**

Yes – Kent has been able to assist with prisoners learning about their culture and country.

**Have the prisoners you have worked with been keen to explore art careers as a consequence of this program? If so, what have they expressed a desire to do?**

Yes – prisoners have been stating that they will continue painting upon release, however at other times they have ceased painting once released.

**Has the program had any impact on your own work in the prisons? Has there been any educational value of the program to you?**

Their paintings help to keep them occupied while they are incarcerated and out of trouble.

**In your opinion, what have been the most positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

Connection to culture, pride in their work, possible career paths.

**In your opinion, what have been the least positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

Another person in the same position as Kent would be helpful as there are a lot of prisoners across the state.

**If the program continues in the future, in your opinion how could it be improved?**

More staff connecting with prisoners (like Kent).

**Do you think there is value in the program continuing? If so, why?**

Yes – I think learning about culture is very valuable and the extra support is very helpful to both the prisoners and the prison staff.

**Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to add?**

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### **9.3.3 Participant 3**

#### **How has the program assisted in addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners?**

We were running art programs before the Torch was up and running as we are a maximum-security prison – we only have access to art room. Two hours on Tuesday and Thursday, numbers vary as we are a remand prison too and guys are moved on through the system.

#### **Do you think the program has had a positive or a negative impact on individual prisoners? Have you noticed a change in them? Please provide details.**

As stated, depends on how long they stay at remand. I think once they are sentenced they have more structure and programs that they can attend.

#### **Do you think the program has had any educational value for the prisoners you have been working with? Please provide details.**

All the prisoners who have attended have a positive attitude and are encouraged to continue with their art.

#### **Have the prisoners you have worked with been keen to explore art careers as a consequence of this program? If so, what have they expressed a desire to do?**

Most will paint while in custody, but once out find it hard as they need to adjust back to normal life. Only a handful paint on the outside, they want to find employment and can't feed their families on selling art work.

#### **Has the program had any impact on your own work in the prisons? Has there been any educational value of the program to you?**

As an artist I have found working with the guys educational as we learn together.

#### **In your opinion, what have been the most positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

I have just started back working in prisons – still need a bit of time to adjust.

#### **In your opinion, what have been the least positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

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#### **If the program continues in the future, in your opinion how could it be improved?**

Need more information on when exhibition will be and time to provide art works. Also as guys are being moved to other prisons it is hard.

#### **Do you think there is value in the program continuing? If so, why?**

Anything to help these guys is a bonus – they just need support on the outside.

#### **Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to add?**

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### **9.3.4 Participant 4**

#### **How has the program assisted in addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners?**

By giving them the opportunity to learn about their culture and keeping them busy while in prison.  
Learning experience.

#### **Do you think the program has had a positive or a negative impact on individual prisoners? Have you noticed a change in them? Please provide details.**

This program has been really positive in many ways as it has given many of the prisoners the opportunity to change their ways and state of mind. It gives them a chance to be proud of something they have done, not only this but gives them job opportunities to earn a living to support their families when released.

#### **Do you think the program has had any educational value for the prisoners you have been working with? Please provide details.**

This program gets them back in touch with their culture and teaches them to express themselves through their paintings, whether it is by way of telling their story or giving a message.

#### **Have the prisoners you have worked with been keen to explore art careers as a consequence of this program? If so, what have they expressed a desire to do?**

I have had many prisoners wanting to pursue this as a career and some that are still doing art after being released and selling their pieces. I also have many that just do it to pass the time whilst in prison as it keeps them busy.

#### **Has the program had any impact on your own work in the prisons? Has there been any educational value of the program to you?**

I find it has been educational to me in the way of making art and the different types of art depending on your mob – it's interesting learning about a different mob other than your own.

#### **In your opinion, what have been the most positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

To see them learning their culture and being proud to know who they are and where they're from, but also that doing art has made them positive while in prison and upon release.

#### **In your opinion, what have been the least positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

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#### **If the program continues in the future, in your opinion how could it be improved?**

More books about different cultures and art could be beneficial for them and on different ways to paint. More guys being able to attend the art program as there is a limit.

#### **Do you think there is value in the program continuing? If so, why?**

Yes – because it keeps their culture alive and it is something to keep them busy and to be proud of.

#### **Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to add?**

Big thank you to all the work The Torch does.

### **9.3.5 Participant 5**

**How has the program assisted in addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners?**

Helps to maintain their connections with the community – in a cultural context. The program assists with ensuring that rehabilitation is not confined to welfare and treatment programs. It is a positive opportunity to increase their understanding of self and facilitates change.

**Do you think the program has had a positive or a negative impact on individual prisoners? Have you noticed a change in them? Please provide details.**

One of our program participants, who has done several prison sentences over many years, has now established himself in the community for a longer period than he has previously – he has not reoffended.

**Do you think the program has had any educational value for the prisoners you have been working with? Please provide details.**

Yes – particularly in relation to understanding country and culture.

**Have the prisoners you have worked with been keen to explore art careers as a consequence of this program? If so, what have they expressed a desire to do?**

Yes – the evidence is in their lifestyle changes post release.

**Has the program had any impact on your own work in the prisons? Has there been any educational value of the program to you?**

N/A

**In your opinion, what have been the most positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

It is a great non-statutory tool – you can talk about art and not jail, nor corrections orders. It helps workers post release to greater understand the individual.

**In your opinion, what have been the least positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

N/A

**If the program continues in the future, in your opinion how could it be improved?**

More resources and staff

**Do you think there is value in the program continuing? If so, why?**

Absolutely – it lends itself to culture, understanding and vocational opportunities.

**Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to add?**

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### **9.3.6 Participant 6**

**How has the program assisted in addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners?**

The program has assisted especially when prisoners get released. In the past, prisoners had no avenue to turn to with their artwork. Now they have Kent to assist them to continue their works.

**Do you think the program has had a positive or a negative impact on individual prisoners? Have you noticed a change in them? Please provide details.**

It has had a positive change – prisoners appear to be more relaxed and focused.

**Do you think the program has had any educational value for the prisoners you have been working with? Please provide details.**

It has an educational value because they teach each other to advance in their progress. It also teaches them more about their country and culture through art.

**Have the prisoners you have worked with been keen to explore art careers as a consequence of this program? If so, what have they expressed a desire to do?**

Absolutely – they have explored art from their own tribal areas.

**Has the program had any impact on your own work in the prisons? Has there been any educational value of the program to you?**

I see positive change – the program is healing and educational. It has helped open doors to further programs within the corrections system.

**In your opinion, what have been the most positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

That the prisoner is keen to learn and explore new ideas.

**In your opinion, what have been the least positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

Wishing Kent was at the location more often – needing specialist brushes.

**If the program continues in the future, in your opinion how could it be improved?**

Regular visits from Kent, better art supplies and resources.

**Do you think there is value in the program continuing? If so, why?**

Yes, prisoners need guidance once released. Kent can guide the prisoner in the right direction in terms of building clientele, exhibitions, costing etc.

**Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to add?**

Keep up the good work.

### **9.3.7 Participant 7**

**How has the program assisted in addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners?**

The feeling of being a part of something big and positive, knowing that hundreds would be viewing your work.

**Do you think the program has had a positive or a negative impact on individual prisoners? Have you noticed a change in them? Please provide details.**

Very positive because they were excited to know about the viewing, then sent home to family when finished.

**Do you think the program has had any educational value for the prisoners you have been working with? Please provide details.**

Not sure, only had two from here that are not in prison anymore.

**Have the prisoners you have worked with been keen to explore art careers as a consequence of this program? If so, what have they expressed a desire to do?**

Have had 2 prisoners show interest in an actual career and are prominent at art shows.

**Has the program had any impact on your own work in the prisons? Has there been any educational value of the program to you?**

Impact for me would be hearing the positive feedback and excitement from the prisoners involved. However in terms of education, not really.

**In your opinion, what have been the most positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

The excitement of being part of something huge in the way of their artwork being in galleries and then being asked to send to other galleries as a result.

**In your opinion, what have been the least positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

N/A

**If the program continues in the future, in your opinion how could it be improved?**

Kent to do a few more visits to the prisoners before the actual exhibition, so that the boys get used to having him around and trust him and the program.

**Do you think there is value in the program continuing? If so, why?**

Making art is a positive lifestyle that all can do together, in which they can all relate to.

**Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to add?**

Proud of the program, so keep it going.

### **9.3.8 Participant 8**

#### **How has the program assisted in addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners?**

I believe that it has given the Indigenous men of the prison an opportunity to express themselves in not only traditional forms of art work, but also in experimenting with new more innovative forms of art. Any form of Indigenous program in a prison enables groups of men from different areas to come together and express their views and share their knowledge. Providing such programs allows them to use their prison time constructively and not fall into anti social patterns of drug use.

#### **Do you think the program has had a positive or a negative impact on individual prisoners? Have you noticed a change in them? Please provide details.**

Any challenge that can be placed in front of these men is a positive thing. Overcoming the issues that they have in the prison follows onto the issues that they have in the community. It also has a therapeutic value on their behaviour as they are using their time constructively to create things that they can keep or give to family members. Presenting work that the prisoners know will be viewed by elders in the community and the community itself is a great honour to them.

#### **Do you think the program has had any educational value for the prisoners you have been working with? Please provide details.**

Having someone like Kent run the program I feel gives the program great credibility. He knows many of the areas that the individual men come from and many of their family. He has the ability to turn up with images of their men's home country plus words that are used in that part of the country and their meaning. If anything I believe that it should be promoted more heavily.

#### **Have the prisoners you have worked with been keen to explore art careers as a consequence of this program? If so, what have they expressed a desire to do?**

Many of the men have wanted to explore careers in art once they are released. Realistically only a handful have the ability to make a living in the community. With that being said it is a valuable tool that can be used by organisations like the men's shed etc.

#### **Has the program had any impact on your own work in the prisons? Has there been any educational value of the program to you?**

Being non-Indigenous I am always looking for strong Aboriginal men like Kent from the community to come into the prison and act in a pro social role with the inmates. I have been lucky to meet a number of men and women like Kent in the year that I have been doing this role – it adds credibility to my role and allows the men to mix with a lot of different people from the wider community.

#### **In your opinion, what have been the most positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

Giving the men a platform in the community to display their art.

#### **In your opinion, what have been the least positive/helpful elements of the program for both you and the prisoners?**

Probably the paperwork aspect of the job – as we potentially have 84 men here.

#### **If the program continues in the future, in your opinion how could it be improved?**

I would like to see it run as a full yearly program linked in with the current TAFE courses that we have running on site

#### **Do you think there is value in the program continuing? If so, why?**

It links men with their own culture. It can be argued that this lack of culture or anomie is why the men commit crimes in the first place.

**Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to add?**

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## 9.4 Appendix D: Prison Staff Group Discussion

**Interviewer:** How many of you are involved in the program and who are in contact with the prisoners who are part of the program?

**Female:** Is this just doing an assessment on the compliance or the exhibition?

**Interviewer:** No not the actual exhibition - you guys all know Kent— basically the Torch is running a program called Statewide Prison Arts Officer Program and its both being in contact with the prisoners whilst in prison and post release and keeping in contact with them and connecting them with service providers.

**Male and female acknowledge answer:** Yes

**Interviewer:** OK the first question to get you guys talking. We are interested in hearing about your experience with the power of art making within the prisons and the impact of this art on indigenous prisoners and in particular changes you have noticed because of this program?

**Male:** Do you want me to speak about our location? There are a couple of guys that came in and started painting first time and Kent comes down probably once every 4-6 weeks to show them were to start and to give them some advice on brush techniques and what kind of colors and hues to use and also paint some artworks from their country or wherever they are from. A lot of artists these days tend to do a lot of dot work, it is not just about dot work but that is not all aboriginal art work is about, there are other forms of art work out there that people are not sure of. That is where Kent comes in and also provides information and Kent brings a lot of stuff from the internet for the guys to read up on and use for their artwork. For example Kent bought along some information on a guy last week who paints a lot of plants in his art work. Some of those plants Kent noticed were not indigenous plants so then Kent did some research and went back and found out which country he was from and now that prisoner can is utilizing those native plants where he is from in his artwork. So he gives a lot of valuable information to the guys especially the new guys beginning their artwork and Kent is also in contact with me on regular basis following up on their progress as well and this is good staying in contact with each other. Kent sends a lot of detail to me which I also pass onto the prisoner. Yes so it is really good.

**Interviewer:** Anyone else?

Male with deep voice: I've only just recently returned to MRC so on Tuesdays and Thursdays we do art and I spoke to Kent just the other day about coming down and introducing himself – about where he's from and his country.

**Interview:** Anyone else?

**Different male voice:** Yeah, I work for the Brosnan Centre and Kent rings me every week and we talk about plans and organise when we go on field trips. I give him some names of plants and so asked them for his artwork, yes he is helpful and I'm glad we traveled together starting next month so is good, we are brothers like that.

**Interviewer:** Anyone else?

**Male voice:** We had a prisoner that constantly keeps coming back into prison, good artist! And ever since Kent's come on board he is working with this prisoner during his time in incarceration but that also now that he is out this prisoner has now sold a few of his artwork and continues on with his artwork with Kent's help and I just believe if he continues on with his artwork, plus with Kent assisting him with building up his clientele and that sort of stuff, that I don't believe he will come back to jail where previously he did not have that support and so he just probably stopped doing his artwork which is what happened in the past to him and a lot of guys as he did not know were to go and which direction to take with their artwork. So hopefully if all goes well Kent can organize at some stage a gallery exhibition for this prison/prisoners so obviously a positive coming

out of all of this and with Kent's assistance especially on the outside as well a lot of these guys can continue their artwork and hopefully never come back to prison.

**Interviewer:** Have you guys noticed changes in behavior of the prisoners in prison about how they go about their daily work and lives?

**Male voice:** There definitely has been. I have noticed especially that doing artwork is more relaxing. We have art program at Marngoneet two programs - one for education and also one that I run after hours and I notice that the guys seem very settled whilst doing their artwork and in a different frame of mind and I just believe having this sort of program in prison, it's part of the healing process and its definitely a benefit to be able to offer it and if we didn't have this sort of program in prison I just think that what kills a prisoner more than anything else is boredom and with nothing to do, most likely get himself in trouble whereas this way we are introducing the programs to the prisoners and they keep themselves busy and they are learning and yes so it's definitely good.

**Woman's voice:** Yes and I think generally too it comes down to the fact that a lot of programs and classes aren't voluntary, whereas with this one the prisoners want to participate yet don't necessarily have to participate. They are already working on this huge thing that they want to do, rather than have this compulsory art so that's another thing and so that learning that everybody is at different levels of knowing about their culture and the learning opportunity for them as well. Also they are interested to learn about their culture and learn about what other fellas know about their cultures as well. It's helping to build their identity and putting a few pieces about their culture back together and also introduce new pieces about their culture which builds them up again with knowledge that they were not necessarily aware of and this in turn is building them up as individuals.

**Interviewer:** What do you guys think of reconnecting them again to their culture and that process? Is this a positive thing?

**Male voice:** Some guys come into prison not having that connection to their culture and their community for whatever reason and we can bring that back. When they first come in we speak to them and try finding out where they are from and hopefully get someone from those communities involved. Some of them come into the prisons to see the prisoners just as a general visit; it could be men's business, so yes we do try to emphasize and strengthen that connection and the ties with the community, their culture and their art is a big part of that as well. This is not just in the form of running camps, it could be poetry and that sort of stuff as well as the art work and motivation as well. There is a variety of things that these prisoners can do as not everybody is an artist some are just musicians. There are other things that matter as well.

**Interviewer:** Have the prisoners talked about art only being inside time? Or have they expressed an interest in pursuing art careers once released?

**Male voice:** Yes before Kent came in it was just inside time, and it would cease once released. But now, they continue.

**Female voice:** Something to pass the time really. Now it is promoted to them that if you do this now so then when you get out you are armed with a whole stack of art work, whatever sort that may be and that you are leaving better off than when you came in basically. So then they have someone to go to and a point of contact as they had the contact made whilst on the inside and so when they are on the outside there is someone they can draw on and go to who has the knowledge of the art world and stuff that they were potentially missing beforehand so they have got something to do and somewhere to go

**Male voice:** I had a lot of fellas that once they got out they won't pick up a brush because they don't have time to paint. It's hard they have to make a living so they just forget about it. Which is a shame.

**Female voice:** We have quite a few guys who've been released, and now that they have they're selling their artwork. Kent has been a really big part of this – we've had really good feedback from Kent. It makes me really happy actually when they're so proud of their artwork and culture. It's a big change. It's always good to hear.

**Male voice:** It's something that all of the prisoners can relate to – you know they might be in there for completely different offences but when it comes to their artwork they can help each other and teach each other. By the time that they get out, it's something that they're very good at and that they can all talk about – it's something that they are all interested in. It also means that you've got some of the older fellas who are talking and making art, then all of a sudden a new guy comes in who doesn't know anything about their culture and they're able to teach him. That's what this program gives them – the knowledge. They help each other a lot with it – it's relaxing, and they're there for each other, which is really good to see.

**Interviewer:** This maybe a similar question but have you witnessed or noticed a change in attitudes since Kent's direct involvement in either as a lead up to Confined or as a result of his visits. Can you see more contact with families or with community members from the outside?

**Male voice:** can't hear...

**Interviewer:** Do you guys have a lot of contact with the family members?

**Male voice:** Yeah we make a lot of calls to family members. So yeah, we have a lot of contact with family members. I cannot see any difference in regards to having more visits or more family but in general I see prisoners staying clear of drug activity or prison politics mostly they stay focused on their artwork you know because they work really hard and when they have time they go straight to their artwork and that's a good thing cause they are keeping out of trouble.

**Different Male voice:** It also sets them a goal, because they don't see their family much you know it's hard to get their missus and half a dozen kids coming 500 miles and so doing their artwork it's really something for them to focus on, so they can send it home, and when they go home it will earn them some money so they can pay the bills even though it is a struggle. It's really hard for families while their husbands are in jail. So it's a goal setting so that when they finish their work it's something they can be really proud of, and something to learn from.

**Female voice:** They produce a lot of artwork that they exhibit for NAIDOC week, and also for people that are coming into the prisons. Giving artwork to and thanking the GM. So there are certain times during their sentence when that sort of thing happens that they are not just a prisoner, they're an artist and so they have a different sort of identity. And that is something that you can see and that makes them feel pretty chuffed about especially when you see people asking after their artwork or saying thanks very much for doing that fabulous work. So that is a boost for them but as I said they are not they are then not prisoners they are artists. And even though that is only one function it still is a positive thing.

**Male voice:** The prisoners do donate a lot of work around here they do have a number of functions around here. When I have asked them to do other things there is no hesitation for instance we have asked them to do some painting and they happily agree without complaint. I have never had anyone say 'no I can't because I'm not getting paid for it or what's in it for us'. I have asked them to do artwork so we can donate it to visitors. We have had some functions were we require a donation as well like the football game and the guys who are the more confident speak to the visitors and its good to see as we feel its giving back to the community. It's not just about the prisoner trying to get something out of it not financial. In the prison setting they cannot make a profit but they still donate their works, which they do not have to and some of their artwork is worth a lot of money but they do it anyway because they know its giving something back which is a good thing.

**Interviewer:** I guess it differs from each prison but where do they do their painting? In their cells or more like an organized structured environment?

**Male voice:** We try and keep it in one structured area if we can. We have had it relocated to the Koori Centre here and that way the guys can come in here to do their artwork. During out of hours times they can take their work back to their cells. They can take supplies from the Koori Centre back to there cell. The Koori Centre supplies the canvasses and paint for the prisoners to use.

**Interviewer:** Have you had feedback from the prisoners themselves whether it is better for them to do their artwork in their cell or at the Koori Centre in an organised setting? Do they have a preference?

**Male voice:** Well the prisoners always like to paint I know most of my guys like it here in a group cause they can turn the radio on and do their artwork in this group setting. Unfortunately we are a programmed prison and these programs come first basically for us it has to be here at the Koori Centre but we are open after hours. The guys come here after hours but they do not have because it is a voluntary program to but they do and can spend up to two hours at the Centre each week. Sometimes they might come up there with their artwork but they may decide not to paint they may come up to make a beaded necklace. There is always something going on which is good.

**Interviewer:** In the next couple of months they will be developing and publishing a simple, practical art support guide to assist staff or add to your library of art resources so my question to you is would there be anything particularly helpful to you or your colleagues to assist in the awareness of the arts sector and to support the development of this?

**Male voice:** Probably a library of books on as many Koori tribes as possible in Victoria, NSW and South Australia. Sometimes it is hard to get information on those tribal areas. This would be great as then we could research and obtain more information on the indigenous prisoners and their cultural background. And if possible if that could be arranged a library of books on those tribal areas with specific artwork to those areas would be good. Also maybe a range of art suppliers would be good as well.

**Another Male voice:** Standard sized canvases.

**Interviewer:** What were you saying about brush strokes?

**Male voice:** Yes also books on techniques and also suppliers of good brushes as unfortunately we don't have all the brushes here that the prisoners need, like special line brushes and all that. So a list of places where those sort of things can be obtained to help their artwork progress even further.

**Female voice:** Books and information on symbols and their tribes.

**Interviewer:** Any more technical information that might help you guys in your work?

**Male voice:** Just the expertise is all we need from Kent so that we can ask questions, the best way to follow on with their artwork and getting the answers for the prisoners and being able to speak up for them with some information that the prisoner may need to progress in their artwork. I think that is the best way to learn. It's working for us here at the moment.

## 9.5 Appendix E: Stakeholder Interviews

### 9.5.1 Participant 1

**Interviewer:** What has been your involvement with the Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prison's and Community Program?

**JA:** Well for two years, ending last December I was the Aboriginal Liaison Officer in the Grampians region. And we've done a couple of art exhibitions, two with The Torch project and one with Brambush.

**Interviewer:** So you've been in contact with the program for over two years now?

**JA:** Yes that's correct.

**Interviewer:** Do you think the program has helped addressed the needs of Aboriginal prisoners?

**JA:** Immensely, yes. It's encouraged them to use the talents that they have, gives them self-confidence and some self belief in their own ability.

**Interviewer:** How do you know this?

**JA:** Through observing and working with them on a daily basis. Even with other matters, the self-confidence that they get from recognition from their art, it just changes their whole persona in the prison system.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me what, if any, effect the program has had on the wider community?

**JA:** It's allowed them to understand that the people in prison are human, and that they have talents other than the ones that aren't socially and community accepted ones. Allowed them to tell their story within the community.

**Interviewer:** How do you know this?

**JA:** Talking with community members and the written feedback the Indigenous guys got especially from their art exhibitions in Brambuck and through the Torch. The feedback that they get is just awesome. It encourages them as individuals, because their first name may be on their paintings and it address them by their first name. They'll get letter that say for example, "Dear John..." and that just absolutely raises their self-esteem beyond any recognisable level.

**Interviewer:** With its joint inside/outside focus, do you think the program could help to reduce recidivism?

**JA:** Look it can, we can't expect miracles. What it has done is now one of our better artists who has now been released from location some time ago, he's now been living up in Queensland and he's assisting young Indigenous guys with art. That was never thought possible when he came to prison, he had never painted before he got to Ararat (prison). It's allowed this guy to go up there and teach.

**Interviewer:** How could this be measured?

**JA:** This guy is only one, but there have been a number that have now left here and have gained some sort of employment or recognition through their art – and to date I can think of three of them personally, and none of them have come back to prison. So that would be a part in keeping them going on the outside.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me what, if any, impact the program has had on families?

**JA:** Strangely enough we had a number of letters sent into me from families and a number of phone calls commenting on how the person has changed in their personality due to their artwork, and that's because they're being recognised.

**Interviewer:** Are you aware of the program building any sustainable post-release partnerships?

**JA:** I do believe the likes of Kent and Alison have been working with them since they've been out. That's a lot of pre-release work and also once they've been released they've been getting some assistance from Alison and Kent which is certainly helping them stay out (of prison) and keep them on the straight and narrow.

**Interviewer:** What other suggestions can you make that would assist the program to do this?

**JA:** Just keep the program running, and obviously get bigger and better. More exhibitions is always good, I know they're expensive and a big thing, very time consuming. But the more their artwork is out there and the more feedback these fellas get, the better reaction we're getting.

**Interviewer:** Has the program had any impact on your own work?

**JA:** It's certainly allowed me to encourage the guys a lot more with their artwork, it's allowed me to gain a little bit of assistance as far as purchasing art supplies and such yes. People recognise the ability of some of these guys, and they're out to support it and just something we can touch on that was the local policemen at Halls Gap visited the Indigenous guys and bought in quite a few dollars worth of art supplies.

**Interviewer:** What feedback have you had about the program from others?

**JA:** A lot of staff here have recognised the Torch project working here and their work with the Indigenous guys. The staff here have recognised the differences in the prisoners themselves. Just better behaviour, more dedicated to their art work, a little bit of a focus instead of just being a bit blasé about everything, they're focused on their artwork and which helps staff work with the guys on other matters as well. So just general behaviour within the prison, I believe this (the program) has huge significance. Mind you I don't think it cures everything, but it certainly does help. This is all documented in their IMP files.

**Interviewer:** How do you think the program could improve?

**JA:** More exhibitions, and more of the likes of Alison and Kent coming out and visiting the locations, it just really assists the guys when I let them know they're coming – they get all their artwork ready, they're dedicated to finishing their work and the advice that they get from Torch representatives is just invaluable. General encouragement, advice on marketing, on their artistic flair, what they could do to improve it. You know some of the guys might ask Alison how they could improve their artwork and she'll give them her take on it, and they'll take all of that onboard. So to receive that sort of information from people that they respect, really does help them. Instead of just painting a picture, they're starting to really tell a story, in essence.

**Interviewer:** What are the best elements of the program?

**JA:** The advice and just being able to get their artwork out there to the general public in exhibitions.

**Interviewer:** Do you think there's value in the program continuing?

**JA:** Absolutely, absolutely.

**Interviewer:** Why?

**JA:** It continues the good work that has been done in the past. As artists move through the system, we've got a whole new group of Indigenous guys in here now but they still talk about the Torch program and the opportunity to put things out there.

## **9.5.2 Participant 2**

**Interviewer:** What has been your involvement with the Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in prisons and community program?

**AD:** Well basically we get clients here post release. At the initial assessment most of them put down that they want to continue with art or any other things so we follow up that up with them. Of course it comes up in the case management thing we do with them. Not all of them do art but for those that do, we look at other groups who are involved with art. We also have an art place at the Brosnan Centre in Collingwood.

When I first started they told me about The Torch and that it is the only place you can work with them if you have got an artist. I think one of them used to work here before he helped sort of set up, Johnny King? So he said to me 'don't forget The Torch' you must remember this. Then when he was in jail I used to visit him and he used to do a lot of art, I said to him 'when you come out we can help you get art material and also we can work with The Torch' but I think Kent was already in contact with him at the same time I was. So that is how I sort of started working with The Torch and Alison met me through a client who was an artist too. That artist is still here. We meet in Richmond because I was his caseworker.

I then went to the Exhibition – NAIDOC Week Exhibition in St Kilda. That is where we read a review on Torch. I find it pretty good working with Kent and that he is always responsive and we are able to work together and sort of have a theme. We have a brokerage where we can help artists and pay for their art materials.

**Interview:** How long ago did you get in contact with Torch?

**AD:** Maybe 3 or 4 years ago – when they first started the Confined exhibitions.

**Interview:** Do you think the programs help to address the needs of the Aboriginal prisoners?

**AD:** Yes I think so because when they come out of jail there is nowhere that they can continue their artwork. I think Torch has a specific role here and we can support them with case managers and their needs with their art. I am very interested in art as well and because I know artists are very special people and their thinking is different. So I know that it is very important.

The program works and I can only talk about what I see that goes through here. It works because the prisoners want to continue their work and explore and make it their profession. We help these people by developing their self-esteem, and their aspirations. Kent helps with this too. It is one thing just to work with these people as their mentor, but their needs to be more than that. Some local galleries are buying their artwork and of course this is good and we need to support the artists. The artists then feel good and they like to see their artwork on show and that is what we want and that is the end product.

I think in one way we have met the needs of those, once they are released they not only paint but have an exhibition to look forward too. See this fella Lawrence, one of his artwork was bought at the NAIDOC week exhibition it made him feel good and he said I want to do more. And also I think it has also helped them to stop drinking because they have something productive to do. There are some that do not want to continue but those that do we are here to support them not treat them like babies.

**Interviewer:** Can you also tell me what effort the Torch program has had on the wider community?

**AD:** I think the Koori Community can see that there is a program that helps prisoners when they get out of jail. It helps the released prisoners stay out of jail and not re-offend. It re-affirms the Koori Community that there is help for the released prisoners and they are proud and confident that these prisoners now have something and the hope is that they will not reoffend. The Koori

Community sometime lose faith in these prisoners and are ashamed of them and will not visit them in jail but when they see them being good and doing good then they are proud.

This sort of program changes the feelings of the Koori Community to these released prisoners so they can reconnect with them and make an impact on them. It gives the released prisoners a direction and a path to follow.

**Interviewer:** Also do you think that the joint inside and outside prison focuses that this program helps reduce reoffending?

**AD:** Oh yes, it might not be seen straight away in the beginning but is constant now and will be seen in the future. The prisoners begin by being involved in the program whilst in prison and that in turn is good for their self-esteem and a sense of ownership. With words of encouragement and direction this then encourages them to follow a path. It also opens their minds to new things apart from their artwork. This is all a good thing and they say they are on a good thing.

**Interviewer:** How will all this be measured do you think?

**AD:** Well in a way it is not hard to measure. The numbers of people that go to prison now do not return to prison or to the courts, so that is an easy way to measure. And to look at the success of this program and see that only one or two fellas go back into prison. That's how you could measure it.

**Interviewer:** Can you also tell me what if any impact the program has had on the families of these prisoners?

**AD:** Oh yes, it brings the families back together because they see the released prisoner doing artwork and they like it a lot. They all come together to support them in this, the mothers, the fathers, the daughters and sons. The families often visit them here while they are involved in the program and it reunites them and reminds them of their family values.

**Interviewer:** Do you have much contact with the families?

**AD:** Oh yes, all the time. I talk to them every time they visit. I have a released prisoner here and another in Wangaratta who tell me that this program helped reunite the whole family. This is very good. I have a lot of excellent talks with these families. There are things like a local café has given some space just for the indigenous artwork to be exhibited and the artist works in the café. It is very good. I go there now and then to talk to the café owners. I like it is part of my job.

**Interviewer:** Are you aware of the program building any sustainable post release partnerships?

**AD:** Yes many.

**Interviewer:** What other suggestions can you make so that other partnerships are sustainable?

**AD:** One thing is probably to market the strategy. We need more people like Kent. We cannot just rely on funding all the time. We need other people to promote programs; maybe the Corrections Department can get some money to do more programs like this maybe The Torch can be involved in with their people. So when the prisoners are released they can direct them to programs like Torch – that way there is a link.

**Interviewer:** Has Kent and Alison's work had any effect on your own work and the way you interact with your clients?

**AD:** Yes definitely it has affected the way I work with my clients because I do not feel so alone doing my job and it is good to have Kent and Alison available for me. I am happy for their support and being in partnership with them that way we can create and assist the client together.

**Interviewer:** Have you learnt anything from Kent's work through your clients?

**AD:** Oh yes, I learnt a lot through clients because they share their stories about what Kent is doing with them so for me having Kent and the program is leading my/our clients towards the same purpose and that is to make their lives better and getting them into the right direction and achieve their goals. It is good.

**Interviewer:** What feedback about the program from other people?

**AD:** Before I knew Kent I heard from my work colleagues here about the Torch and their work. Feedback from others say the Torch program enriches a lot of my clients because of their resources and they are able to meet their objectives.

**Interviewer:** How do you think the program could improve?

**AD:** Well, I think one of the ways is that we need more groups to know what they do and it would be good if we could have a dedicated facility to display, exhibit and sell Aboriginal Art. We can still use the show but the program could offer more resources in the form of more people working. Writing support letters like I did before and we got Kent. We need funding for these extra people.

Improvement is always a good thing in the form of extra people working within the program like Kent and also experienced artists coming in and giving their thoughts and encouragement. Also when he visits the jails, there should be more of a focus on making sure that the prisoners are linked to the outside resources. This is very important.

**Interviewer:** What do you think are the best elements of the program?

**AD:** Basically the contact that the released prisoners have with people like Kent, that's one thing and the other, is the Philosophy of the program – the objectives – it's the way they try and promote what the Torch stands for.

**Interviewer:** Do you think the program should continue to run?

**AD:** Definitely, I personally have gained a lot of insight and I am happy that my clients come to me. We have packages that once these packages are complete and the clients time is up and I see their progress and they are getting on with their life it is very rewarding for them and me.

### **9.5.3 Participant 3**

**Interviewer:** What has been your involvement with the Statewide Indigenous Art Officer in Prisons and Community Program?

**FS:** So basically, you know there is NAIDOC week every year? So basically Kent and I we sort of get together and get an art exhibition going with all of the ex-prisoners and we display them at the Victorian Police Complex and this is displayed through the whole month of July. We find generally that there is a lot of interest and sometimes sales of the artwork.

**Interviewer:** How long have you been involved in this?

**FS:** About two years I would say.

**Interviewer:** Do you think the program addresses some of the needs of the aboriginal prisoners?

**FS:** What we aim to do with the prisoners that have the artist talent, and a lot of them do, is to raise their profile as artists. We find that the display at the Victorian Police Complex is a good platform so really we also want the unnamed artists here which gives them a platform to sell their art. There are a lot of government agencies that pass through the Victorian Police Complex and also there are approximately 600-700 individuals that work here so there is a lot of exposure for the artists. This could give the artists a good lift into their future earnings.

**Interviewer:** Have you spoken to the prisoners about exhibiting at the Victorian Police Complex and how they feel about that?

**FS:** I spoke to Kent in regards to it and the feedback from him was that he felt it a great idea and most of the artists know that is what we do (the communication went through Kent) and also a few of the artists dropped in here at the Victorian Police Complex to help with the hanging of the paintings and they were really positive about the idea.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell what affect this program has had on the wider community?

**FS:** I think they fully accept it and it's brilliant as every time the artwork gets displayed people in general are really excited and enthusiastic about the work these artists produce. It is really high quality.

**Interviewer:** Have you had feedback from community members or maybe your work colleagues about the exhibition.

**FS:** Yes very positive. It is something we want to continue with every year.

**Interviewer:** With its joint inside/outside focus do you think the program could reduce recidivism?

**FS:** Basically, well let me say that we all have personal views on this, but I believe if we can give ex-inmates the opportunity to maybe able to make a living, of course this may reduce repeat offending behavior. Generally repeat offending is a livelihood issue.

**Interviewer:** Just reiterating that last question: do you believe that providing them with a source of income becomes more of a means of preventing them getting into further trouble?

**FS:** Absolutely! Because 1. It gives them focus on what they really want to do with a passion, and as I said earlier, a lot of them a very talented. Also what follows with positive feedback is that they sell their paintings it's really a confidence booster and they can make a living out of.

**Interviewer:** How do you think the connection between this and recidivism could be measured?

**FS:** I believe that the artists that we have used over the last few years can be interviewed. Sit them down and ask how they feel on a personnel level and how they felt displaying their work. This could be done in the police environment and also shows them how the police are embracing this program and how this could change the relationship between the police and the ex-inmates and ask the ex-inmates how their perception changes/d about policing. It's about building a productive relationship with them and the police community.

**Interviewer:** Have you had much contact with the ex-inmates families?

**FS:** Yes – a lot of the artists that come in when they hang their artwork they are really very proud of their achievements and so they bring their families in. When we do the NAIDOC exhibition we invite the artists and their families and you have to understand that this exhibition is very high profile. We have Chief Commissioners of policing here along with some other very high profile police staff looking at and praising the artwork and meeting the artists and their families so it as you can imagine an extremely positive thing for these people.

**Interviewer:** Are you aware of the program building any sustainable post release partnerships?

**FS:** We know that there has been commissioned work out of these exhibitions so there has been individuals coming along and purchasing artwork or contacting the artist direct and have artwork commissioned.

**Interviewer:** In terms of Victoria Police does this exhibition foster relationships with them?

**FS:** Yes of course – these artists are people that would not normally set foot in the Police building/s. And also after the NAIDOC exhibition finishes after the one month duration we have a closing ceremony which incorporates speeches and a luncheon so that gives the individual artists the opportunity to speak to people as there are many people who attend this ceremony high stake holders not only within the police force but the wider community. This gives the artists the opportunity to see the police in a relaxed and informal environment and see them as people rather than just police. This breaks down barriers.

**Interviewer:** What other suggestions can you to help assist the program do this?

**FS:** A lot of the artwork that is displayed is from unknown artists and I think that the pricing of the paintings are a little too high. I think this can make it a little difficult for these ex-inmates to sell their work quicker and so I have suggested to Kent that we should start off with a fairly medium price range particularly for the unknown or newer artists until they get more of a footing in the Indigenous art world. I think the pricing on this artwork should be a little more moderate.

**Interviewer:** Apart from the NAIDOC week do you think that there could be any other partnerships along with Victoria Police that could establish the artists?

**FS:** Yes – I think you should look at Arts Victoria, I think they do a lot of work throughout the whole year with Aboriginal artists and I think the Torch should get in contact with them. My suggestion is that I offer people a space to exhibit their work but I do not charge them for that space. I think that would be a good start.

**Interviewer:** Has the program had any impact on your own work with Victoria Police?

**FS:** Yes – everybody has been great and they think it is a great idea very positive. I do not know if you are aware but there is a NAIDOC calendar that comes out every year and Victoria Police are now featured in that calendar stating that we have an art show every year with NAIDOC.

**Interviewer:** Have you learnt anything from Kent or the artists about Aboriginal culture?

**FS:** Well as you know I work in the Indigenous Unit but although I am no expert by far but with the involvement I have had with the program and its people I have learnt from listening to their stories about their art and where they come from.

**Interviewer:** What feedback, if any, have you had from others?

**FS:** Well there were some people that did not realise the program existed and so displaying the art work has given them that awareness and also directing these people to publications and towards finding out more through the Torch is showing them the work being done and opening up their minds to what is out there for the Indigenous ex-inmates.

**Interviewer:** How do you think the program can improve in the future?

**FS:** I think just keep on the path you are on and keep pushing the program and perhaps as I said before having year round exhibitions/displays at various venues something that continues all year around and have the exhibitions at rotating locations. Get as much space as you can free of charge. Once the word is out it just grows.

**Interviewer:** What do you think are the best elements of the program?

**FS:** The individuals themselves – seeing them grow through all of the changes presented to them.

**Interviewer:** What have you seen personally?

**FS:** The humbleness that I see from the artists. They are thrilled to be able to display their work because some of their paintings have been sitting around for years, as they had nowhere to go with it or no one interested in it. I know that artwork is a very personnel thing but when these artists see how elated the purchaser is it is very overwhelming for them and incredibly uplifting.

**Interviewer:** Do you think there is value in the program and should it continue?

**FS:** Absolutely, Absolutely, Absolutely.

**Interviewer:** And why is that?

**FS:** I come from an art background and art is important for people. This paintings and artwork are important for humanity and being able to tell a story through artwork is an incredible thing. Thank you very much.

## 9.5.4 Participant 4

**Interviewer:** What has been your involvement with the Statewide Indigenous Arts Officer in Prisons and Community Program?

**TS:** I run a Certificate III in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) cultural arts course at Loddon Prison for Bendigo TAFE. Bendigo TAFE provides the education here at Loddon. The ATSI course is one provided. Our students have been able to work towards the Confined exhibition that Torch put on at the end of the year. That also links up with Kent who has been coming up to the prison to give guys the resources and information that they normally wouldn't have access to, and that I wouldn't have normally had access to. This has helped in the development of their artwork.

**Interviewer:** How long have you been involved in the program?

**TS:** From late 2011 because we got some of our students to place their artwork in the exhibition and of course all of this year.

**Interviewer:** Do you think the program addresses the needs of the Aboriginal Prisoners?

**TS:** Yes definitely, definitely it has become vital.

**Interviewer:** And how do you know that?

**TS:** Oh, just from the response from the guys, it has really given them a focus for their work – having those exhibitions. Also having contact with Kent who is also indigenous – he can really extend that stuff around family background and identity – there is a real connection and trust. We have guys from all over Victoria and inter state as well Kent. We also run ATSI cultural arts course up in Bendigo and Echuca but the difference up there is that there is a community up there and so culturally they are getting the same sort of knowledge pertinent to that community rather than the spread you have in the prisons where they indigenous men are from a much wider and scattered area so hence Kent has a bigger job to source information from every one of the prisoners communities then pass it onto them.

**Interviewer:** Have you noticed a change in the behaviour of the prisoners since their involvement in this particular program?

**TS:** Yes I think so – it's given them a more positive outlook in what they are doing which relates to the outside world. It's not just something they are doing in prison that does not have any relevance; it's linked to a future in the outside world. Kent also forms links with the guys so that when they get out of prison they have ongoing opportunities when they get out they can further their skills in that area. That is vital in prison it has been over the years that I have worked in the prison it seems that most of the programs in prison do not set them up for the outside world once they are released. When first released it is a critical time for the guys to have work or education or something so that they can change the things that bought them there in the first place.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me what the effect the program has had on the wider community if any?

**Tony Stone:** I think it has drawn people to the exhibitions with the Torch. The guys that participated in the course are encouraged to continue even if they are required to move prisons and that is one of the good things that the Torch do as they are running this same program in many of the prisons here in Victoria so that allows continuity for the prisoner within the prison community. There is a whole-ism there – a connectedness that wasn't there before with outside family and the wider community.

**Interviewer:** Have you had any feedback from the prisoners about how this program connects them to the wider community and families?

**Tony Stone:** I think before the Torch program there wasn't so much talk about their families and so it appears they have opened up about it more and are communicating with people inside and outside the prison system.

**Interviewer:** With its joint inside prison and outside prison focus do you think it could reduce recidivism?

**TS:** Yes definitely, definitely.

**Interviewer:** How do you know that?

**TS:** I think it is a vital link within the whole system where the corrections system addresses the offending behaviour of guys. You then have teams that work in the drug programs, health programs and behavioural programs there and that gets addressed. We also provide the educational programs through Bendigo TAFE for the vocational work and then what's needed is that 3<sup>rd</sup> leg from the outside that can connect this stuff up when the guys get out. To give them some sort of focus, while they're in prison, giving them something to work towards and also when they get out – just a bit of support when they get out. This is what Kent is doing with the art program in prison. I think it is vital and without people like Kent and the Torch program it's just nowhere near as effective.

**Interviewer:** How do you measure the success of this program and the reduction in recidivism?

**TS:** I'm not sure it is a really difficult one. Even with our education program it is hard to measure and this is largely due to the privacy issues throughout prison. The privacy laws prevent us from getting the relevant information from the prisons and the education of prisoners so it is difficult to measure the success of these programs. I am not sure that has changed but I can say anecdotally I really can see the benefits in a big way. And unless you can get access to the statistics it is hard to measure unfortunately. And also when the guys are released they don't want to fill out paperwork to help gather the statistics, as they want usually to put that part of their lives behind them.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me if any what impact this program has had on the prisoner's families?

**TS:** From what I have seen, and the exhibitions I've been to - it's a connection with families – for the guys to produce some work and exhibit it in a space where their families can come along and participate. I think it gives both the family and the prisoner a source of pride; it's a really positive thing. Again, just the connection with the person – we're able to take photos of the exhibition and take them back inside and show the guys the set up of the exhibition and show them people who were there. It helps that sense of separation that they feel from their families.

**Interviewer:** Are you aware of the program building any sustainable post release partnerships?

**TS:** The Torch is the only thing that I have come across that provides the continuity when they get out and are released from prison. And it provides the links for guys to follow up when they get out, so that they have contacts and places to exhibit.

**Interviewer:** What other suggestions can you make that would assist the program to build on these partnerships to be able to continue this work?

**TS:** To continue doing this work and I would love to see the program enhanced by giving it more funding as I think it is a terrific program. Kent does a wonderful job but he has to visit so many prisons so that puts him under a lot of pressure. More funding which allows more time would be fantastic and this in turn would extend the program.

**Interviewer:** Has the program had an impact on you and your programs in prison?

**TS:** Yes definitely. I am not Indigenous so having someone come into the prison who is Indigenous it reinforces things I can say to the guys but I only stick to the art techniques whereas

Kent being Indigenous is listened to and he speaks more about his identity and their identity it appears to reinforce what I teach and offer the guys as well. One of the big units we have taught in the past about indigenous identity and teaching about that and using your indigenous identity to develop your art work. We haven't been able to do that in the past but now it has been possible to marry these together because of the Kent's program, it's made it easier to bring the programs together because of the community groups forged now in prison.

**Interviewer:** What feedback from the prisoners and work colleagues?

**TS:** I've had nothing but positive feedback from the guys and staff and I think since Kent's involvement I've have more prisoners enrolled in programs, not everyone but a large number which is great probably about a 90% enrolment rate. It's great because not a lot of the indigenous prisoners enrol in programs but there is a high rate as I just said that have enrolled in the ATSI program. It is the art program that gets them into the indigenous program and if that is a positive experience for them they go onto enrol in other programs and see their future looking good. If it's a positive experience for them in prison, they're more likely to pick up TAFE when they get out, or even university level. Everyone has commented on the value of the program.

**Interviewer:** Have you had enquires from the prisoners about pursuing further Education either at TAFE or at University once they are released?

**TS:** Yes, I think since the Torch program has been running and how the guys can see that this is real – real exhibitions, real catalogues. They think 'I might be able to do this when I get out' so then they become interested in further education once released. They enquire about where the closest TAFE etc to where I will be living once I get out – Mildura?? So then we connect them with those services.

**Interviewer:** How do you think our program could improve?

**TS:** Like I said before I would like to see more contact with the prisoners with someone like Kent, he gets up when he can but he needs more on his team to lighten the load for him and more funding. When I go to these exhibitions I see guys that have got out with their families, which is great. There are probably a lot of associated activities that can be built around these exhibitions and visual arts or in individual communities. I think it is a pretty good program. I think the fact that there is a big exhibition once a year. Actually it would be good to run two exhibitions a year. So having two big ones apart of the NAIDOC one that is run within the prison where visitors come in but another would be great that keeps the prisoners busier and in turn they stay focused.

**Interviewer:** What are the best elements of the program?

**TS:** One of the best elements of the program is that it has an indigenous person coming into the prisons like Kent who passes on advice and resources. He not only does that for the prisoners but for me as well. Because of the valuable information and resources that Kent passes on I have changed my teaching a little to be able to give the guys more of what they need for their education. It has been useful for me as a teacher. The outside link up that provides that support for the guys is a very important thing.

**Interviewer:** Do you think there is value in the program continuing?

**TS:** Oh yes definitely, I would be shattered if the program stopped. I have worked in the system for a while and at this prison for a while. I would have to say the Torch program is the best thing that has happened for the prison/s. You know before this program came onboard you didn't know how the guys were doing once released and whether the work you were doing with them in prison was working well or not, you basically were flying blind. Also the attitude of the guys prior to the Torch program being implemented was 'I'm just doing this to fill in time while I am here' rather than it be seen as a path to the future on the outside. From a TAFE point of view, as you know I am a TAFE teacher I see that as our industry link, the Torch art program.

**Interviewer:** Would you like to add anything else to your comments?

**TS:** Yes I just really hope that whoever has the keys to future funding that they can keep it going and if possible increase it. I just think it is a brilliant program. I do not know who thought of it but it is a great idea.