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"TWO WAY" MANAGEMENT IN ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA"

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Abstract

Little is known about the self-managed and controlled Aboriginal Organisations in Central Australia. In fact, until recently, outside the Northern Territory many Australians had no idea that these organisations existed. Yet they have been described as 'among the most influential, important and innovative Aboriginal Organisations in Australia'[1]. To date there has been little research on how Aboriginal cultural traditions impact on the way Aboriginal controlled organisations are managed in modern Australia, nor on those who manage them. Representations of Aboriginal organisations in the popular Australian media rarely move beyond the superficial view, depicting Aboriginal organisations as all the same, and frequently in a negative light. Very little attention is paid to the reality of those who manage these organisations, nor of the value of the essential services they provide. Both of these are something which this paper sets out to address.

This paper presents a profile of the Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal managers in the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Central Australia. It was developed as part of a research project conducted in 1990 and 1995, designed to establish the training needs of the managers of these organisations. The results were translated into a curriculum for an Associate Diploma in Business (Aboriginal Organisations Management) and a Certificate in Vocational Studies, now accredited by the national training authority in Australia and offered to employees in these and other organisations in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and other remote communities by the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD). Follow-up research was conducted in 1995 as part of the process of course re-accreditation and decision-making on future directions.

"TWO WAY" MANAGEMENT IN ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA"

1. "TWO - WAY" MANAGEMENT COURSE

The Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) has been offering management training for Aboriginal people in Central Australia since 1988. IAD is a wholly Aboriginal-owned and controlled organisation, specialising in indigenous education including, art and craft, English literacy, Aboriginal languages and interpreters and cross-cultural communication.

IAD's management training is unique in Australia. In keeping with the philosophy that *'the answers are within us'*, expressed at the 1996 World Indigenous Peoples' Conference in New Mexico, the course acknowledges that Aboriginal people have demonstrated a unique management style in the organisations they have built since the 1970s in Central Australia, and that Aboriginal cultural traditions can and should impact on management. Course content therefore reflects what Aboriginal managers *do now and have done in the past* that has enabled them to create and maintain these powerful and dynamic service organisations.

The focus, therefore, is on ***"two-way management"***. It combines the existing practices which enabled Aboriginal organisations to maintain and enhance cultural survival in the community - and prosper - with an understanding of contemporary Western management theories and practices. The challenge was to develop a course tailored to Aboriginal needs, yet to gain government accreditation so that students and graduates had a portable qualification which could articulate to further education. High on the agenda is to view education as a cultural enabler, and therefore the history of the organisations in Central Australia is included in the course. Another important aim was to prepare a pool of trained future leaders for the time when the existing Directors retire. The course does not aim to impose Western management structures or solutions on community organisations. In fact, it believes that current Western management theory is moving in the direction of some of the principles upon which Aboriginal organisations have been built. It does, however, recognise that an understanding of current mainstream management practices is necessary for survival. It recognises that many Aboriginal people have been exposed in the past to models of management and education which reinforced powerlessness instead of promoting empowerment. Therefore, students are encouraged to view their own models and cultural preferences alongside Western models, and to structure the organisations and manage them according to cultural need. The course prepares students to work in both Aboriginal and mainstream government and non-government organisations, creating wider opportunities for their employment.

2. ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS

First a word about the history of the organisations in which this research was conducted, without which the findings and discussion in this paper would have no validity. The Combined Aboriginal Organisations (CAOs) of Alice Springs and Tennant Creek were 'established as a forum of managers and directors of Aboriginal Organisations'. They were designed to 'pass on information to each other in terms of delivery of essential services to the Aboriginal communities in Central Australia; to support one another's establishment; and to avoid duplication of services' (Geoff Shaw, Director, Tangentyere Council, 1995). A significant aim was that these services should be culturally relevant, self-managed, and meet community needs.

The first three service organisations began in the early 1970s. Tangentyere Council was incorporated in 1972, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (offering a medical service) in July 1973, and the Aboriginal Legal Aid Service in October 1973 (History notes ALAS; Congress

1995). Tangentyere Council, ALAS and Congress were instrumental in assisting the later organisations to form. The last, the Arrernte Council was formed in 1992.

Today these Organisations provide a legal service; a medical service; media in the form of radio, television, a viable music industry and the Internet node for Central Australia; a primary school teaching a 'two-way' Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal curriculum; the Central Land Council; a resource service for outstations; a child care agency; three councils and the already mentioned Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD). Similar organisations were set up in Tennant Creek. A list of the organisations can be seen in Figure 2.1, together with a note on the year/s of participation in this research. Such services are vital given that Aboriginal people comprise 22% of the total population of the Northern Territory (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992:19).

Figure 2.1 Combined Aboriginal Organisations (CAO)

Alice Springs

Tangentyere Council (1990, 1995)
Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (1990, 1995)
Central Land Council (1990, 1995)
Institute for Aboriginal Development (1990, 1995)
Pitjantjatjara Council (1990, 1995)
Nganampa Health Service (1990)
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (1990, 1995)
Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (1995)
Yipirina School (1990)
Ingkerreke Outstation Resource Services (1995)
Central Australian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (1995)
Arrernte Council (1995)

Tenant Creek (1990)

Papulu Apparr-Kari (Barkly Regional Aboriginal Language Centre)
Anyinginyi Congress
Nyinkka Nyunyu School Council
Julalikari Council

Aboriginal culture is the longest living culture in the world, and one of the oldest. There is evidence to suggest that it has existed for at least 40,000[2] and possibly 150,000[3] years. Despite this, Aboriginal communities have been described, together with native Americans, as among 'the most regulated people on earth[4], or as the 1990 Royal Commission in Australia was told[5], 'among the most *managed* group of people in the world' (writer's italics). The past two hundred years have seen Aboriginal cultures struggle to survive within the dominant culture and the goal of self-management is far from easy given the resources available to these relatively new organisations.

The Central Australian Combined Aboriginal Organisations (CAOs) listed in Figure 2.1 have represented for the last twenty-five years a new and independent cultural response to the colonisation which began in 1872 in Central Australia, when the Telegraph Line from Adelaide was joined for the first time between Adelaide and the Telegraph Station near the present town of Alice Springs[6]. "Pistol and brandy shots" celebrated the arrival of this technological achievement for the new, white settlers because it provided them with a communications lifeline to their cultural roots in the "old" country. For the Arrernte people, whose country the new Telegraph Station now inhabited, this event heralded the fracturing of their close association with the land and the communication and cultural links which had maintained their whole way of life (Parbury, 1986:11; Lawlor, 1991:14). The ripple effect was to take over 90 years to extend fully to all Aboriginal cultures in remote Central Australia, progressively reaching clans like the Pitjantjatjara, Luritja and Warlpiri (Goodall, 1992:12) until finally the Pintubi were brought in from the far Western Desert during the extreme drought of the late 1960s.

During the one hundred years between 1872 and 1972, the lives of Aboriginal communities in Central Australia were "managed" mainly by governments, missionaries and pastoralists, and Aboriginal access to the vital health, educational, and other community services, which they now needed because they had lost their traditional way of life, was only indirectly received, if at all. Even into the late 1980s, prior to the launching of the Australian AUSSAT satellites, essential services in remote Central Australia were confined to the thin corridor of uncertain road, and radio-telephone communications tenuously linking Adelaide, through the townships of Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin (White, 1990:349). The only services outside these towns were on the mission or government settlements on which Aboriginal people had been moved from the late 1930s until the early 1970s; or on the cattle stations then owned by pastoralists. Up until the late 1960s, most Aboriginal families who did not work in 'town", had been forced to live in the "bush", on government welfare or mission settlements, or as stockmen or other workers on cattle stations on country which had once belonged to them. Services such as the Flying Doctor and School of the Air, for example, only serviced cattle stations, missions and government settlements. Many of those who did work in "town" had managed to set up camps, although they were illegal (Rowse, Tim, IAD, Alice Springs, 1990).

From 1966, however, the practice of "bush" people living on cattle stations, missions and government settlements began to come to an end as a combination of equal pay legislation following the 1965 Arbitration Commission ruling, the long drought, a rural economic downturn, new rural technologies, and the introduction of a new policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people emerged. With equal pay for all workers, many Aboriginal families were unable to continue living and working on the cattle stations which had enabled them to partially continue a form of traditional life, hunting and eating the foods they had always eaten. With self-determination, along with the granting of Land Rights to many Aboriginal people in 1972, many communities were able to move away from mission or government settlements to return to their Homelands. However, they were also moving away from all forms of communication, water, electricity, housing, education, health and other services vital to the process of self-management. While many communities did manage to return to traditional ways in the Homelands successfully, others moved to the camps already springing up around towns. These town camps and communities needed a full range of essential services but the question was, how could these be provided without turning the camps back into welfare settlements? The answer which came was to form the Aboriginal service Organisations discussed in this paper.

These 'grass roots' organisations, therefore, in 'reigniting the fire' represented a new form of organisational structure to deliver services 'for and by Aboriginal people' (CAAMA, 1980). They can be described as practising "two-way" management. What this means is that the managers of these Organisations needed to be able to work within the cultural practices which have enabled Aboriginal people to "manage" their lives in the harsh Australian desert for many thousands of years; as well as within contemporary Western management practices in order to communicate with and satisfy the demands of government and other private organisations with whom they dealt. As a result they have developed structural flexibility, a commitment to both traditional and contemporary cultural ways of working and managing, co-operation, accountability to the community being served, the management of cultural diversity and an awareness of cross-cultural communication. It can be argued that these organisations have for many years, practised what many Western organisations and management theorists now preach, but have failed to implement in their own organisations due to the enormity of cultural change required.

This includes concepts such as the empowerment of workers, organisational learning, the place of co-operation versus competition, the alignment of organisational values with those of their customers and information sharing. Despite these Aboriginal Organisations being above all accountable to the communities they have set themselves up to serve, they do not reflect Western concepts of community or representative identity.

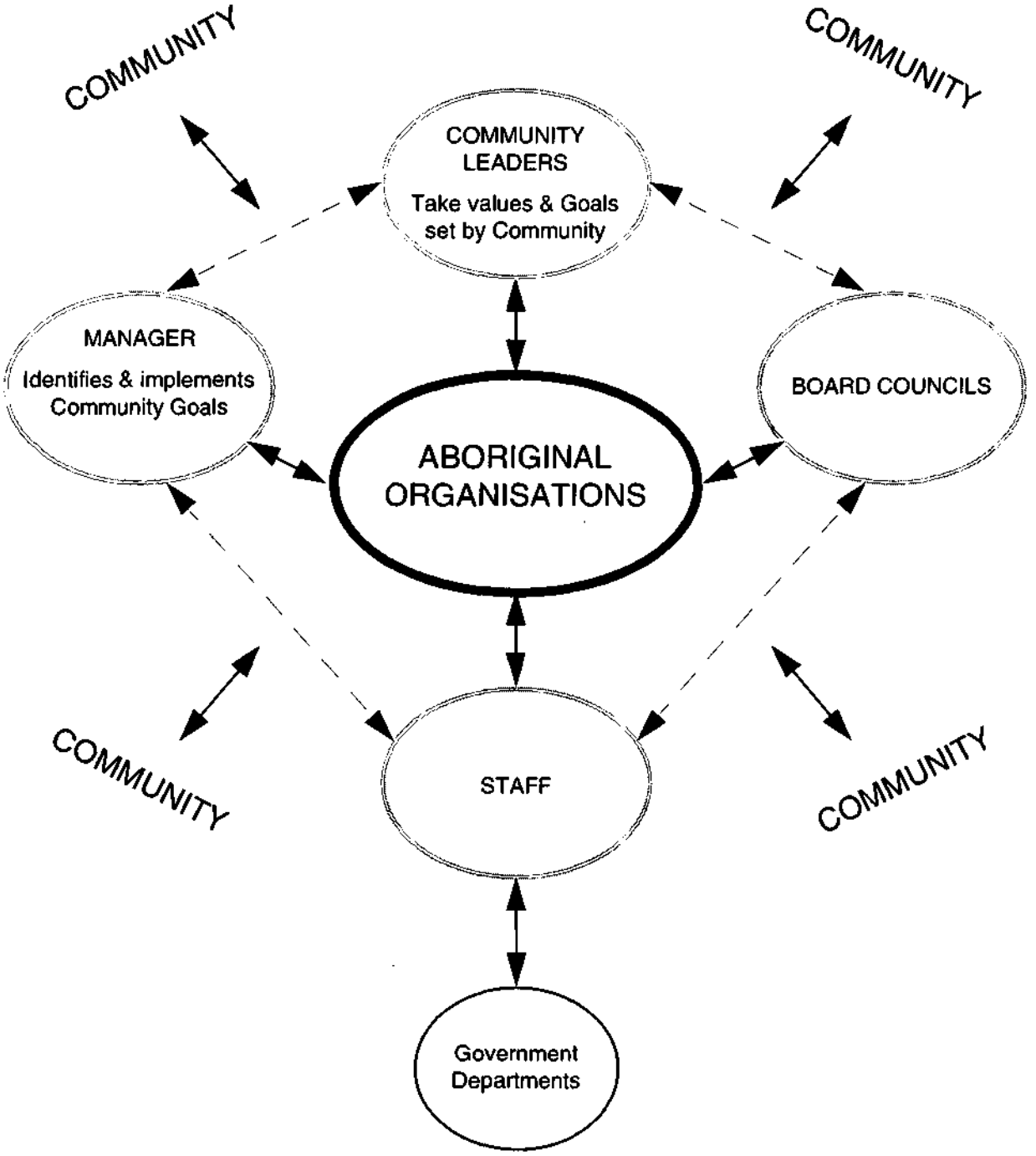
As the Aboriginal anthropologist, Marcia Langton told the enquiry into Black Deaths in Custody in 1990[7], the Aboriginal identity can be represented as a tension between what she called "autonomy" and "relatedness". It is autonomy, and not communality that is, she said, "seminal to the Aboriginal concept of self". Aboriginal people, for example, will not give up a piece of traditional land entrusted to their care by ancestors simply because the community votes that they do. They have autonomy over the management of the land. On the other hand, Aboriginal culture does not imply a right to interfere in the lives of those in your community, but it does imply an obligation to share resources. Such tensions between autonomy and relatedness are a daily fact for managers working in Aboriginal Organisations, and can cause conflict, for example, when kin members ask for an organisation car to attend a funeral.

Traditional elders are represented on the Boards of Aboriginal Organisations, and play a vital role in decision making, not in the Western, hierarchical sense, but more as "first among equals" (Director, Pitjantjatjara Council, Personal interview, 1995). As explained and represented graphically by one manager in an Aboriginal organisation, the role of the manager is more one of facilitator, than 'boss', one of the structural cogs in a wheel of mutual accountability and operation. As in a wheel, the cogs cannot work in isolation, but exist in a "two-way" relationship with one another, as well as with the external environment. The traditional and contemporary two ways of managing do not exist in the Western sense of what they can offer each other. Nor does this term "two-way" only imply the working together of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In these organisations, managers and their communities also work "two way" between traditional and contemporary situations, linked together in a symbiotic relationship. Should the link between the managers and the communities in Figure 2-2 be broken, these managers would become dysfunctional (Sylvia Neale, Personal Interview, Graduate, Associate Diploma [Managing Aboriginal Organisations], 1996.), and community services may end up being delivered in culturally inappropriate ways. See Figure 2.2 on the following page graphically representing these relationships.

Community leaders achieve legitimacy through their direct contact with traditional elders from whom they gain the appropriate knowledge and authority to function in their organisational roles. They show leadership in the continuing struggle to win rights and social justice for the people. Part of the process of gaining authority and legitimacy is what enables them to function as a manager in Aboriginal Organisations and represent the community with authority and legitimacy in the wider political environment. Skills such as "speaking out" for the community at all levels, including making representations to government ministers in Canberra, or dealing with the media are therefore much more prized than for managers in non-Aboriginal Organisations. The ability to apply for and gain the funding without which the service programs cannot continue to operate is another essential management skill. These essential service providers must seek out all of the funding they require, usually on an annual or tri-annual basis, and win it in open competition with the many other Aboriginal, and non-Aboriginal government or private organisations, for example Arts Boards, which depend on funding grants to survive. It is a tribute to the leaders, managers and staff that these organisations have been able to thrive in such an environment given the history of their communities for the past one hundred years.

It was in an effort to capture the special qualities which had enabled these organisations to grow, and to pass the skills and information onto others that its Directors decided, in 1987, to set up a training course with the objective of providing a succession of leaders to take these organisations into the future. By 1995, with the growth and development of the Organisations, and the increase in the numbers of young people entering the Organisations, the aim of the management course has been altered from providing leadership 'succession' to the 'maintenance' or organisations.

Figure 2.2



3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

The research reported here presents selected findings and analysis from a variety of research data gathered in 1990 and 1995. The research instruments included a skills audit, an attitudes and knowledge survey, a personal interview, and a Work Role[8] survey, designed to establish the demographic characteristics, managerial work demands and financial incentives of managers in these Aboriginal Organisations in Central Australia. The results of the skills audit and attitudes and knowledge survey are not included here, but were used to design and write the management curriculum. This paper presents the results of the Work Role survey conducted in 1990 and 1995, combined with relevant data from personal interviews to illuminate the findings. It is important to note that the Work Role survey instrument used, while not necessarily ideal for gathering

information in an Aboriginal context, was chosen as one of the instruments used, and reported here with the aim of gathering data which could be used and understood by the wider, non-Aboriginal community.

Despite every care being taken to ensure that the information reported here represents as true a picture as possible of the managers in these organisations and their work, its findings and interpretation should be viewed tentatively at this stage. Researchers are always aware that while their data may be accurate, much rests upon its interpretation, and this situation is magnified in conducting research in Aboriginal Organisations. The old saying that "facts are sacred, comments are free" holds especially true in situations where many external factors cannot be controlled for, and there are many different points of view to be incorporated into a single finding. Official statistics, like the Australian Census figures, have been consulted on questions such as whether the percentages of men and women managing these organisations of a particular age are typical or atypical of the Aboriginal population as a whole in the area being surveyed. However, even official census figures are not reliable in this instance, because many Aboriginal people were not picked up by the latest Census, and some others may be unsure of their ages because they were taken away from their parents as children.

Two other factors need to be mentioned which could have seriously confounded the findings of this research and indicate that care must be taken in interpreting the results. Both relate to cultural notions and definitions of "managing" and "work" which were held by the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who work in these Central Australian Organisations which it was not possible to make explicit in gathering the data, particularly in 1990. "Work" for many Aboriginal managers is what they do 24 hours each day in their role as a community resource person. Their position in the community, the extended family, and in the wider political context, without which they would not be managers, comes with a special set of expectations, and financial and other family obligations which do not fit neatly into a regular working day, and cannot easily be categorised into a survey of the type used in this research. Many of the Aboriginal managers surveyed do not categorise these obligations as "work", although to a non-Aboriginal manager attending a community work-related meeting, assisting a community member to solve work conflict after hours, or taking staff for health care, may well be defined in this way. Replies to similar questions, such as, "How many hours do you work at home each week?" may therefore have been interpreted quite differently by the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers in the same organisation because of their different cultural perceptions.

A word also needs to be said about the number of non-Aboriginal managers working in these organisations, given the organisations' stated needs for Aboriginal self-management. It is important to explain that non-Aboriginal managers work in largely advisory, as opposed to decision making roles in a variety of disciplines. What draws individual non-Aboriginal managers, who this research shows are frequently from interstate or overseas, to work in Central Australia is a complex question which this paper does not attempt to answer, although it goes far beyond the commonly stated "missionary, mercenary or misfit" categorisation. Given the essential services provided by these organisations, they require staff with professional qualifications in areas such as law and medicine, and also professionals with advanced financial and accounting skills to meet the accountability requirements needed by various funding bodies. There are not sufficient Aboriginal people with the formal qualifications as yet to take up these positions, and many non-Aboriginal advisors act in the role of intermediaries between the organisations they work for and the bureaucratic and other demands of the wider Australian society. As personal interviews conducted during this research revealed, most non-Aboriginal professionals, described as the "thin white line"[9] work to Aboriginalise their own positions, or to give meaning to their work lives apart from the pursuit of personal or financial profit.

One way of overcoming some of the difficulties in this research has been to present the data for interpretation to representatives of the Organisations themselves. Students in the current Associate Diploma (Aboriginal Organisations Management) have commented on both the summary of findings and answers to personal interviews; the Co-ordinator of Management Training at the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD), who is the joint author of this paper, and her staff have studied the basic research findings and provided feedback and interpretation without which this work could never have been written, certainly not with any validity; and finally the Directors of these Organisations have been consulted at a Directors' Meeting in Alice Springs in November, 1996 as their permission was required before the research could be placed into the public forum. Having mentioned these difficulties, however, it should also be mentioned that the 1990 and 1995 research yielded collaborating results in most instances. In addition, the findings of the Work Role Survey in both years, and the answers given to personal interview questions were also supportive of one another. It can therefore be concluded, fairly reliably, that the basic data is good.

Special mention must be made concerning the control and ownership of this data, and the role of the non-Aboriginal joint author and researcher of this work. Apart from references to other work, the information in this paper is owned and controlled by the Aboriginal Organisations whose property it is, and this paper can only be used or reproduced in part or full with permission from their Ethics Committees and the authors. Not only does this comply with ethical rules now imposed by most institutions in an "information age", but it is also consistent with the traditional Aboriginal management of all forms of information. Other ethical requirements have also been met, for example, that no individual respondents can or would be identified from their responses, and full confidentiality of the data is ensured. Also consistent with traditional Aboriginal management of information is that no-one can speak for others about something which they own or concerns them directly. This naturally means that the non-Aboriginal joint author of this paper was given permission by the Directors of these Organisations to firstly conduct research in their organisations, and to report upon it only in certain approved ways. It does not automatically mean that the joint author is free to write about or comment upon any information discovered in the course of doing this alone.

4. DATA SAMPLE

The sample for this study consisted of more than 70 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers in the Organisations listed above in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek in 1990 (from whom 56 total responses were obtained), and 37 from Alice Springs in 1995. The 70 managers who completed the Work Role questionnaire in 1990/1991 were, at that time, close to the whole population of managers in these organisations. Only thirty-seven managers were surveyed in 1995, despite the fact that the total number of managers had increased, due to time and resource constraints. While the 1990 research combined the responses of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal responses, the Directors of the Combined Aboriginal Organisations expressed a wish to separate the responses in 1995. As a result the findings below compare total 1990 and 1995 responses allowing overall changes to be recorded, but also allows the 1995 data to compare Aboriginal with Non-Aboriginal responses. In 1990, a total of 57 managers was included, in 1995, 20 Aboriginal and 17 Non-Aboriginal managers were surveyed.

5. METHODOLOGY

A variety of methodologies have been employed to analyse and present the data in the tables below. In 1990 data was collated and frequency percentages calculated manually by a young Aboriginal woman in Alice Springs. In 1995 the data was analysed using the statistical computer package SPSS at Monash University in Melbourne and presented in tables and graphs. Data gathered in personal interviews was collated by the researcher, and clustered for interpretation by students in IAD's Management Course before being interpreted by the joint authors.

6. STRUCTURE OF THIS PAPER

Demographic data have been given to provide an overview of the key demographic variables comprising those who manage these Aboriginal Organisations in Central Australia. Their work demands and stress management data are included next. The use of financial incentives and extent of industrial democracy as practised in a Western organisational sense were measured by the survey, and the data was analysed. However, not-for-profit organisations, such as these organisations represent, prioritise the meeting of social obligations and community goals over the making of profits, meaning that there is no money to distribute to managers as incentives, nor any profit-sharing schemes. As a result of this, the findings on these questions except in one or two cases, add nothing to the research and have therefore been omitted. The key findings follow in two sections; selected demographic characteristics, and work demands, and as each set of data is reported, an interpretation of the analysis is included. This is followed by a summary of key findings and a general conclusion.

7. SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The demographic characteristics of the sample examined in this section include managerial position, age, sex, number of years in a managerial position, number of years in current position, number of employees for whom the manager is directly responsible, size of the organisation, industry grouping and manager's annual income. This provides some real information on who is managing Aboriginal Organisations and what they actually do.

Respondents were first asked to indicate whether they were born in the Northern Territory; in another Australian state; outside Australia; in the town or bush. In 1990 thirteen respondents indicated they were born in the Northern Territory and another 27 were born in another state. Seven respondents were born overseas.

In 1995 when responses were grouped as either Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal, a clearer picture emerged showing that a majority of Aboriginal managers (11/20) were born in Alice Springs or the Northern Territory, while a majority of non-Aboriginal managers (16/17) in the Organisations were born interstate or overseas.

Table 7.1.1 1995 Research Showing Where Managers Were Born

Place	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
NT	6	0
Alice Springs	5	1
Interstate	7	11
Overseas	0	5
Missing	2	0
Total (N)	20	17

7.1 MANAGERIAL POSITION

Figure 7.1.1 presents the frequency and percentage frequency distributions of respondents classified according to their managerial position.

Figure 7.1.1 Classified By Managerial Position (Comparison 1990-1995)

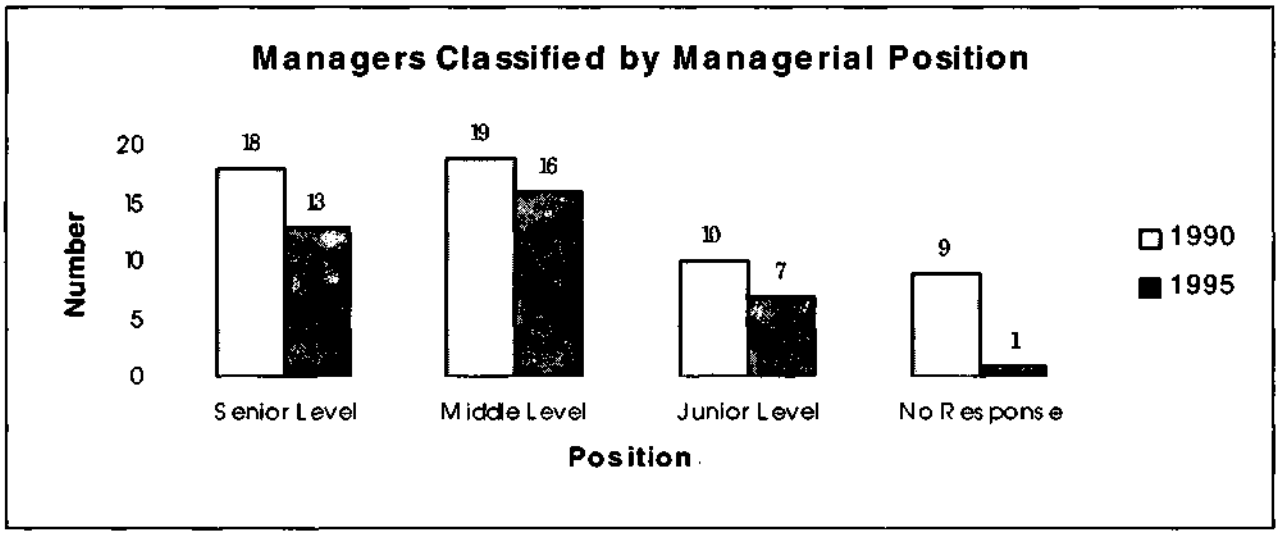
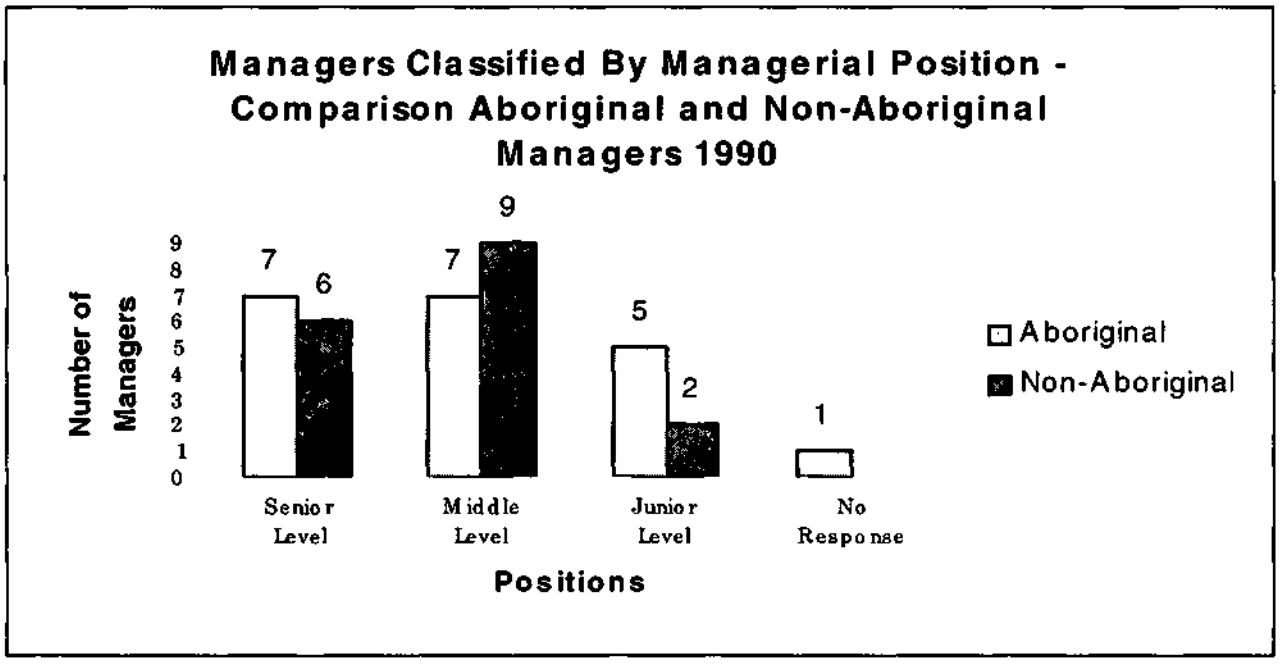


Figure 7.1.2 Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Managers in 1995



7.1.1 Managers Classified by Managerial Position

As Figure 7.1.1 indicates, the majority of respondents surveyed were in the senior to middle management levels of their organisations, (32% and 34% respectively), in 1990 with little change in 1995. While the number of Aboriginal senior managers was slightly higher than non-Aboriginal managers, a relatively higher percentage of middle managers were non-Aboriginal and a relatively higher percentage of Aboriginal managers worked at the Junior level. These figures confirm as discussed in the introductory sections of this paper, that while these organisations are Aboriginal owned, controlled and managed at senior and Board levels, there is still a reliance on the "thin

white line" of non-Aboriginal lawyers, accountants, doctors and other professionals to assist in the delivery of these essential services.

7.2 MANAGERS CLASSIFIED BY AGE

Figure 7.2.1 Managers Classified by Age - Comparison Between 1990-1995

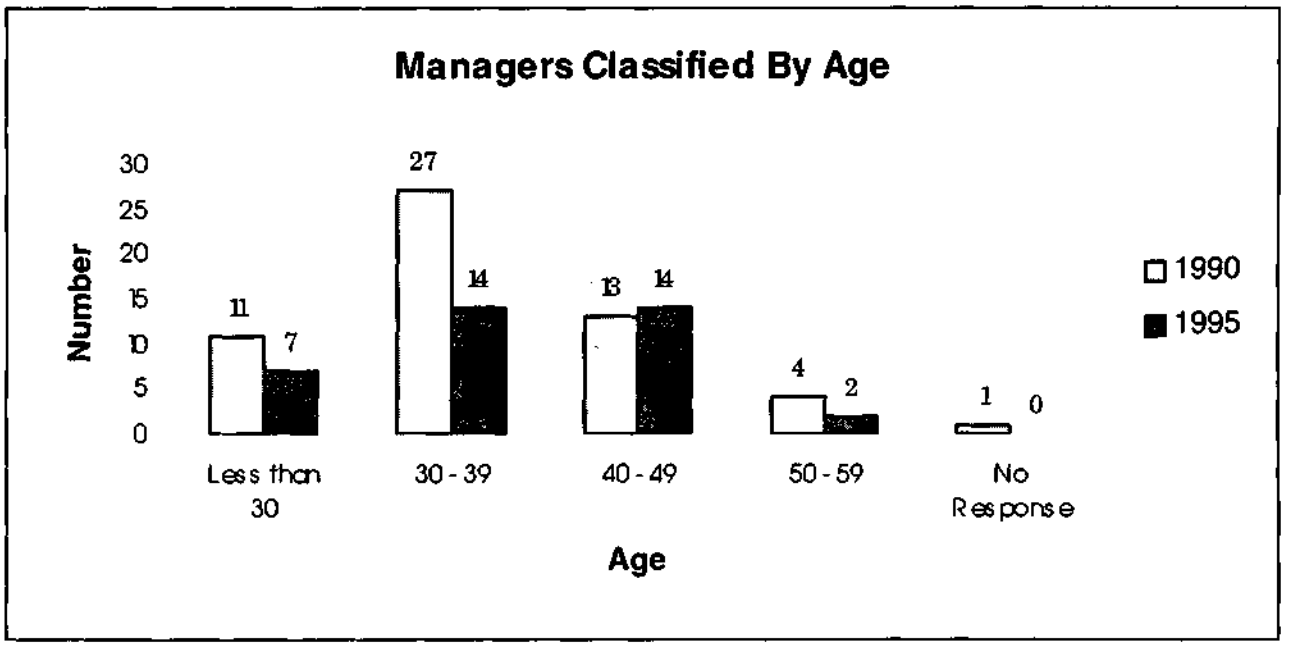
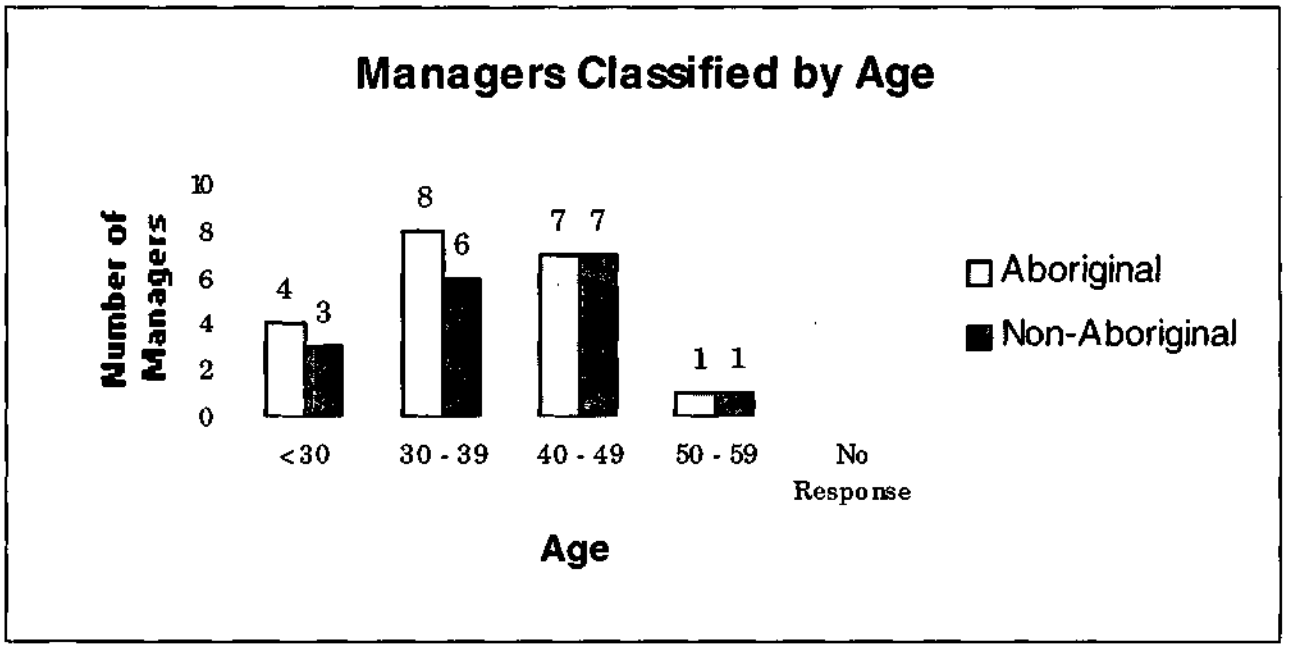


Figure 7.2.2 Managers Classified by Age Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Managers



7.2.1 Managers Classified by Age

Of the managers surveyed, a majority (48%) were in the 30 - 39 age group, with 23% in the 40 - 49 age range in 1990. By 1995, approximately 37% of managers surveyed were in the 30 - 49 year range. Few were over 50 years of age. The data analysis has not yet related the age of managers relative to the seniority of their positions, but it is anecdotally safe to assume that with one or two

exceptions, most senior managers are in higher age ranges. Approximately 17% of managers in 1995, and 20% in 1990 were less than 30 years of age in both surveys. This points to a strong need for workplace training to support these young managers' career development while ensuring a supply of future talent for Aboriginal self management goals. Figure reveals no significant differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers, except perhaps that non-Aboriginal managers are slightly more likely to be in their 40s.

Australian Bureau of Statistics indicate that 54.5% of the population of the Northern Territory were 26 and over in the 1991 Census[10]. The Northern Territory as a whole with 23.7% population between 12 and 25 years, is reputed to have the youngest population in Australia.

7.3 MANAGERS CLASSIFIED BY SEX

Table 7.3.1 Managers Classified by Gender - Comparison Between 1990-1995

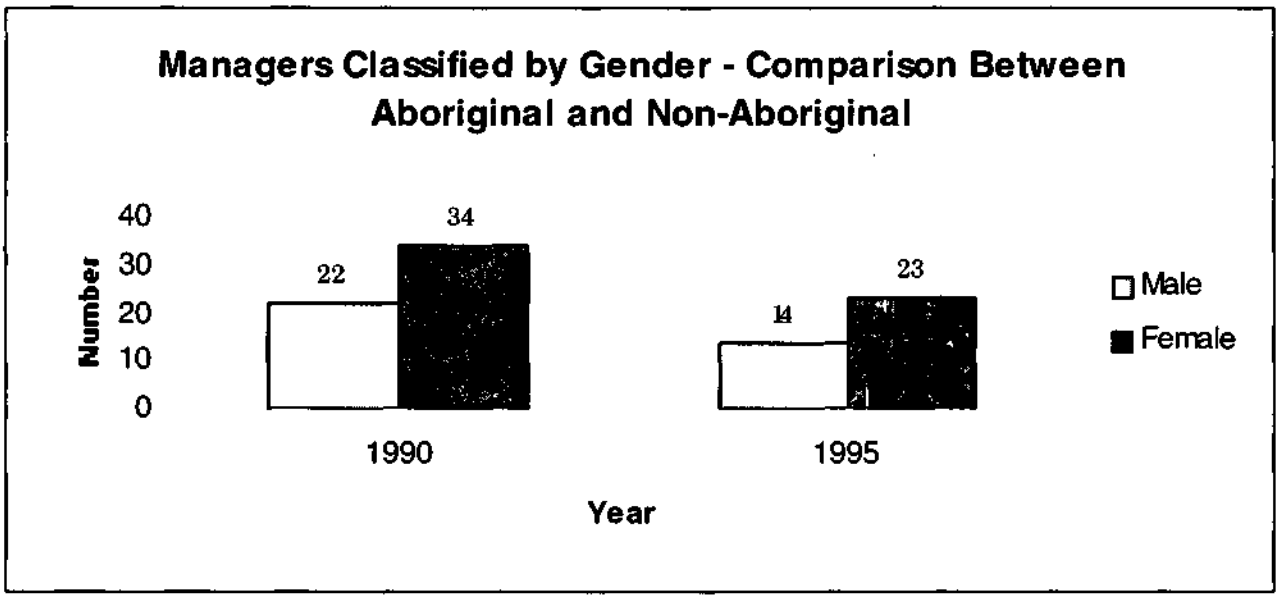
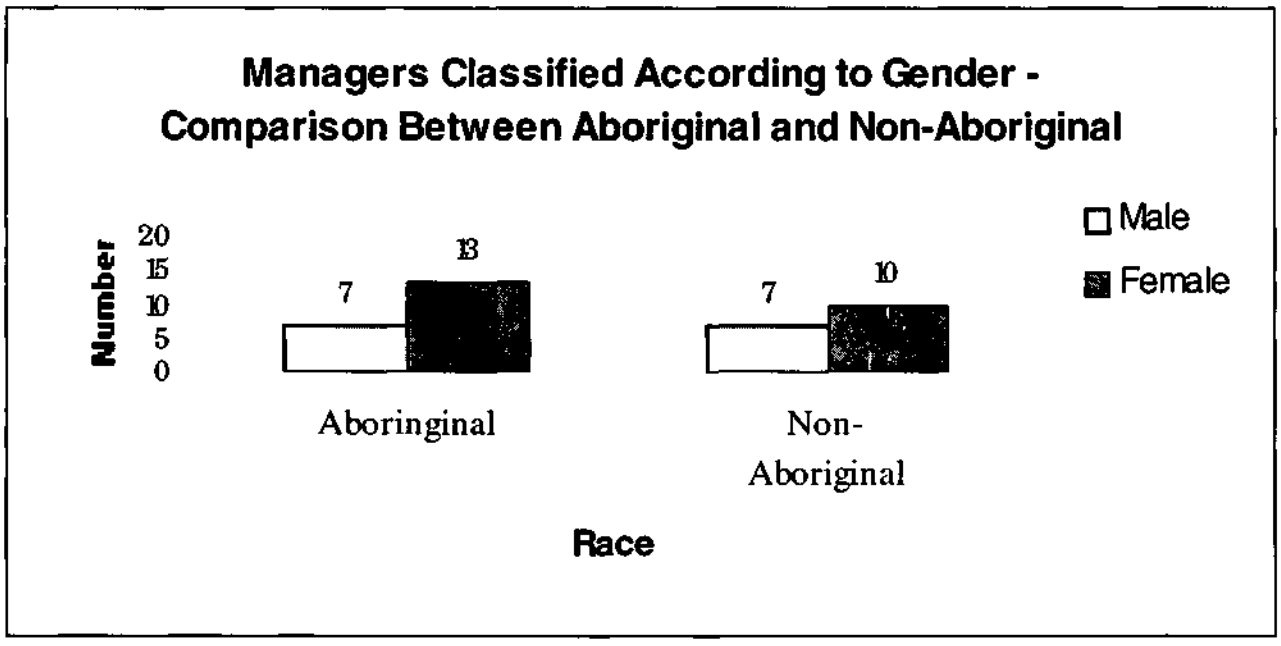


Table 7.3.2 Managers Classified By Gender Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal



Of the managers surveyed, the majority, approximately 60% were female, and approximately 40% were male in both 1990 and 1995. If anything, there was a 2% increase in the percentage of female managers overall by 1995. This was true of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers, although non-Aboriginal managers at 58.8% female and 41.2% male fell slightly outside the 60/40% split. Further analysis will be conducted to relate these managers' ages, to gender and level of seniority. Female managers are not represented in such large percentages in the majority of non-Aboriginal organisations and suggested reasons need to be given for non-Aboriginal readers. Firstly, the impact of negative social historical influences and the struggle Aboriginal communities have had to regain their way of life has exacted a great toll on Aboriginal men, along with the effects of stress, poor nutrition, alcohol and other substances which have negatively affected their morbidity and mortality. Aboriginal men have been more visible in the struggle for their people, and have therefore been more likely to end up being disciplined or in gaol. It could therefore be speculated that the predominance of female managers, especially in the age group of the majority of managers, is the cumulative result of these negative social influences which have impacted much more upon Aboriginal men at present, affecting their participation in the workplace. At the same time, the history of education of Aboriginal education shows that, perhaps because of the above reasons, Aboriginal women were exposed to more education. However, there are other factors which can explain the number of women managers. Once these Organisations were set up, then the traditional roles of women in the community began to be reflected in the gender structure in organisations. The provision of health, child care, educational and other services was not viewed by the community only as 'men's business', to the extent that many executive men voted for a female executive to share that part of the responsibility that was "women's business", and to take co-responsibility in decision making and management of services.

An independent census conducted by Tengentyere Council in June 1996[11] of the population of Aboriginal town camps around Alice Springs was consulted in order to ascertain whether these figures on gender and management reflected the population as a whole. When the database was queried, it revealed 132 male and 124 females between the ages of 30 and 49 years living in town camps. This suggests that the other factors described above are impacting on managers. It was further suggested by a spokesperson for Tengentyere Council that social effects are impacting more on teenage boys at school and affecting their levels of education, and therefore, participation in the work-force. Additionally, it was suggested that education in the main is more directed toward service or administrative goals than farming or trades, both of which are more likely to attract young Aboriginal males.

7.4 YEARS IN MANAGERIAL POSITION

Figure presents the frequency and percentage frequency distributions of respondents classified according to their years in managerial positions.

Figure 7.4.1 Managers Classified by Years in Managerial Position - Comparison Between 1990-1995

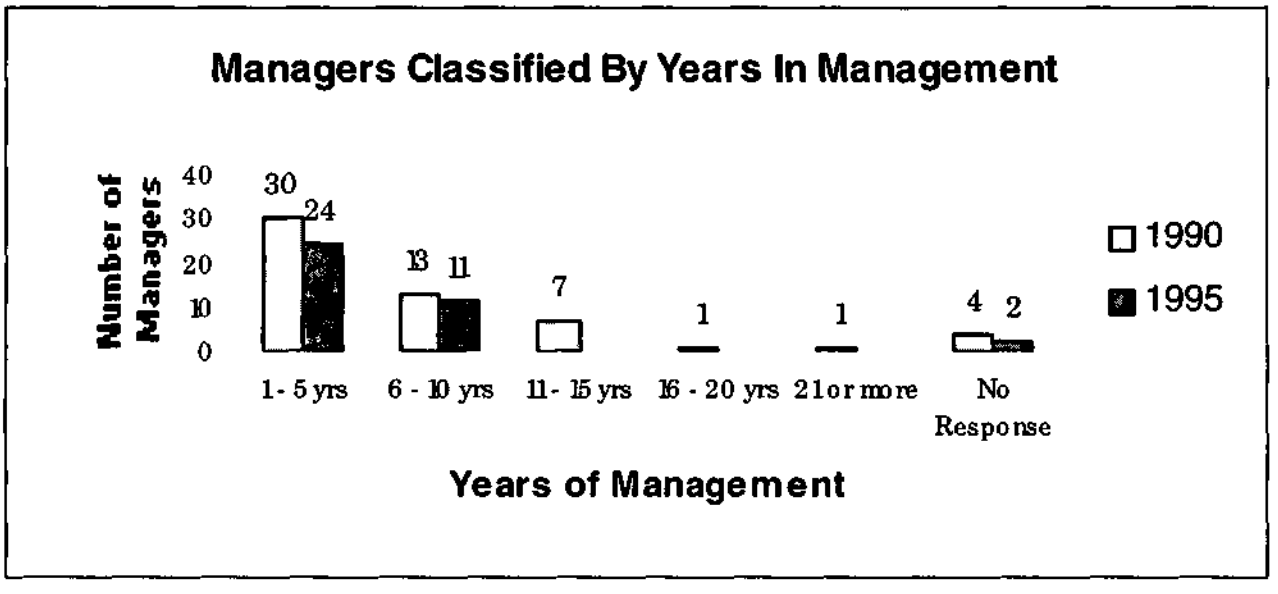
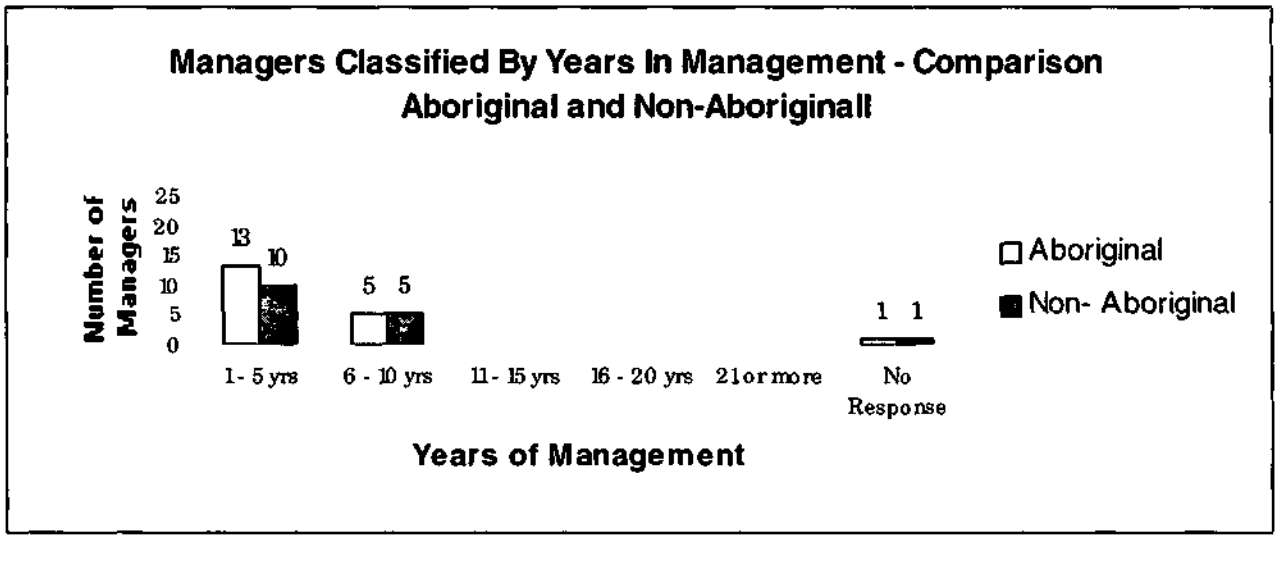


Figure 7.4.2 Managers Classified by Years in Managerial Position - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal in 1995



More than half (54%) of the managers surveyed had been in a management position between 1 and 5 years in 1990. Almost another quarter (23%) indicated that they had worked 6 to 10 years in management. The responses fell away to 1.8% after 15 years, reflecting the relatively recent development of these Organisations since 1972. In 1995, when managers were classified as Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal the results were the same, with 65% of both having been in management between 1 and 5 years.

While the overall trend is clear, that is, that over half of those surveyed had been managing for less than five years, some contextual explanations need to be employed in interpreting this finding. As discussed in the methodology section of this paper, the definition of what "a managerial position" means can vary, both between Aboriginal managers themselves, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers. While many Aboriginal managers may only have been in a formal management position for less than five years, they may well have had 20 years of community development work in a similar role which they did not count, and which this research did not pick

up. They may, for instance, have worked for other community groups in town or out in the bush, or in many cases different government departments. The careers of most of the managers interviewed in the 30 to 49 age range could be characterised in this way. It is safest, therefore, to interpret this data in the light that over half of the Aboriginal managers had only worked in these Combined Aboriginal Organisations for less than five years. Another reason for this result is that the demanding nature of managing Aboriginal organisations or communities, either in the organisations or elsewhere, with its lack of staff, funding and political, social and economic complexities causes them to suffer burnout very quickly. They simply need to take a break in order to avoid unbearable stress in their lives, and take time out, or move from one organisation to another to relieve it. Non-Aboriginal managers also suffer burnout managing in Aboriginal Organisations, but their reasons for describing themselves as having been in management for five or less years are more likely to be connected with their initial reasons for working in the organisations in the first place; that is that they are giving something back to society for a few years, or have managed to work towards their own redundancy as planned.

The figures still suggest a need for continuous management support and training for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers in the organisations along with strategies to avoid burnout. Answers to personal interview questions support this, with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers wanting on-going training.

7.5 MANAGERS CLASSIFIED BY YEARS IN CURRENT POSITION

Figure 7.5.1 gives the distribution of executives classified by the total number of years they have been in their current managerial position.

Figure 7.5.1 Managers Classified by Years in Current Position - Comparison Between 1990-1995

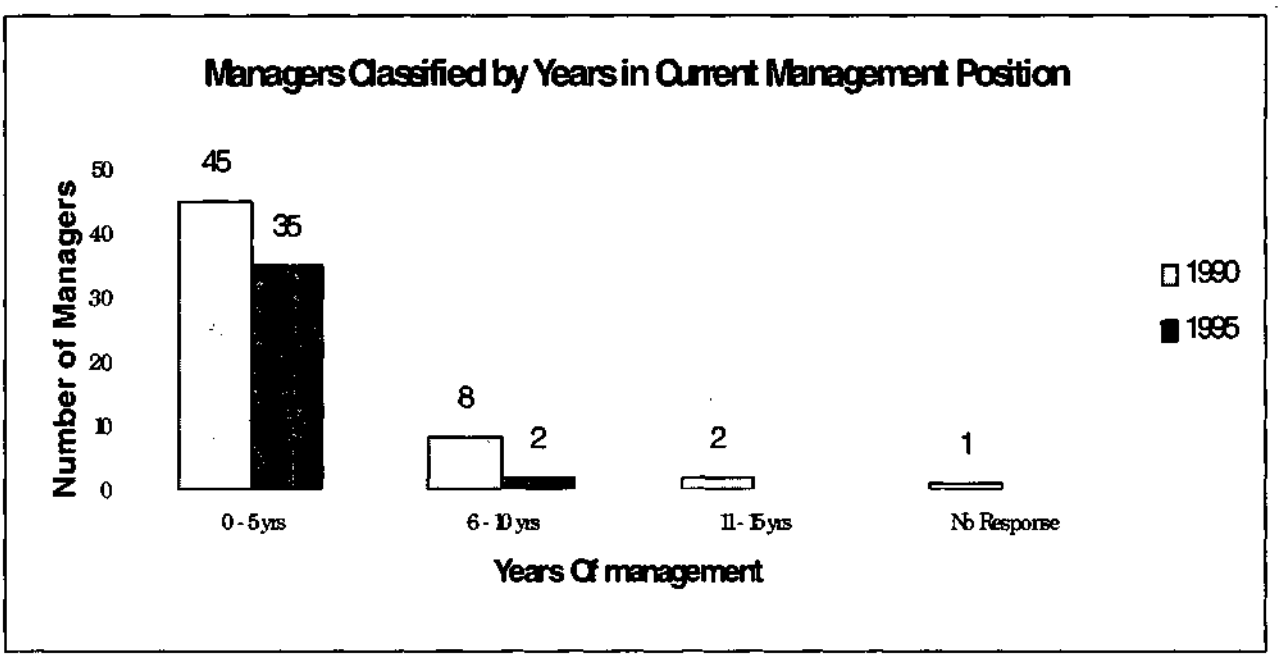
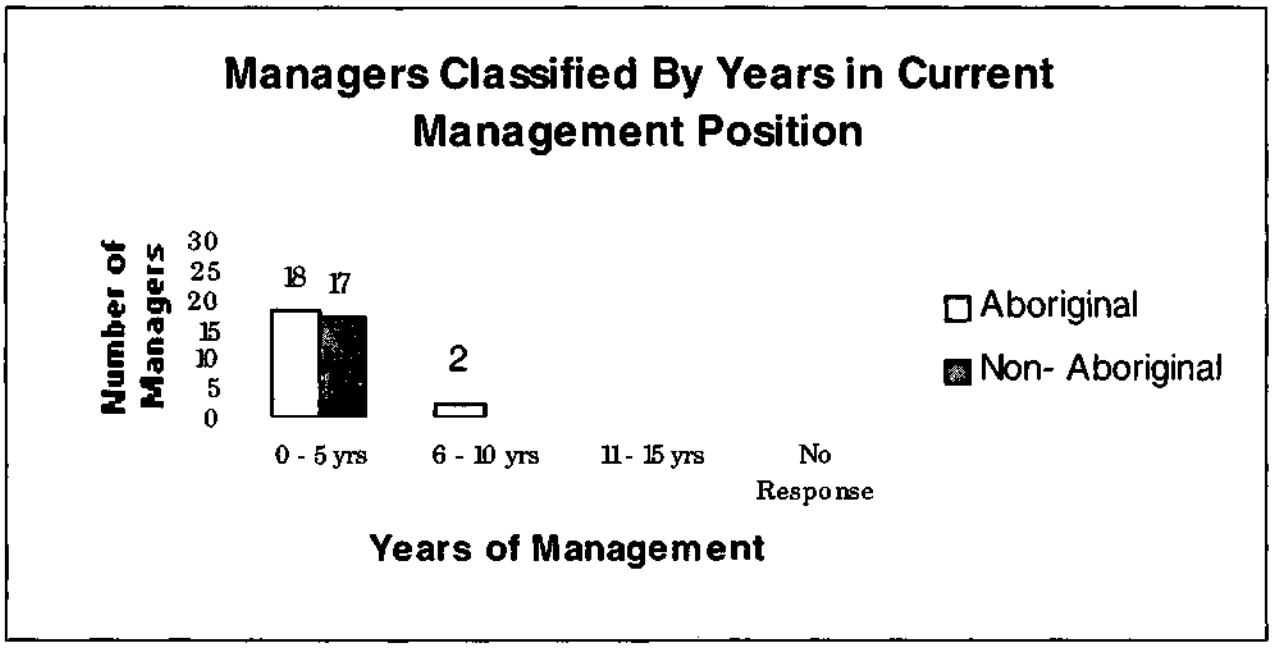


Figure 7.5.2 Managers Classified by Years in Current Position - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal 1995



As expected from the previous findings, most managers (over 80%) had been in their current position for less than 5 years. A minority in 1990, (14%) had spent between 6 and 10 years in that position, with this percentage decreasing by 1995. This was particularly true of non-Aboriginal managers, 100% of whom in 1995 had been 5 years or less in their current managerial position. The data lends support to the fact that managers in Aboriginal Organisations are very mobile, suggesting that the continuous social change in which Aboriginal people have found themselves, has created by default a Charles Handy[12] Shamrock situation where staff move from being "core" workers whose work is not sustainable over the long term, into periods of casual or part-time employment, and onto providing a single service as a way of coping with the type of change now being experienced in Western organisations. Another reason for the mobility revealed here is that those managers who display a talent for management are quickly utilised within organisations, and if they are young, this can result in conflict between their needs for training and support and the level of responsibility they are given. In addition to the burnout mentioned above, they are also poached by non-Aboriginal government or other organisations who need them to liaise on their behalf with the Aboriginal community.

Nevertheless, these figures have implications for both managers and the organisations themselves. They highlight the need for staff to be able to gain management training which is portable, something which IAD's management course achieves through nationally recognised course recognition and accreditation. On the other hand, it does suggest that these Aboriginal Organisations may be losing many of those who have undergone management training in the last five years. Both need to be taken into account for the future.

7.6 MANAGERS CLASSIFIED BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES FOR WHOM DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE

Figure 7.6.1 below, shows the number of employees for whom survey respondents are directly responsible. In 1990 the number ranged from 1 to 91 employees, whereas by 1995 it had grown to 397. This figure reflects the growth of the organisations themselves but also indicates a flatter span of managerial responsibility with most, or approximately 66% of managers in both surveys being directly responsible for between 1 and 10 employees. The number of employees for whom a

manager is responsible also varies with the level of management and frequently the age of the managers. It is important to note that the number of staff supervised by any particular manager may not, in these organisations, reflect their actual position. For example, in the 1990 survey, one young female manager directed a child care agency with only two to three staff, but this in no way reflected the number of people assisted by the organisation, nor the responsibility undertaken by this manager. As explained in the introductory comments, however, and supported by some of the qualitative data, this reflects both the size of some organisations (see Figure following), and the cultural tendency to flatter hierarchical patterns and information sharing. (For example, an 1989 Sarros survey found that 88% of Victorian managers supervised between 0 - 125 employees.)

One respondent commented: "Under-staffing, extremely difficult to carry out management role, time spent in non-management role". There are insufficient managers and staff in most organisations because of a chronic lack of funding. Frequently managers have to direct their programs to take advantage of what funds are on offer, or 'flavour of the month' in the wider community, rather than in response to actual or potential community needs, in order to provide what they know are essential services.

Figure 7.6.1 Managers Classified by Number of Employees for Whom Directly Responsible 1990-1995

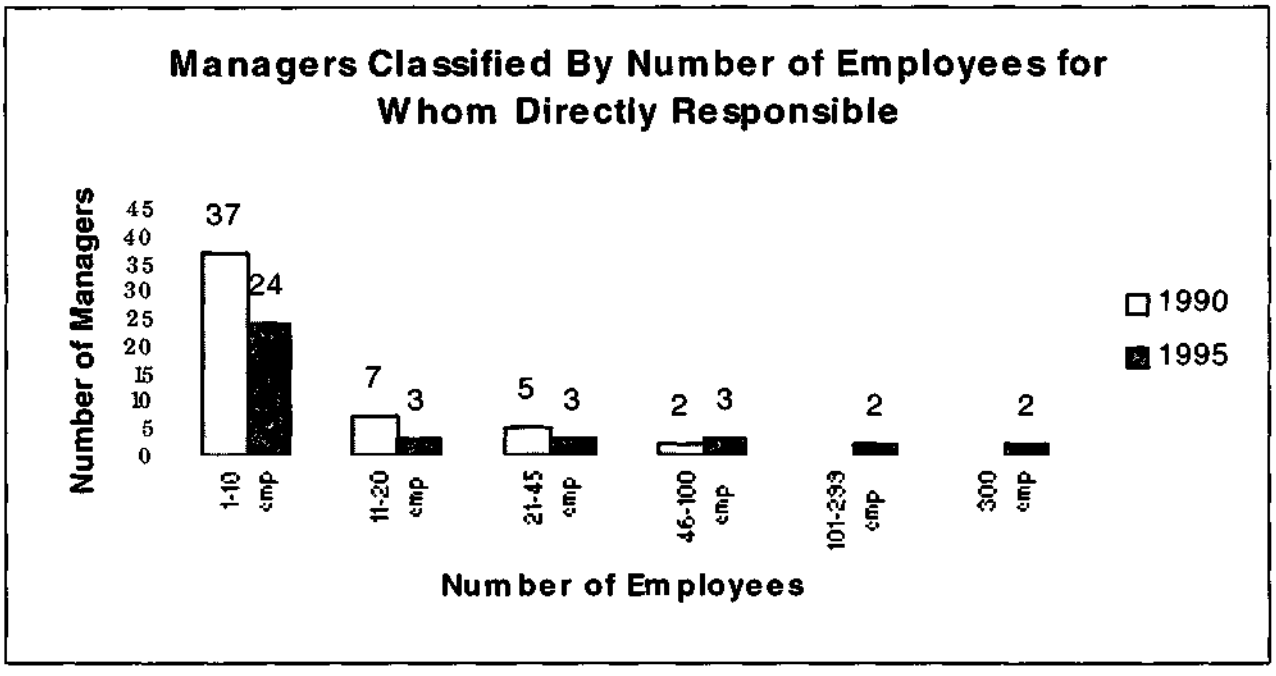
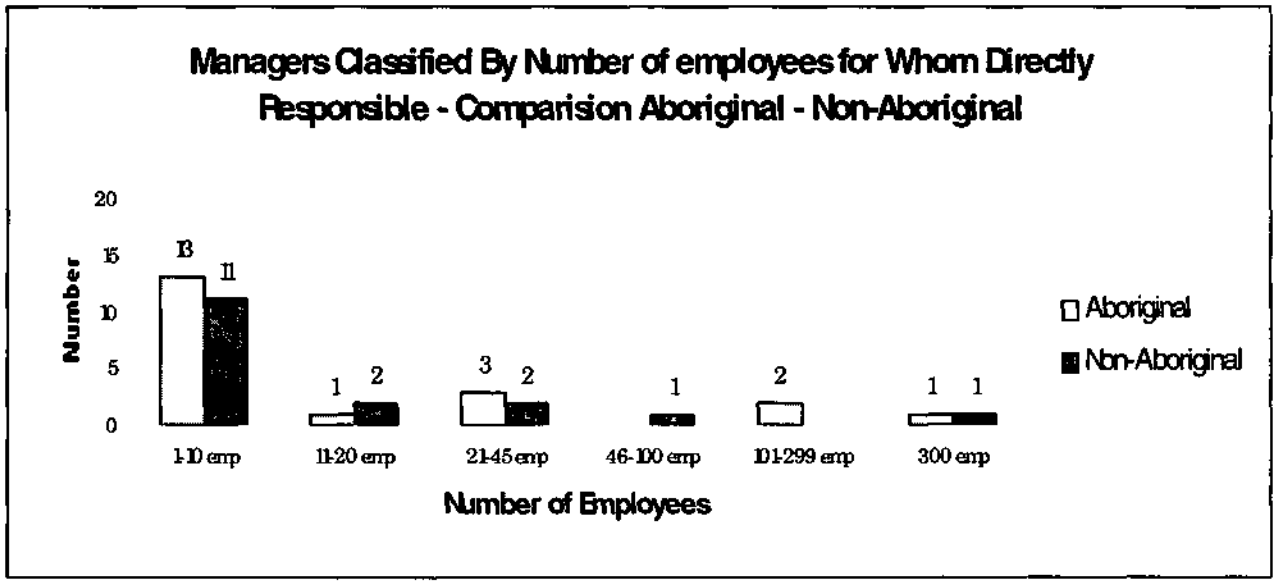


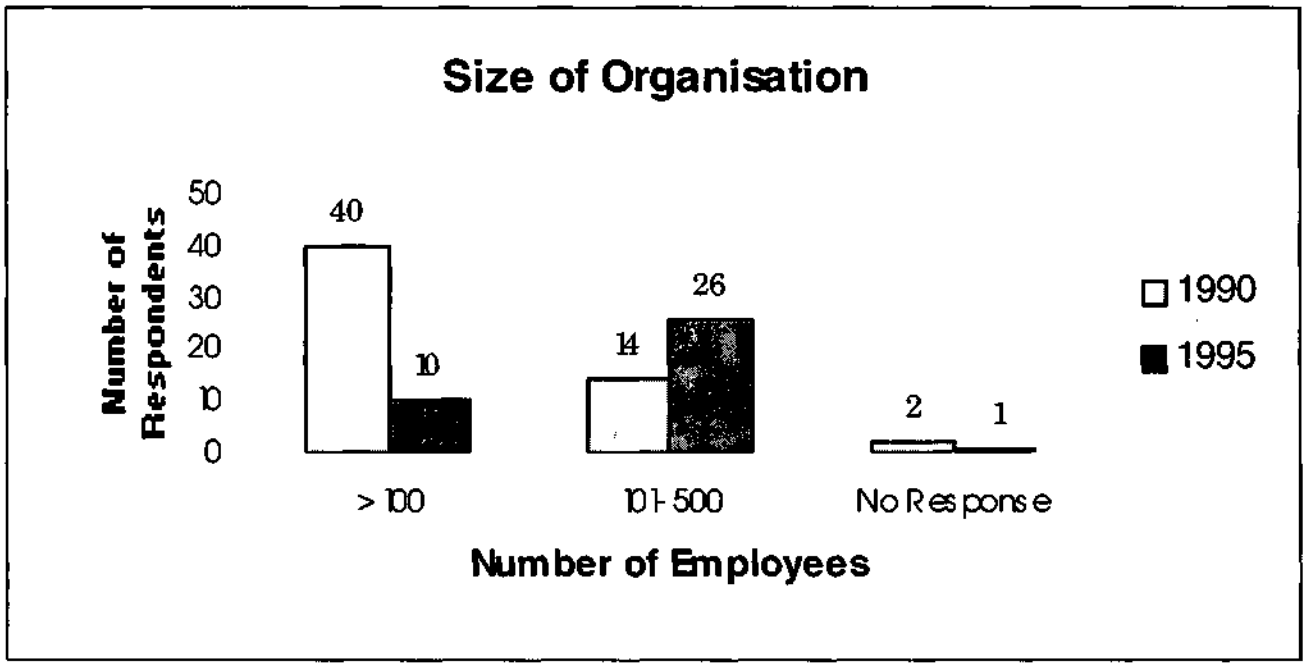
Figure 7.6.2 Managers Classified By Number of Employees Directly Responsible for - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal 1995



7.7 SIZE OF ORGANISATION (NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES)

Figure 7.6.1 reveals that 40 managers were employed in organisations employing less than 100 people in 1990, whereas by 1995 the majority, or 26 of the 37 managers surveyed were in organisations employed over 100 employees, and some up to 397. This data also reveals that, on the whole, Aboriginal service organisations tend to be smaller in size than their mainstream counterparts. However, their growth has been phenomenal. CAAMA radio doubled in size every year from its inception in 1980 until 1989, and continues to thrive, while the newly formed Arrernte Council in 1992, now comprises 150 people.

Figure 7.7.1 Size of Organisation - Comparison Between 1990-1995



7.8 MANAGERS CLASSIFIED BY TYPE OF SERVICE PROVIDED

For the purposes of this research, all managers surveyed were firstly classified as belonging to organisations servicing the Aboriginal community in Central Australia. One comment, however, from one of the second year management students in 1996, was that many Aboriginal people manage units providing government services to Aboriginal communities through the government in Central Australia, and that those Aboriginal people also share the same commitment to serving their community.

Figure 7.8.1 below provides a breakdown of the different types of services offered. Its inclusion is to assist survey users to identify the type of Aboriginal services provided in this research. Although there are many professional workers in land management and legal services, these people do not identify themselves as being in management positions, and so have not been included in this research. The breakdown below, however, does not reflect the multiplicity of services within each of the organisations, and should not necessarily be taken to equate to the standard services with which readers may be familiar in less remote areas. For example, the work of Tangentyere Council goes far beyond the services normally offered by a Council. In addition to offering housing, sanitation and environmental services, it also teaches Aboriginal people how drive; operates a Night Patrol in the Alice Springs area to help keep order within town camps, and assists Aboriginal patients discharged from hospital without transport to return to their homes.

Figure 7.8.1 Organisations Classified According to the Type of Service Provided (1990 Survey)

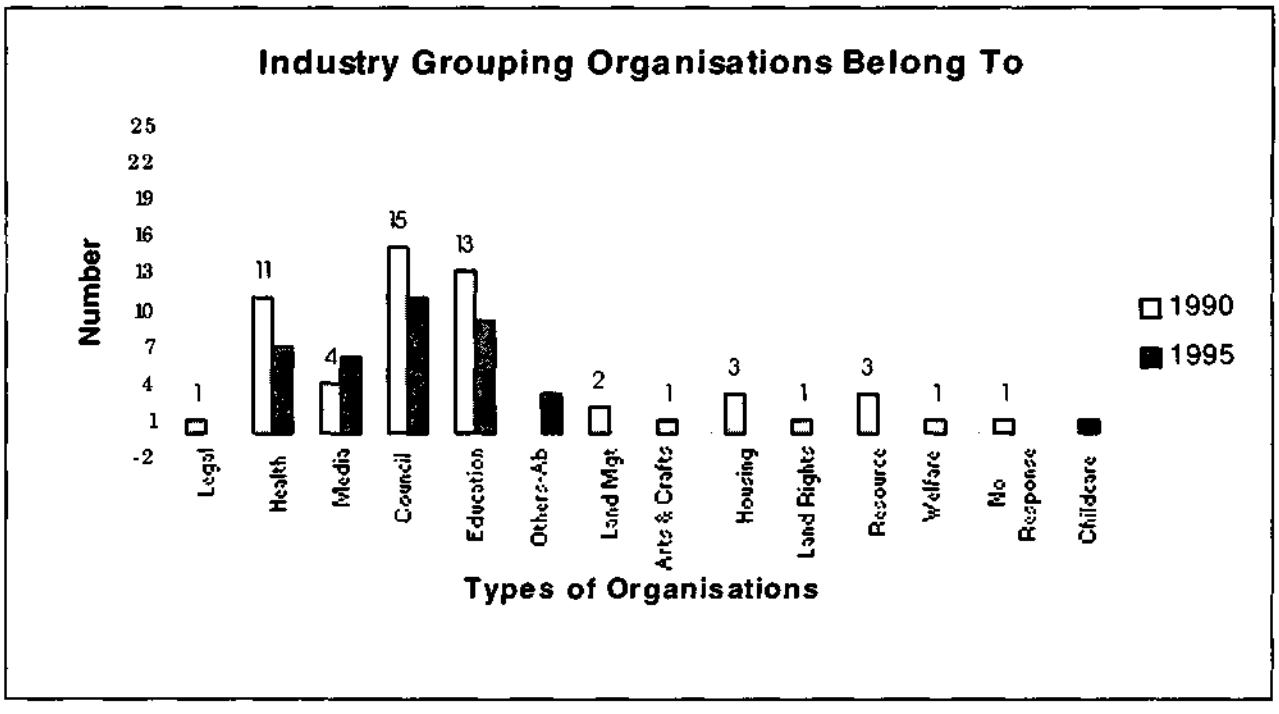


Table 7.8.1 Managers Classified by Type of Service Provided 1995 Survey Result

Industry	F	%
Legal Service	0	0
Health Service	7	18.9%
Media Service	6	16.2%
Council Service	11	29.7%
Educational Services	9	24.3%
Others - Aboriginal Industry	3	8.1%
Child-care	1	2.7%
Total (N)	37	100%

7.9 MANAGERS CLASSIFIED BY ANNUAL INCOME

Figure 7.9.1 Gives the Annual Salaries Received by Managers Working in Aboriginal Organisations.

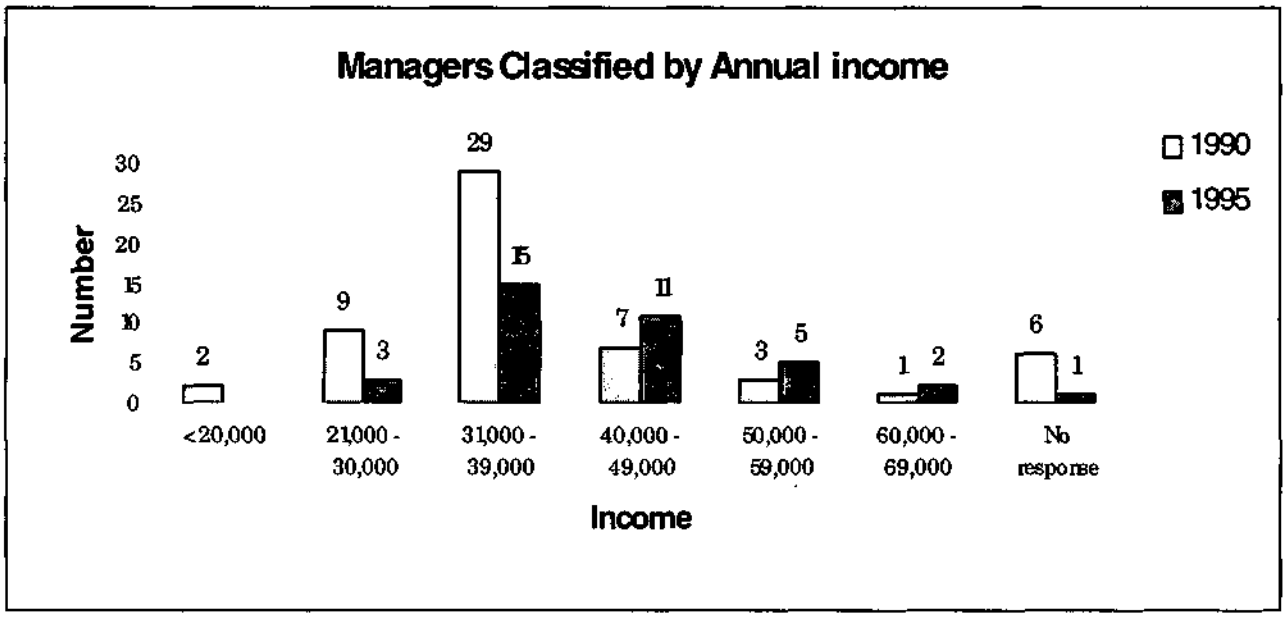
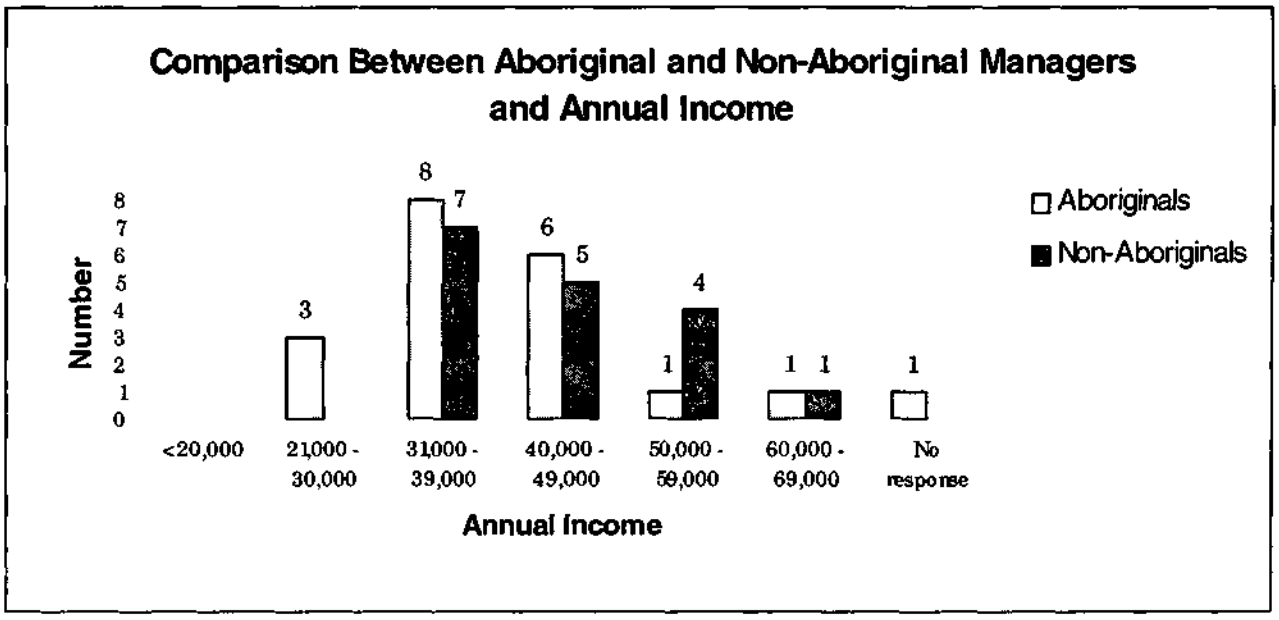


Figure 7.9.2 Managers Classified by Annual Income - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal 1995 Only



As Figure 7.9.2 indicates, the majority of managers in Aboriginal Organisations earn between $30-39,000 annually, and approximately 30% earn between $40-49,000, with little differences between what is earned by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers. At all levels, these salaries contrast poorly with what a majority of Victorian managers in James Sarros' survey reported earning, for example, with 25% earning up to $49,000, and another 24% earning over $70,000 even in the late 1980s.

Some further comments need to be borne in mind. These salary levels reflect the overall scarcity of financial resources available to these Organisations in Central Australia. For most Aboriginal managers, their wages are expected to help to support not only themselves and their families, but also their extended family members who may need financial assistance. As one manager was quoted, "the more I earn, the more there is to give away". This means that the wages being paid in these Organisations are playing a vital role in the economic life of the community. Despite the historical significance of award wage payments for Aboriginal people as equal members of the Australian community, award wages have not been improved since the arrival of ATSIC. Even organisations which have tiered salary structures have not been able to keep pace with inflation because of a lack of funds. For example, a top salary scale at Level 10 may earn its recipient $50,000 annually. Aboriginal managers, also experience the tension referred to earlier between their autonomous need to have their own work valued and rewarded at current market rates, and their collectivist need to allocate available monies to much needed community services. Taking into account the knowledge, abilities and qualities needed by those who manage these organisations, they can not be said to be receiving equal pay for equal work.

While these salaries reflect the general scarcity of resources available to Aboriginal Organisations in Central Australia, they leave these Organisations open to having their skilled managers attracted away from them. This could be another factor in explaining the mobility of managers in these organisations, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

7.10 FINANCIAL INCENTIVES AND INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

As the above salaries indicate, those who manage Aboriginal Organisations appear more likely to be motivated by performing a community service, than seeking personal profit. To test this, managers were asked how important either salary bonuses or financial incentives were to their performance

7.10.1 Importance of Financial Incentives to Managerial Performance

Figure 7.10.1 indicates managers' replies to how important salary bonuses and/or incentives were to their performance.

Figure 7.10.1 Importance of Financial Incentives to Managerial Performance - Comparison Between 1990-1995

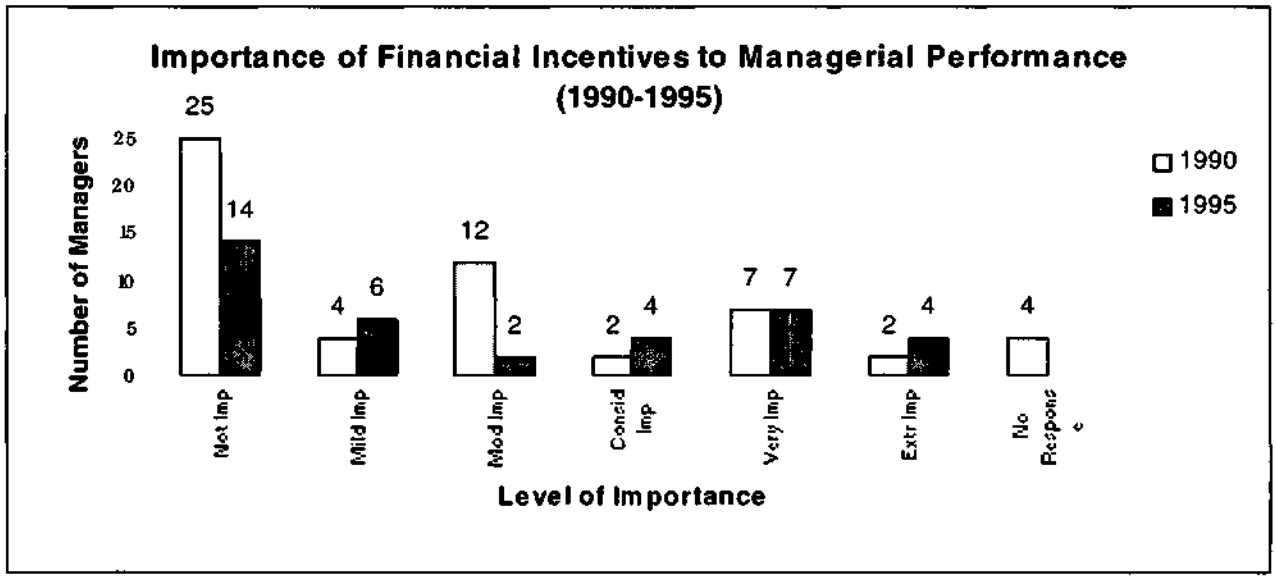
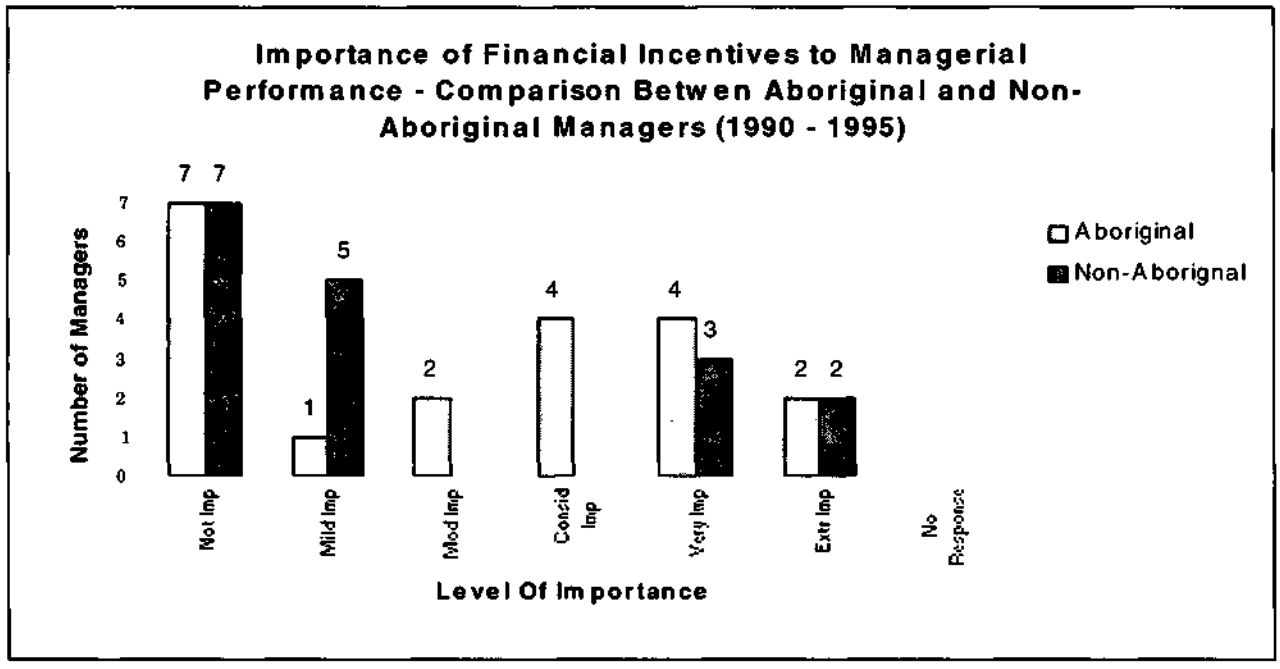


Figure 7.10.2 Importance of Salary Bonuses and/or Financial Incentives to Managerial Performance Comparison Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal



As Figure 7.10-2 shows, a high percentage of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents indicated that salary bonuses or financial incentives were not at all important to their managerial performance. Financial incentives are very or extremely important to approximately one-third. This data may reflect the considerable extent to which Aboriginal managers see their own personal well being linked to community well-being as well as their own personal careers. For non-Aboriginal managers it may reflect the extent to which they have chosen to work in Aboriginal Organisations as a commitment to a goal, or in pursuit of cultural learning. As managers also, they are fully aware of the resource constraints mentioned above, and recognise that this extends to their own financial rewards.

7.11 MANAGERIAL WORK DEMANDS

Mintzberg writes that "managerial work is renowned for its variety, brevity, and fragmentation" (1973:17). This is also true of managers in Aboriginal Organisations in Central Australia who are trying to meet the work demands of a working life characterised by turbulence and change, financial and resource cutbacks and new technology. They are also trying to work towards economic self sufficiency as government funding decreases. Added to their existing family and cultural responsibilities, which are well documented elsewhere as being extensive, this all adds up to a heavy work load for the Aboriginal manager. As the following data indicates, and results of personal interviews confirms, these managers are multi-skilled in a range of service contexts.

This section examines the nature of managers' work in terms of most frequently performed activities, number of hours worked each week, work load, work stress and work pressures.

7.11.1 Work Activities Most Frequently Performed by Managers

Table 7.11.1 lists the 5 management activities which respondents believed took up most of their time in 1990 and again in 1995. No prompts were given in eliciting this list, so that respondents' own activity descriptions have been used. No percentage frequencies have been collated, but activities have been listed in numerical order.

Table 7.11.1 Work Activities Most Frequently Performed by Managers 1990

Activity in Order of Frequency	Frequency Listed
Attending meetings	28
Staff liaison and conflicts	25
Public communication	20
Administration/paperwork	19
Policy Development/Co-ordination	18
Report Writing/Submissions	17
Personnel Management/Developments	17
Planning	16
Finance/Budgeting	13
Delegation/Supervision	12
Co-ordination of Projects	12
Follow up work/role ambiguity	10
Inter organisational co-ordination	9
Organising training	7
Planning/programs and proposals	5
Time management	4

Table 7.11.2 Work Activities Most Frequently Performed by Managers 1995

Activity in Order of Frequency	Frequency Listed
Managing Staff	105
Organising = 21	
Support and development = 6	
Management = 25	
Personnel Management = 2	
Monitoring Performance = 5	
Counselling = 10	
Supervision = 4	
Recruitment = 2	
Conflict Resolution = 8	
People Relations = 4	
Industrial Relations = 2	
Training & Development = 5	
Empowerment = 2	
Consulting with = 3	
Delegation = 4	
Communication	56
General communicating = 8	
Liaising = 26	
Dealing with other sections = 1	
Client servicing = 6	
Gaining new contracts = 2	
Sales and Promotions = 2	
Negotiating = 3	
Travelling = 2	
External enquiries = 2	
Lobbying = 3	
Dealing with other agencies = 3	
Administration	**54**
Administrative work = 7	
Writing memos and letters = 12	
Divisional management = 2	
Co-ordinating = 4	
Authorisation = 2	
Organising Head of Department = 2	
Answering Phones = 6	
Information Processing = 2	
Daily follow-up = 4	
Decision making = 2	
Checking resources availability = 2	
Vehicle inspection = 2	
Cleaning = 2	
Dealing with backlogs = 2	
Filing = 2	

Attending Meetings	33
Report and Submission Writing	22
Finance - Budgeting, Checking Books	16
Policy Making/Developing/Reviving	7
Planning & Co-ordinating	7
Crisis Management	6
Research and Statistics	6
Production	4
Leadership; Project Development	2

As the above tables reveal, the results in 1990 and 1995 were very similar. Managers in these organisations spend more time on organising staff than any other activity, followed by communicating within their organisations, with the community, and with external bodies, including calling and attending meetings. Staffing issues of various kinds stem from the demands of working in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual environment where it must be remembered many community members receiving the services these organisations provide speak English only as a second, third, or fourth language. The demands of working constantly in a cross-cultural environment and managing cultural diversity especially concern these managers. Various administrative duties were only listed fourth most frequently in 1990 but had moved up to number two by 1995, possibly reflecting the increased demands of external accountability placed upon them. Report and Submission writing were also frequently cited, though less so in 1995, and lobbying for external funding remained high on the list. Servicing customers was mentioned for the first time in 1995, although these Organisations have always done this. The emphasis on meetings is not surprising, given the high value placed upon co-operative work in Aboriginal Organisations.

The work role of an Aboriginal manager on the whole very often involves a considerable amount of public and political communication; with the media, in representative councils, within the community and with the government. It demands interpersonal, interorganisational, and political advocacy skills. As one respondent put it "the political demands of the job are reasonably unique to Aboriginal Organisations".

7.12 MANAGERS CLASSIFIED BY HOURS WORKED PER WEEK IN FULL TIME WORK ROLE

Figure 7.12.1 indicates the distribution of managers classified by hours spent in full time work role. Table 7.12.1 shows the hours spent on Organisational related work at home during the week, and Figure 7.12.4 gives the hours spent on work at home on weekends.

Figure 7.12.1 Hours Worked per Week in Full-Time Work Role - Comparison Between 1990-1995

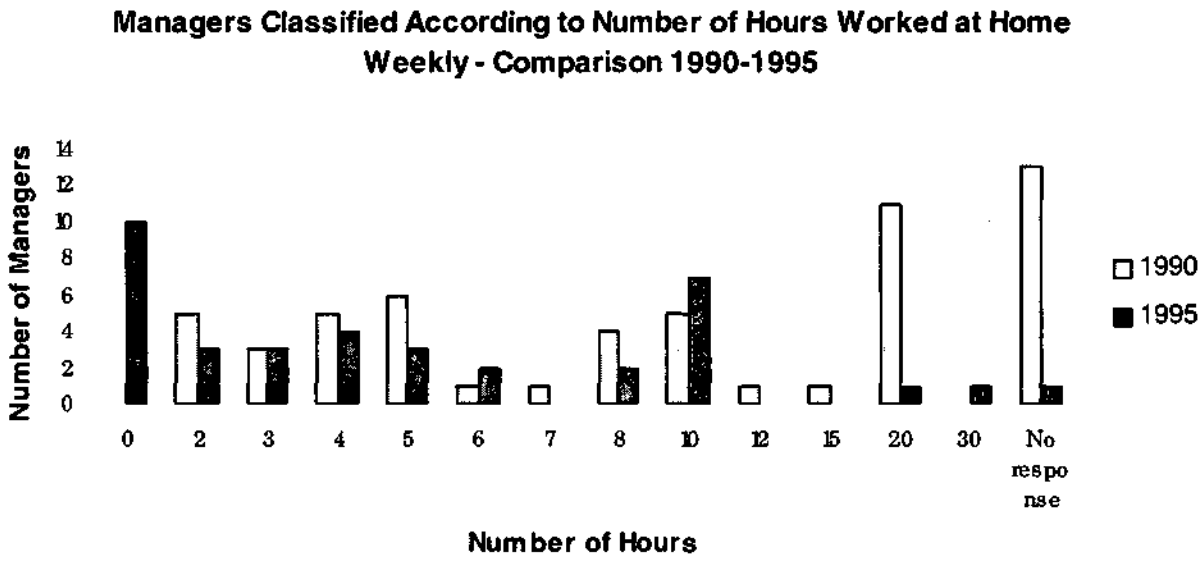
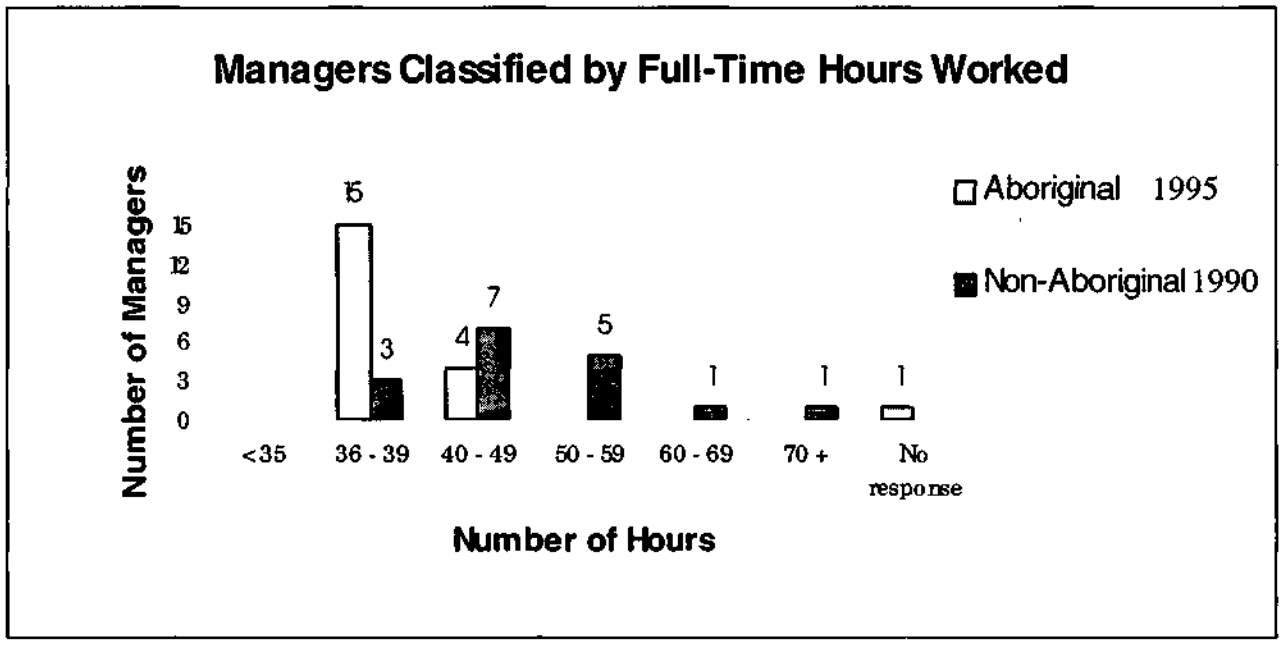


Figure 7.12.2 Hours Worked per Week in Full-Time Work Role - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Managers



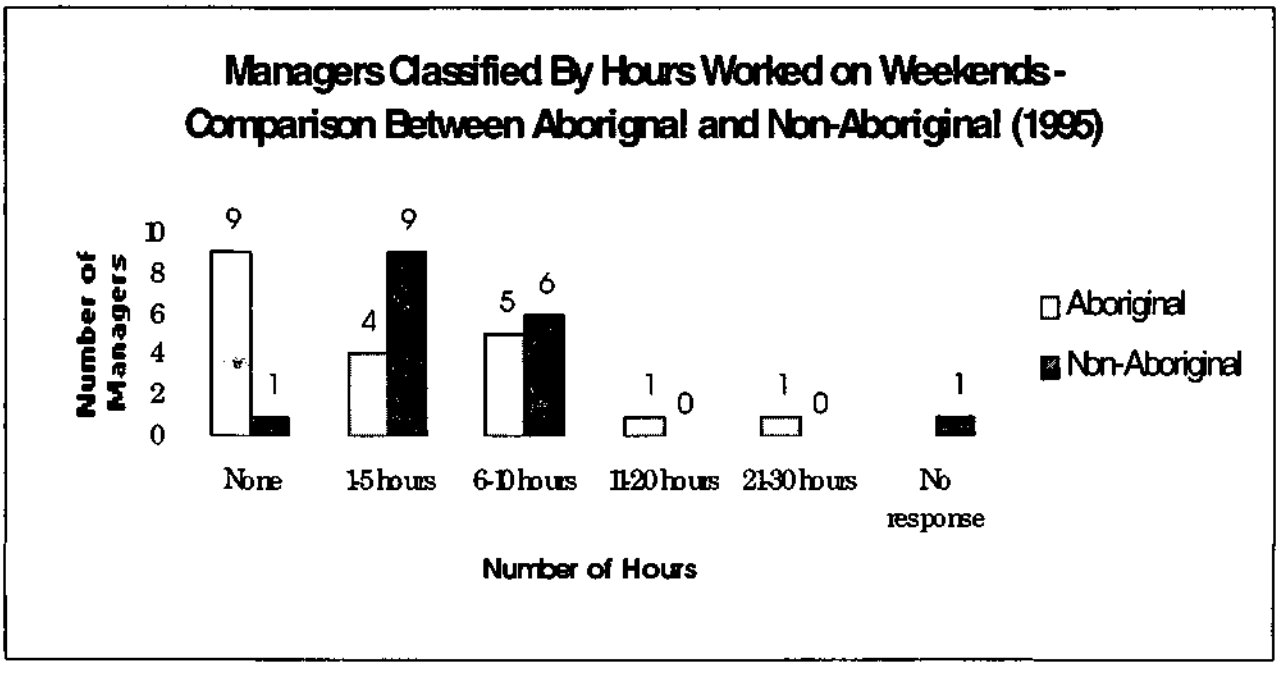
The difficulties of defining "work" and "non-work" in this context have already been referred to in the introduction to this paper, and need to be borne in mind when reading these results. This would be consistent with seeing Aboriginal communities as working within a high context culture, as described by Edward Hall in 1976[13]. While the Central Australian data relates to full time work role, the qualitative research supporting this survey indicates that Aboriginal Managers consider themselves to be formally 'on the job' 24 hours a day. Typically these managers go home to act as a community resource person, spending further hours of work in community development work. These out of "work" commitments require much the same skills as the formal work role, and in many instances, provide significant community, off-the-job management and communication skill training for potential managers.

Even so, the majority of managers in 1990 (78.5%), reported spending between 35 and 49 hours each week in their full time work role. Slightly more, (44.6%), worked between 35 - 39 hours, while the remaining 33.9% worked up to 49. In the 1995 survey, the overall number of hours had increased, though not to any great extent. The number of hours of work per week reported by non-Aboriginal managers was higher than that reported by non-Aboriginal managers, and it is suggested that this is partly because they are defining "work" more precisely from "not working" than their Aboriginal counterparts have done. There is also an expectation within these Aboriginal Organisations that non-Aboriginal managers will undertake cultural learning, to "look, listen, and learn" about the communities they are managing the provision of services for, and that this increases their workload.

Table 7.12.1 Hours Worked at Home Monday to Friday

Hours	1990		1995	
	F	%	F	%
0	0	0.0	10	27.0%
2	5	8.9%	3	8.1%
3	3	5.4%	3	8.1%
4	5	8.9%	4	10.8%
5	6	10.7%	3	8.1%
6	1	1.8%	2	5.4%
7	1	1.8%	0	
8	4	7.1%	2	5.4%
10	5	8.9%	7	18.9%
12	1	1.8%	0	
15	1	1.8%	0	
20	11	19.6%	1	2.7%
30	0	0.0	1	2.7
No Response	13	23.2%	1	2.7
Total (N)	56	100%	37	100%

Figure 7.12.3 Managers Classified by Hours Worked At Home (Weekly) - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal (1995 Only)



The data gathered here does not appear to give a clear trend, and once again this can be accounted for by the imprecision of definitions of what constitutes "work". In 1990 a large number of respondents, 23% did not answer this question, while 100% did in 1995. It is uncertain whether 1990 respondents found difficulty in separating their formal work roles from the community work described above, or whether, in fact, those who did not respond do not take what they considered work home at all but did not like to say so.

As a group the managers in these organisations recorded working from 2 to 30 hours at home each week. Approximately 88% percent of non-

Aboriginal managers reported working between 1 - 10 hours at home, compared with 45% of Aboriginal managers. Ten percent of Aboriginal managers reported working between 11 - 30 hours each week at home

Figure 7.12.4 Hours Worked at Home on Weekends - Comparison Between 1990-1995

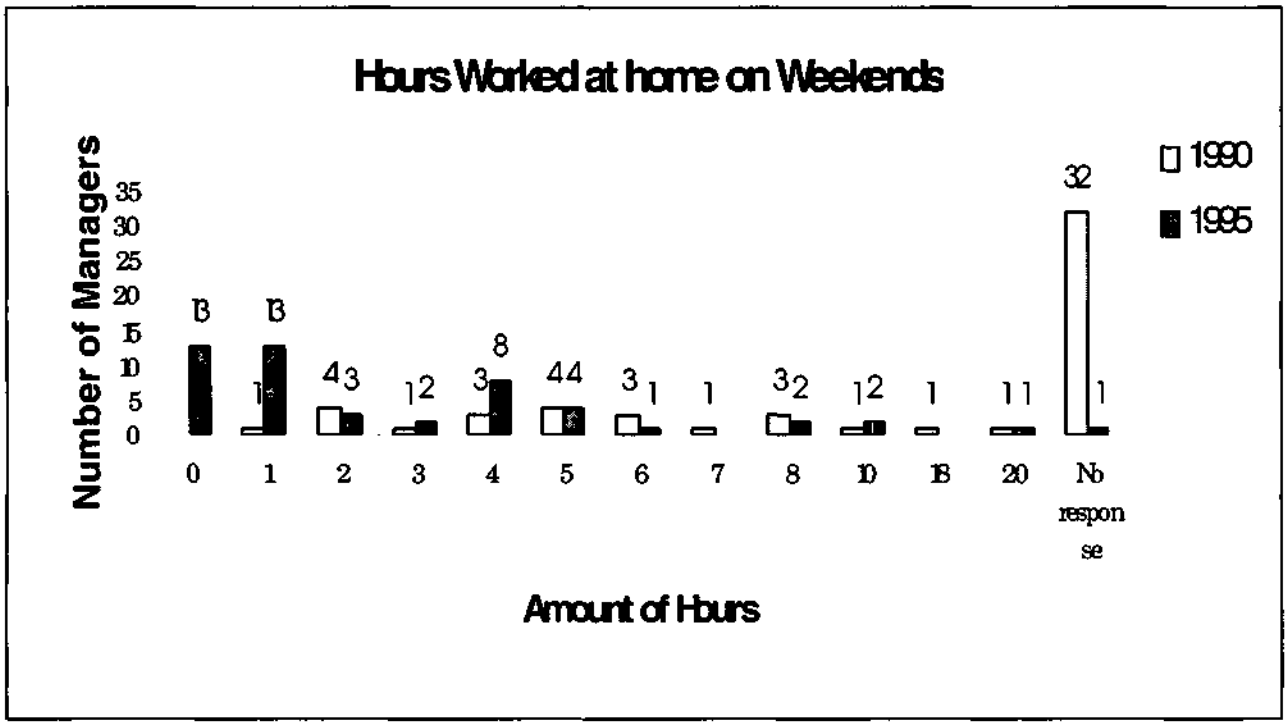
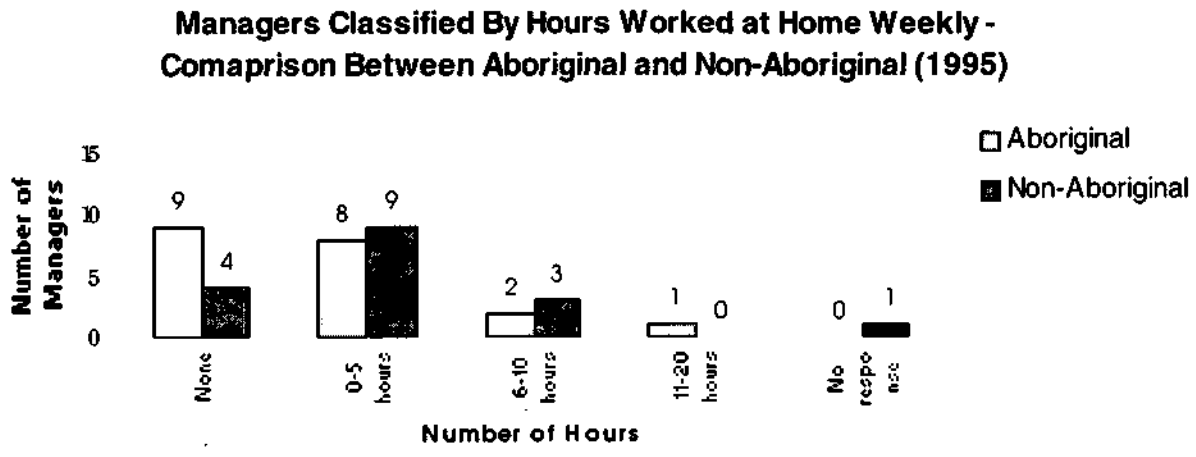


Figure 7.12.5 Managers Classified by Hours Worked on Weekends - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal (1995 Only)



The majority of respondents, 57% did not complete this question in 1990 for reasons which have already been discussed. Those who did respond, spent between 1 and 4 hours working during the weekend. In 1995 approximately one-third of managers reported not working at home over the weekend, and close to one-fifth worked up to 8 hours.

7.13 MANAGERS CLASSIFIED BY WORK STRESS

Tables 7.13-1, 7.13-2 and 7.13-3 show the distributions of managers classified according to work stress, work pressure and work load respectively. Responses here focus only upon what those being surveyed considered to be stressful for *them*. However, given the social environment in which those managing in Aboriginal Organisations operate, and the constant work demands which other parts of this research showed they are subjected to, it seems likely that the levels of stress registered here could be, if anything, relatively understated.

The stressful nature of managing in an Aboriginal Organisation cannot, however, be understated, as this research reveals. The reader has already seen how this affects the number of years a given manager can continue without burnout. Managers, by virtue of their positions in these Organisations are looked up to by community members, and expected to be able to solve community as well as work problems, and to fulfil all of their obligations to their community. The unique, historical social and economic position in which these Organisations operate, and the mostly insurmountable difficulties they must cope with in the face of ever-accelerating change, mean that there is no closure, no finish to their monumental task. There have been plenty of wins for the managers in these organisations, but they are quickly swallowed up by the next gulf of health, housing, educational and social concerns of the communities for whom they have been formed to provide services. For many of these managers, their daily decisions can mean life or death.

Figure 7.13.1 Managers Classified According to WorkStress - Comparison Between 1990-1995

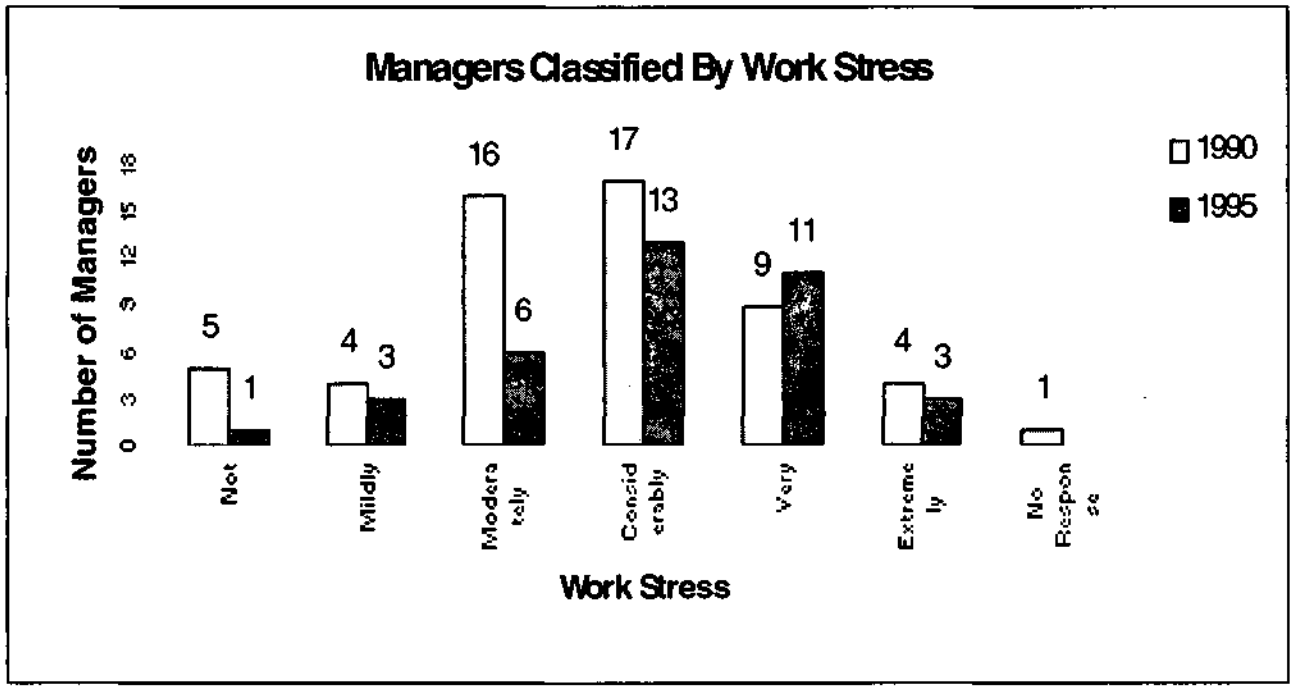
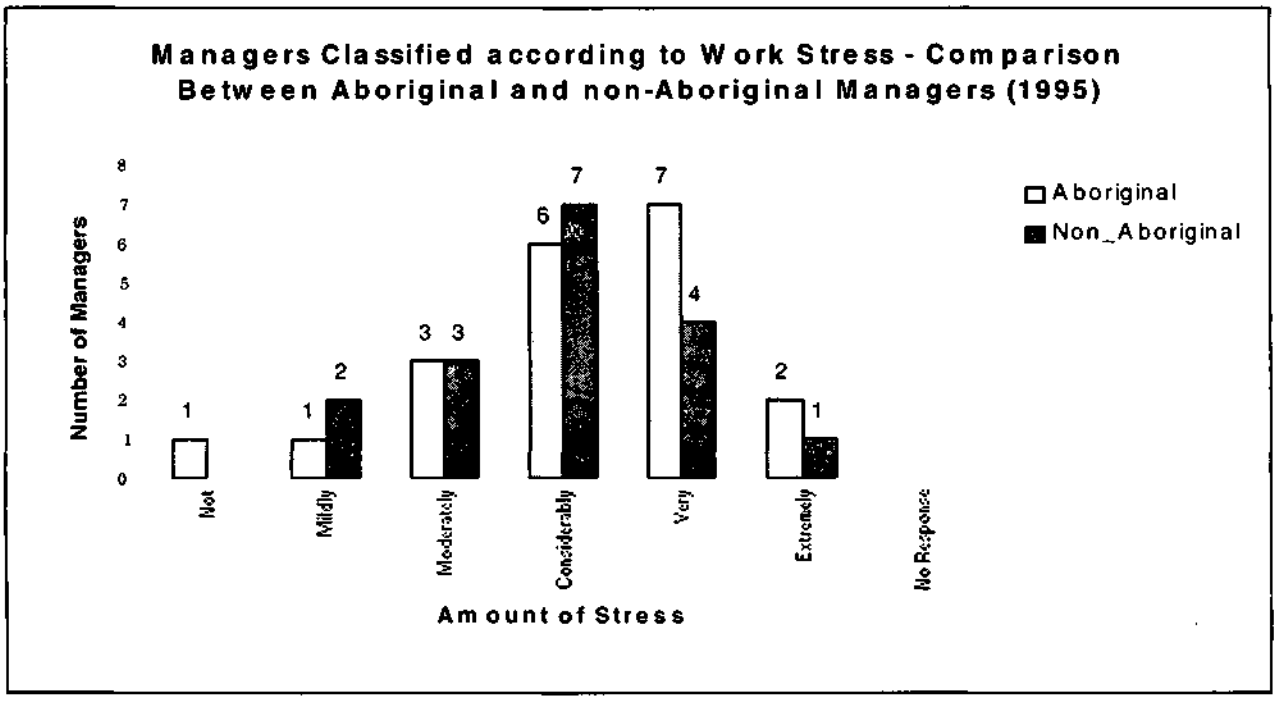


Figure 7.13.2 Managers Classified According to Work Stress - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal (1995 Only)



As Figure 7.13-3 indicates, the greatest number of respondents in 1990 and 1995 reported moderate to very high levels of work related stress. Another large percentage (26.6%) believed their work to be moderately stressful, with another 10% who were of the opinion that it was considerably stressful. This gives a similar total percentage (58%) in the middle stress range, with a higher percentage of Aboriginal Managers reporting 'very' high levels of stress.

Figure 7.13.3 Managers Work Pressure - Comparison Between 1990- 1995

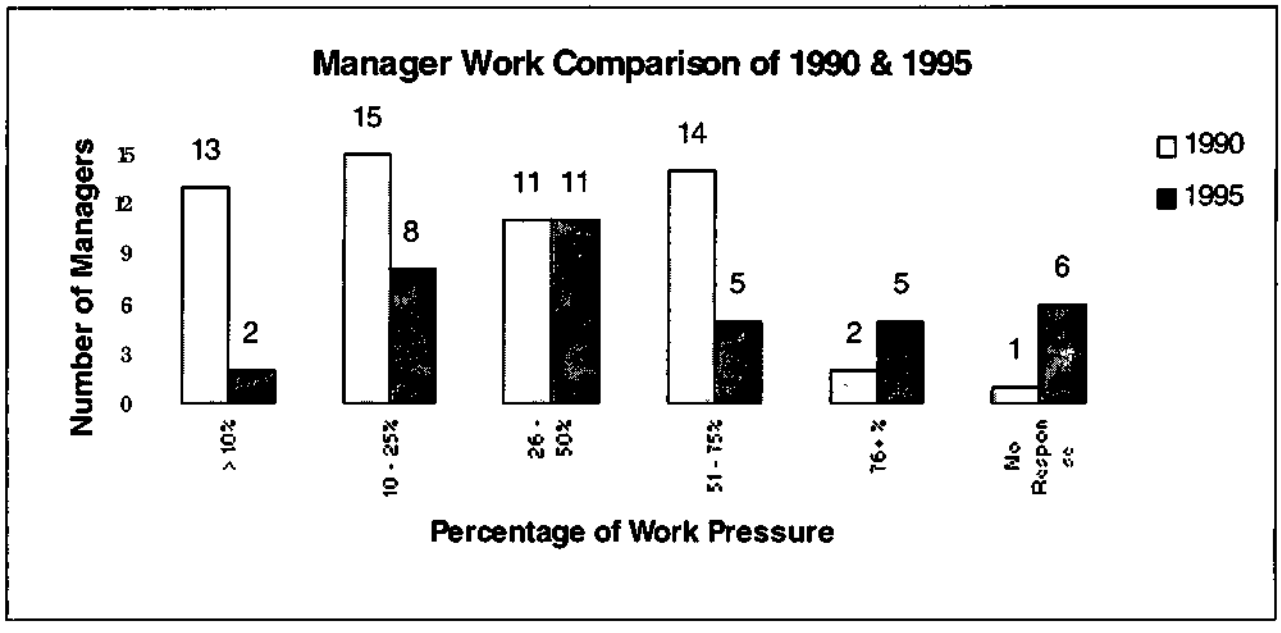


Figure 7.13.4 Managers Classified by Work Pressure - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal (1995 Only)

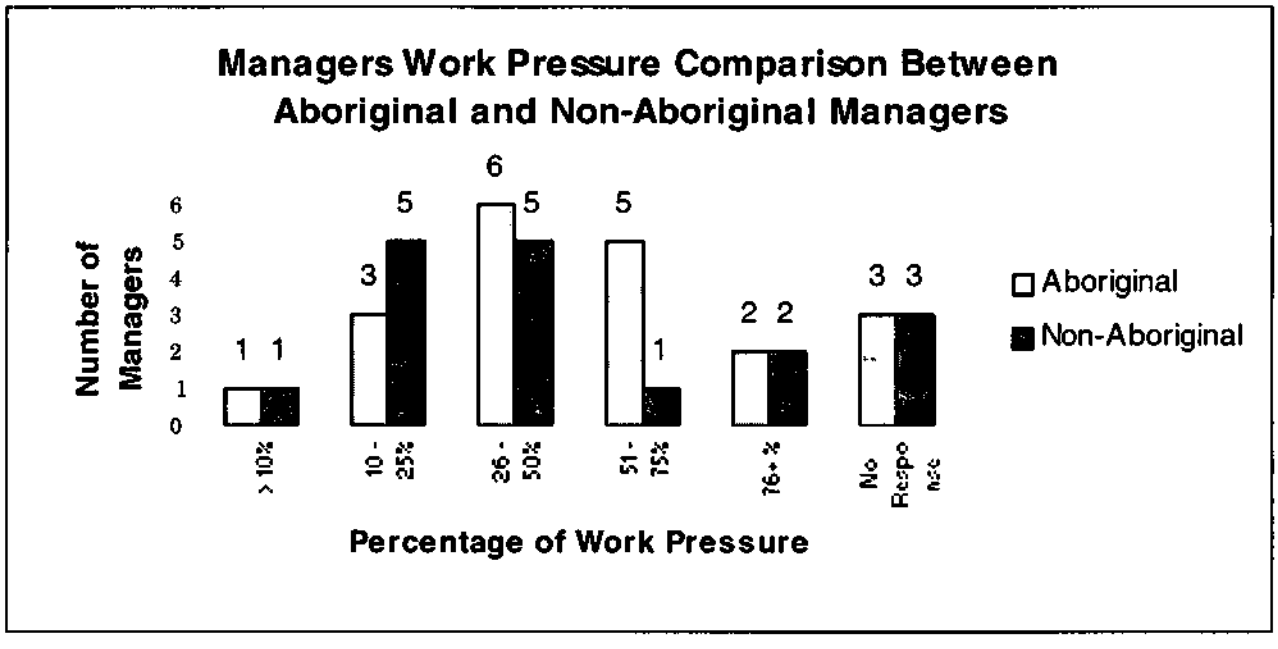


Figure 7.13.4 indicates the extent to which managers felt the pressure to perform had increased in the last twelve months. In 1990 most respondents reported an increase in work pressure. In 1995 approximately half of the respondents believed that the pressure to perform had increased in the last twelve months. Much of this pressure could have stemmed from the turbulent policy and political environment from which these organisations are not buffeted by inner resources. Overall Aboriginal managers surveyed felt the increase in pressure more keenly than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. This makes sense given the requirement for community leadership in addition to organisation life.

Figure 7.13.5 Managers Classified by Work Load

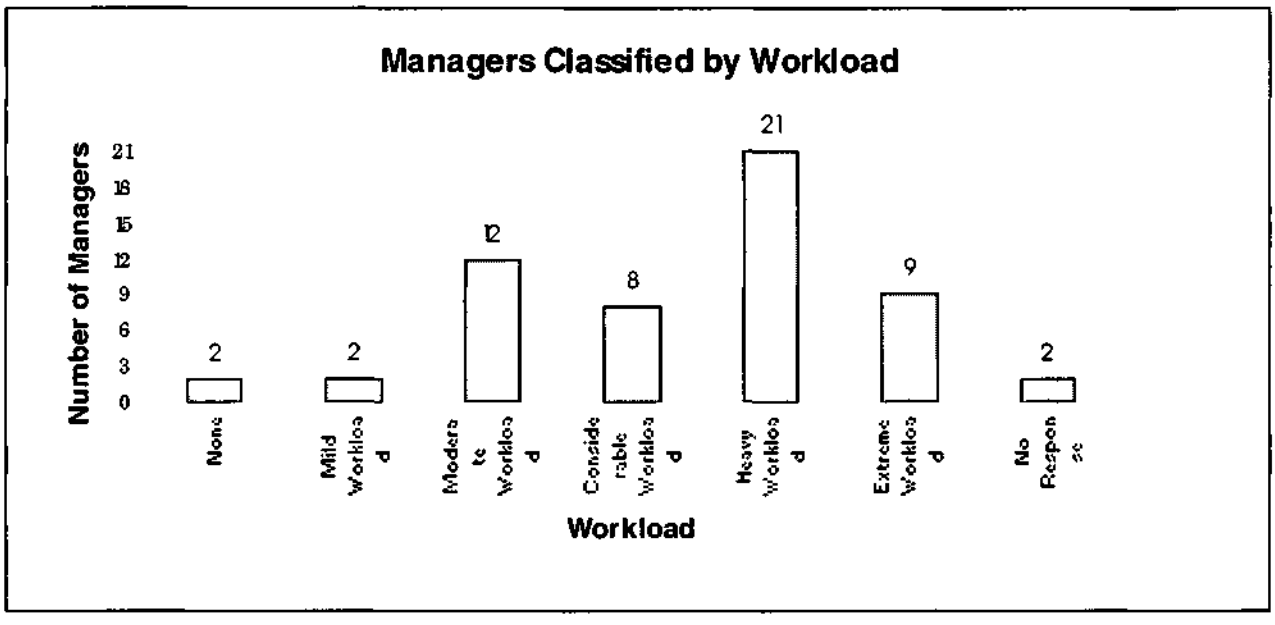
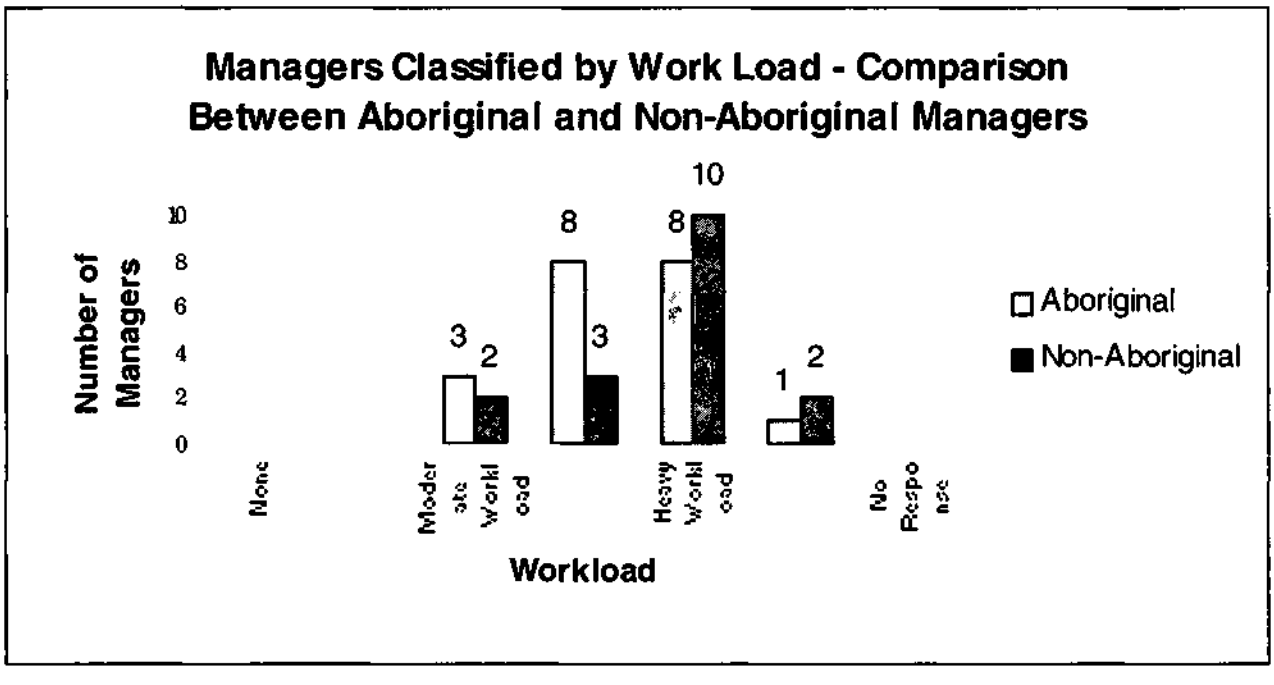


Figure 7.13.6 Managers Classified by Work Load - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal (1995 Only)



Respondents reported a moderate to heavy workload overall for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers. One respondent wrote: "The work load is excessive - however an increase in staff would not necessarily reduce the contact time as work is self generating, there is no limit to requirements".

7.14 MANAGERS CLASSIFIED BY SOURCES OF WORK PRESSURE

Managers were asked to identify three to five major sources of work pressure for them in their present positions, and also asked to indicate whether they found the pressure slight, moderate or excessive.

Table 7.14.1 gives the raw data obtained from this question as it clearly shows how respondents rated the sources of their work pressure.

Table 7.14.1 Managers Classified by Sources of Work Pressure (1990).

Source of Pressure	S	M	E	T
Personnel Issues		8	5	13
Deadlines	1	2	10	13
Leadership		6	6	12
Workload			4	4
Interpersonal		12	9	21
Resource constraints		2	14	16
Client demands		3	1	4
Interruptions		1	1	2
Role Ambiguity	1	1	3	5
Travel		1		1
Personal Characteristics		6	8	14

Table 7.14.2 Managers Classified by Sources of Work Pressure (1995).

Source of Pressure	1	2	3	4	5	T
Meetings			3	4	2	9
Staff Management		1	4	9	3	17
Insufficient funding		2	4	4	1	11
Underskilled employees			3	4		7
Lack of communication		1	2	3	1	6
Planning/Prioritise			2	3		5
Workload			2	2	1	5
Allocation of resources			3		1	4
Lack of time				2	2	4
Lack of support			1	3		4
Organising staff	1	3				4
Completing work			1	2		3
Paperwork			3	2		5
Conflict Resolution			1	2		3
Deadlines		1			1	2
Policy Implementation		1			1	2
Reporting requirements			1	1		2
Travel					1	1
Domestic			1			1
Total Responses = 103			1			1

S = Slight M = Moderate
E = Excessive T = Total

In 1990, the sources of work pressure came from interpersonal relationships, resource constraints, personal characteristics, personnel issues and deadlines, and leadership in that order. By 1995, staff management, insufficient funding or resources, meetings, underskilled employees and the strain of communicating at all organisational levels, plus cross-culturally and multi-lingually topped the list. This result was consistent with answers to personal interview questions[14]. In response to the question, "What are your key management issues at present?", staffing issues, the difficulties of dealing with complex communications, and lack of resources all occurred most frequently.

Sarros, in the report of his survey, pointed out that this also complements Mintzberg's (1975:57, in Sarros, 1990) research in the United States, which found that managers spend between 40 to 48 percent of their time dealing with employee concerns.

Qualitative research conducted along with this survey found that many managers in these organisations volunteered the information that in their view non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal managers often did not communicate with one another effectively. Although the Institute for Aboriginal Development does already offer courses in cross-cultural communication, these findings do seem to indicate a strong need for special management cross-communication workshops in the future as part of the Associate Diploma and as short courses for all managers working in these organisations.

Resource constraints including insufficient funding reinforces the presence of a gap between the community need for the services provided by these organisations compared with the resources available to meet needs. This gap can be identified as a considerable and constant work pressure which all managers in Aboriginal Organisations in Central Australia face and one that is not easily resolved. The data shows that more managers rated resource constraints as an excessive source of work pressure rather than moderate or slight.

Also rated highly and equal with personnel issues by respondents to this work role survey were deadlines. Again this matches the work stressors mentioned by the executives in Sarros's survey, where deadlines were rated as the second most frequent variable.

The fifth highly rated work pressure was given as the stress of being a leader, and what being a leader means in Aboriginal Organisations. This is not something which can be solved simply by education in Western leadership skills, but is something which these managers gain over time.

Government regulations were also rated highly by Aboriginal managers yet did not rate highly at all in the Sarros survey. Although meetings were given rating number one in work activities, they were rated here as causing less work stress than the activities above. These results shed light on the emphasis needed in management training. These findings match the key management issues identified by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers in this research.

7.15 STRATEGIES USED BY MANAGERS TO COPE WITH WORK PRESSURE

Participants were also asked to identify the strategies they used to cope with the work pressure they experienced, and how effective they found that strategy on a five point scale from 1 = not effective to 5 = very effective.

Table 7.15.1 Strategies Used by Managers to Cope with Work Pressure 1990

Category of Work Pressure	1	2	3	4	5
Re-assess/re-organise		6	3	3	12%
Go away Bush/holiday				1	2%
Seek advice		5	3	8	16%
Time with family			1	3	4%
Adapt		1	1		2%
Don't take work home	1	1	2	4	
Delegate		4	1		5%
Work extra time	1	3	1	1	6%
Take breaks	1	2	5	3	11%
Educate workers			3		3%
Liaise with workers			2		2%
Research				1	1%
Decisive				1	1%
Yoga			1		1%
Exercise		1	3	1	5%
Prayer				1	1%
Sleeping/Rest		1	1		2%
Humour			1		1%
Smoking	2	1			3%
Drinking	4	2	1		7%

Table 7.15.2 Strategies Used by Managers to Cope with Work Pressure 1995

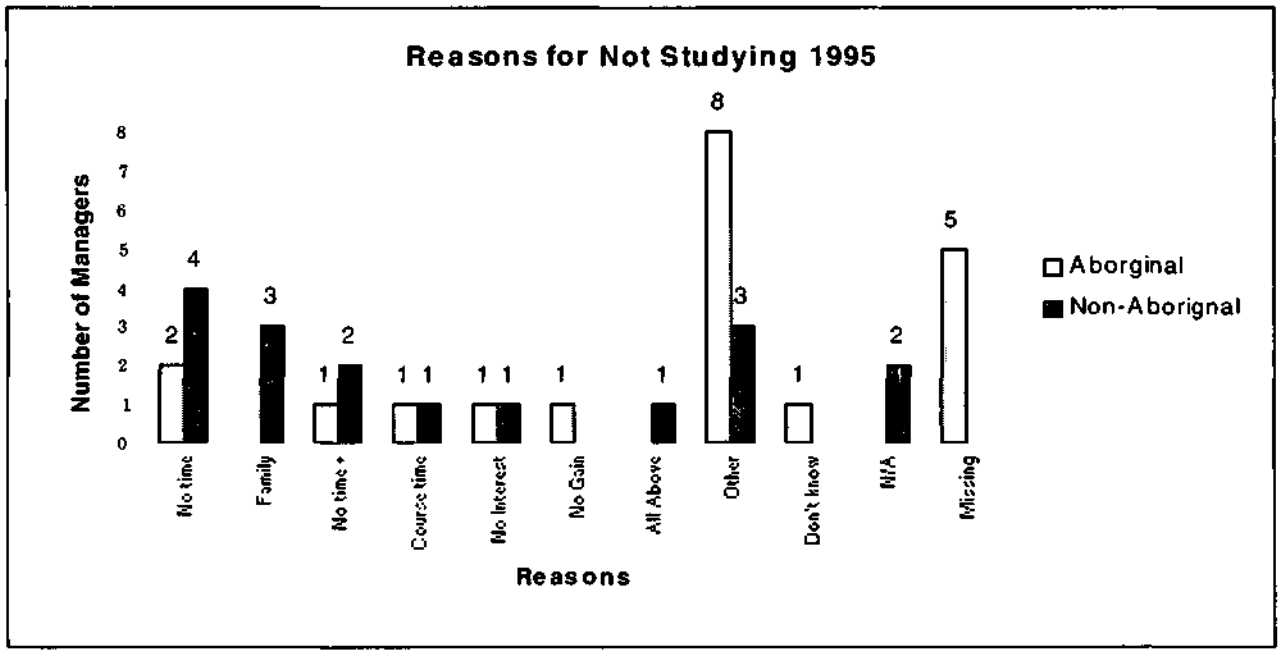
Coping Mechanism	1	2	3	4	5	T
Talking		1	3	3	3	10
Effective planning / organising / prioritising				4	5	9
Delegation		1	3	2	1	7
Friends			2	1	5	8
Time management		1	3		1	5
Exercise / meditation / relaxing			1	1	2	4
Effective communication			1	2	1	4
Extra work (home w/e)		1	2		1	4
Taking breaks			3			3
Holidays				1	1	2
Being focused			2			2
Socialise					2	2
Complete tasks				1	1	2
Panadol/narcotics				2		2
Performance monitoring					1	
React				1		1
Music					1	1
Humour					1	1
Drinking	1					1
Sport					1	1

Calm				1		1
Team work					1	1
Drive					1	1
Gardening				4		1
Total Responses (N) =74						

As Table 7.15.1 shows, the top five coping strategies given by respondents in 1990 were: seeking advice; re-assessing or re-organising their work; taking breaks; and deliberately not taking work home. In 1995 talking with friends rated most highly followed by effective planning, organising and prioritising and delegation. Effectiveness varied for these strategies, for example re-organising work was more often rated as only a medium effective strategy, while seeking advice from friends was considered by more mangers to be very effective. In all a range of coping strategies was reported.

8. REASONS FOR NOT STUDYING

Figure 17.15.1 Reasons for Not Studying - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Managers 1995



As the object of this research was to gather data as input to a curriculum designed to provide the managers of these organisations with management training, the reasons managers gave for not studying at the time of the survey were important.

For example, in reply to other questions in the 1995 research, only four Aboriginal and four non-Aboriginal managers had undergone any formal management training. Eleven Aboriginal and six non-Aboriginal had not. Both groups had learned by "teaching themselves" from "on the job experience" with "help from other people" and twelve managers surveyed drew upon "formal study" in other areas. The same picture emerged in 1990. In 1990 and 1995 managers were asked what they had to teach themselves so that they could manage in an Aboriginal organisation. This was important input into the curriculum, as no assumptions were made that Western management theories or practices would serve the organisations best.

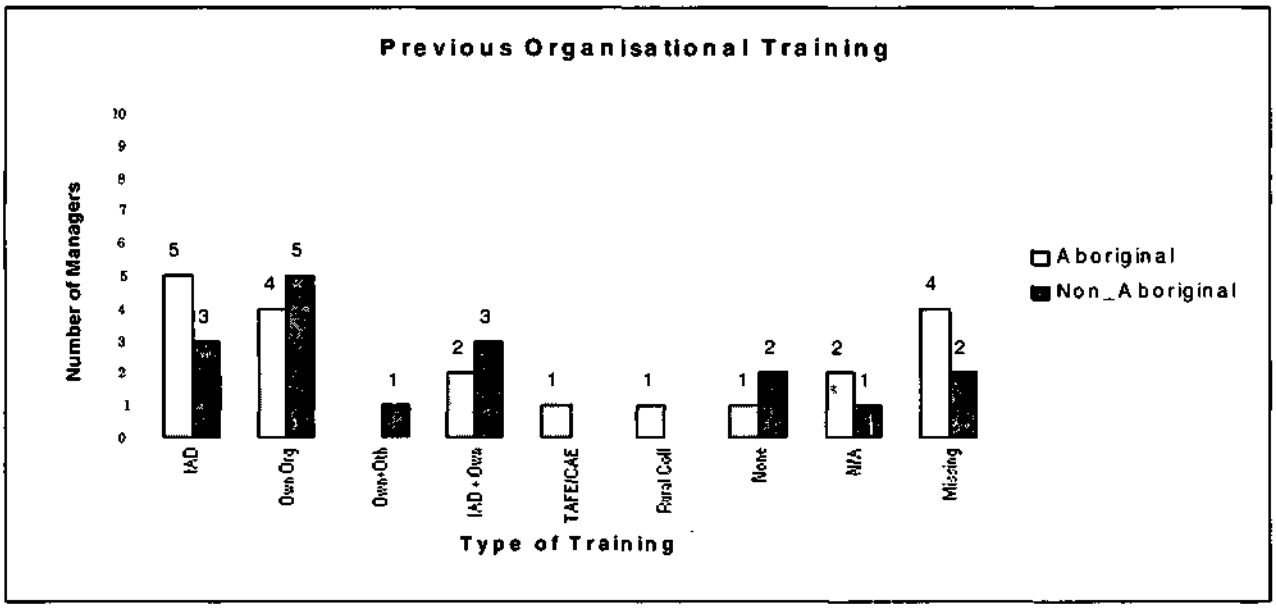
In 1990, most managers gave a lack of time and their family responsibilities as the reasons preventing them from studying, and these were still strong reasons in 1995, affecting both men as well as women. Indications were that sharing their workload would enable them to increase the time available for study, together with the provision of some workload sharing or study leave. An important reason for not studying in 1990 was the need for a local relevant training, something which IAD's Management Training was being set up to provide. By 1995 innovations in educational technology and the competitive policies of many interstate educational institutions toward remote area students, has meant that there are more options for management studies. However, it is important to stress that IAD still operates the only "Two-Way" accredited Management Training designed specifically for the Aboriginal Organisations listed earlier in this paper.

As Figure 7.15.1 above indicates, lack of time still figures prominently in reasons for not studying for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers. However, a high 40% of Aboriginal and 17.6% of non-Aboriginal managers cited "other" unspecified reasons preventing them from further study. This is a very high percentage, in the case of Aboriginal respondents to the question of reasons for not undertaking further study and needs expansion. Discussion with staff at IAD suggest that the Aboriginal managers' previous experiences with education, may have had a negative impact on them resulting in low self-esteem and self-confidence in relation to their ability to learn. IAD's experiences have always been that these students' ability to learn is acute. As the French educationalist, Pierre Boudieu would put it, they have 'misrecognised'[15] the source of their own lack of progress in mainstream educational systems and still blame themselves for the cross-cultural failings of the system. While this was not one of the choices listed in the survey, there was space and opportunity to expand on any point. The fact that 40% of respondents have not done so in this case, could stem, according to IAD staff, from the pain of having to acknowledge a personal educational deficit which many of IAD's students have been able to successfully confront in the management courses. There also appeared to be a general lack of understanding of what IAD's management course offered, possibly due to high staff turnover.

For example, as this research has shown, in 1995 most managers had been with their organisation or managing for less than five years. This indicates the need for constant marketing of the course to other organisations by IAD. Many Aboriginal managers expressed a desire to continue on to a "mainstream" and preferably undergraduate degree qualification after completion of IAD's course. The expectations of staff undergoing training had shifted in five years from organisation to organisation and a vital aspect of future success would depend upon clarifying the selection and career planning of course participants prior to beginning study. Of interest in both this survey, and in personal interview, was the willingness of the non-Aboriginal managers in these organisations to contemplate and even desire organisational support for training to enable them to be able to work better cross-culturally and understand Aboriginal cultural management practices.

9. PREVIOUS ORGANISATIONAL TRAINING

Figure 7.15.2 Previous Organisational Training - Comparison Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Managers



These figures indicate the extent to which Aboriginal Organisations themselves, and particularly IAD have undertaken the responsibility for their own management training.

10. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

In summarising the above findings it is important to emphasise that the primary purpose of the 1990 survey reported here, although supported by interviews with stakeholders, staff and students, was designed to gather demographic and work related data from the managers in the listed Aboriginal Organisations in order to construct a profile of those who manage the organisations to determine training needs. In 1995 the purpose was to revisit the Organisations to find out what had changed in the five years that the Management Course had been operating, and to determine what changes might have occurred in the targeted student base and organisational work roles and responsibilities. Given that the number of managers surveyed ranged from 70 in 1990 to 40 in 1995, and that in a large number of cases the individuals varied, it is interesting that the major findings are very similar. The split responses between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers in 1995 also show very few attitudinal differences overall. All findings have been summarised below:

10.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. Most managers surveyed in 1990 and 1995 were in senior or middle management.

2. The majority of Aboriginal managers were locally born either in Alice Springs or the Northern Territory, whereas the majority of non-Aboriginal managers came from interstate or overseas.

3. The majority of managers were in the 30 to 49 year ago group, with more Aboriginal managers more likely to be in their 30's and non-Aboriginal managers more likely to be in their 40's. Independently sourced statistics gathered by Tangentyere Council in a 1991 survey of Alice Springs Town Camps indicate that the age group 26 - 45 formed approximately 33.4% of the total Aboriginal population around Alice.

4. The majority of managers were female. The number of female Aboriginal managers increased from 34% to 38% from 1990 to 1995 and was higher overall, but female non-Aboriginal managers were still close to 59%. The higher percentage of female managers not only does not reflect the gender balance in non Aboriginal-managed organisations, but does not correlate with the numbers of male and female Aboriginal people in the 30 - 49 age group living in town camps around Alice Springs. Independently sourced statistics gathered from a survey conducted in June 1996, shows that the number of males and females in the general population around the town is almost equal. In that age group, 132 male and 124 female inhabitants were counted in town camps.

5. A very high percentage of Aboriginal (95%) and non-Aboriginal (95%) managers had been in managerial positions for less than 10 years, with approximately 65% of both having managed for less than five. There are justifications for the need for continuing management training here.

6. Ninety percent of Aboriginal, and 100% of non-Aboriginal managers had been in their current management position for less than 5 years in 1995. Obviously this has implications for the investment the Combined Aboriginal Organisations and IAD have made in management training over this time. Four percent of managers in 1990 had been in their current management position between 11 and 15 years, while none had in 1995.

7. The majority of these managers are responsible for up to 10 staff members with, if anything, Aboriginal managers responsible for slightly more than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Aboriginal organisations characteristically do not have a large span of managerial control.

8. In 1990, the majority of these Aboriginal Organisations employed less than 100 staff. However, by 1995, approximately 65% reported between 100 and 400 employees.

9. While the Organisations provided a wide ranges of services, the greatest number of survey respondents identified themselves as being in Council, Educational and Health and Media services in that order in both 1990 and 1995. This is a reflection of the size of the organisations providing those compared to other services.

10. Despite identifying themselves as in senior to middle management, the majority of managers earned 39,000 or less in 1990. While this was still true in 1995, a higher percentage have moved up into the $40,000 to $49,000 income bracket. Two of the thirty-seven surveyed in 1995 earned up to $60,000 - $69,000. Given the responsibilities undertaken and hours worked, these income figures compare very unfavourably with those managing in non-Aboriginal organisations. Despite this one manager in the 1990 survey explained: "I get job satisfaction, I am doing something for my people - there is a challenge in many directions".

11. Close to half of all managers surveyed in 1990 and 1995 considered salary bonuses and/or financial incentives unimportant to the quality of their personal work performance. A further 30% of non-Aboriginal managers and 5% of non-Aboriginal managers selected 'mildly important'. A much smaller percentage considered them 'very' or 'extremely' important. This was true of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers.

10.2 MANAGERIAL WORK DEMANDS

12. The top five work demands stem from all aspects of managing staff; all forms of organisational communication including report and submission writing and communicating with external bodies; general administration; attending meetings and dealing with financial and non financial policies and planning.

13. The majority of managers work between 35 and 49 hours each week in their full-time work role with a trend towards increasing from 1990 to 1995. Non-Aboriginal managers logged higher working hours in 1995 possibly because they had fewer community or extended family commitments outside their full-time role.

14. In 1990 there was a wide variation between 2 and 20 hours worked at home Monday to Friday, and the same was true in 1995. However, while 88% of non-Aboriginal managers worked at home between 1 and 10 hours week nights compared with 45% of Aboriginal managers, 10% of Aboriginal managers reported working between 11 and 30 hours at home Monday to Fridays.

15. The majority of managers either did not work during the weekends, or worked up to five hours. A higher percentage of non-Aboriginal managers (53%) reported working up to five hours during weekends compared to 40% of Aboriginal managers.

16. The majority of managers rated their work as 'considerably' to 'very' stressful. A large number considered it 'moderately' stressful.

17. All managers reported anything from a 10% to a 75% increase in work pressure during the last twelve months prior to the survey. A higher percentage of non-Aboriginal managers reported a 1- 50% increase, while Aboriginal managers were more likely to select 25 - 75%.

18. The majority rated their workload as 'extreme'.

19. Their major sources of work pressure were listed as:

    Staffing issues, and
    Lack of financial and other resources

    In 1990 interpersonal relations, leadership and meeting deadlines rated very highly, but of these only meeting deadlines re-appeared in 1995. Meetings were rated highly in 1995. These findings are consistent with other aspects of the survey and research.

20. Managers used a variety of mechanisms to cope with their high levels of work pressure. Both 1990 and 1995 surveys indicate that seeking advice or talking things over with friends were most effective. Delegation was perceived to be quite ineffective in 1990 but was improving in 1995. Effective planning or prioritising or taking a break were frequently tried. Managers used a wide variety of ways of relaxing to cope with the pressure.

21. Lack of time, and family commitments were most frequently cited as reasons for not currently studying in both 1990 and 1995. However, a large percentage of respondents checked only "Other" here.

22. Most managers had only received management training through a combination of IAD and their own organisations. This possibly reflects both the fact that no other management courses were available in Central Australia until recently, but more importantly that the Aboriginal students taking the course prefer to study locally, and in an environment conducive to their educational, family and work needs. It also suggests that the Aboriginal community has largely taken responsibility for training its own managers.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the survey reported here in no way attempt to identify or compare cultural differences between managing in Aboriginal compared to non-Aboriginal organisations in Central Australia.

Instead the survey focused on identifying the demographic, work demands, financial incentives and training backgrounds of participants.

The research on the manager in these Aboriginal Organisations in Central Australia reveals a committed and hardworking individual coping well with the demands of providing essential community services with few and diminishing resources. They are predominantly young and female, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal management roles differ little. While financial incentives are important, a commitment to community and the relationship between family and community appears to be more important.

It has been suggested by one management trainer at IAD that during their whole existence these Aboriginal Organisations have faced the massive social change now associated with Western organisations in the latter part of the 20th century. These managers have been coping with, and suffering from social change in their lives and in their organisations for their whole lives.

The majority of managers have undertaken management training within their own organisation or at IAD, and have worked for their particular organisation for less than five years. Given the unique social and cultural demands placed on these managers to continue to be able to provide culturally relevant essential services in a cross-cultural environment which are reported elsewhere, the conclusion can be drawn that it is imperative that these organisations continue to provide management training for their management staff and seek ways to retain them for the future. The typical high workload of these managers and their reported levels of work pressure make it all the more important that they are continually supported and upgraded to cope with future organisational demands especially as the future is likely to face even more resource constraints and industry regulation.

Since their formation from the early 1970s onwards these organisations have largely dealt with 'town' community groups. However, the 1990s is seeing a move toward servicing remote Aboriginal communities: a move from town to 'bush' services which will stretch their managers and services even more. It is vital that these and other managers in these organisations are educationally supported to enable them to move into the future.

A 1990 survey respondent said it all: "It is extraordinarily interesting, rewarding and addictive. It is possible to be effective, get many things done that badly need doing, and to create precedents for other Aboriginal groups. At the present time, it also means working with a very talented, motivated group of people throughout the rest of the Management levels".

ENDNOTES

1. Howitt, Dr Richard, "More Than Management", A Review of Management Course for Institute for Aboriginal Development, August 1989, Alice Springs, page 2.

2. Parbury, Nigel, (1986) Survival: A History of Aboriginal Life in New South Wales, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs NSW Australia, page 11.

3. Lawlor, Robert (1991), *Voices of the First Day: Awakening of the Aboriginal Dreamtime*, Inner Traditions International, Vermont, USA, page 14.

4. Lawlor, 1991:143

5. Australian Government Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, "Discussion Paper on Issues and Outline of Issues", Underlying Issues Conference Sessions Northern Territory 20-31 August 1990, page 4

6. Lewis, John (1987), Historical notes in Photographic Exhibition, Old Telegraph Station site, Alice Springs

7. Australian Government Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, "Discussion Paper on Issues and Outline of Issues", Underlying Issues Conference Sessions Northern Territory 20-31 August 1990, page 16.

8. Sarros, James, (1990) Research supported by the Central Research Fund of Chisholm Institute of Technology, and the Australian Institute of Management, presented in a monograph titled, "Challenges in Australian Management: A Profile of Today's Executive". The Work Role Survey used in this research was adapted from the questionnaire used in Sarros' research.

9. A term commonly used to describe the line of qualified white professionals near to the top in many Aboriginal Organisations who provide financial or other necessary skills.

10. Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Northern Territory's Young People: 1981, 1986, 1991, p.5. Figures are not included from the 1996 Census.

11. Tengentyere Council, Alice Springs, June 1996. Independent census survey of Aboriginal population of approximately twenty-eight town camps around Alice Springs.

12. Handy, Charles, (1990), *The Age of Unreason*, Arrow Books, Great Britain, pp.70-92.

13. Edward Hall coined the terms *high* and *low context* in cross cultural situations and refers to context in his works in 1959, 1966, 1976, and 1983. The relevant aspect of contexting referred to in this paper in connection with differing notions of 'work' is that Hall's work suggests that low context groups sharply separate their home and work activities, while high context groups, suggested here to describe many Aboriginal communities, do not separate their home life from their work life.

14. Response to Personal Interview question, "What are your most pressing work problems?" December 1991, Alice Springs. Wendy Bell, 1996, "Answers to General Questions Asked About Managing in Aboriginal Organisations", Attachment to Research Report on "Two-Way" Management Training at the Institute for Aboriginal Development, Alice Springs, 1995.

15. Bell, W., (1987), *Pierre Bourdieu's Metaphor of Cultural Capital: What it can reveal about education and society*, Unpublished term paper, Centre for Comparative and International Studies in Education, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

16. It is important to emphasise the Aboriginal input into this research. All the original data frequencies in the 1990 research were collated and calculated by a young Aboriginal woman at IAD named Robin Maloney. In 1990 many documents were prepared by Connie and other Aboriginal staff at IAD. In 1995 and 1996, the Management Training Program Co-ordinator, Evenly Schaber and her staff, and students in the Associate Diploma class provided their interpretation of the data without which this paper could never have been written. Lara Mezentseff, Masters' candidate, Sessional Lecturer, and Research Assistant in the Department of Management, Monash University in Melbourne, spent many hours assisting with data analysis, and the preparation of this document.

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