

Youth Justice Reform Select Committee inquiry into youth justice reform in Queensland

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Inquiry into Youth Justice Reform in Queensland

Public Hearing Program

*A portfolio submission into helping disadvantaged youth
to overcome barriers and addictions in life.*

Prepared by the Petford Wellness Association

Mr. Michael Jenkins – Committee Member

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Prepared for the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee

Committee Secretary

Parliament House

George Street, Brisbane Qld 4000

Wednesday 7 February 2024

163 Abbott Street Cairns

Crystalbrook Baily

PREFACE

Youth crime rate is a common feature in newspaper headlines, in particular indigenous offenders. To control this behaviour, most people look at detention centres, to lock up the offenders and keep them off the streets.

This problem has been around for many years, although perhaps not as prevalent as it is today. Back in the 1980s some of these kids involved in youth crime were sent to the Petford training farm as their ‘detention centre’ – but it was also a place to learn things in a different way. With more than 50 years of being involved with troubled youth I have learned a bit about where the problems which caused them to wind up in the justice system more than likely started.

During years of personal research, I came upon a book called “Spark” by Dr John J Ratey. There is a story about a case study about a school in Naperville, near Chicago, USA; how a focus on aerobic activity could transform not only the body but also the mind. “It is a template for shaping our society- if we want to make real changes to society as it stands today.” (p19)

Naperville implemented a physical education programme (“PE4life”) in which students could willingly participate. This resulted in evidence of a correlation between physical fitness and academic achievement. Participating students were co-operating rather than competing. Better fitness equalled better attention which then equalled better results.

In a lot of ways, Australia follows American ways, from movies, music, sports, to TV shows and such. So why not “PE4life”?

“It has been said that with 52 million school age children, if they all have the benefit of Naperville style PE, our next generation of adults would be healthier, happier and smarter.” (p31)

In the schools where PE4life were implemented, students that were below state averages in reading and maths were able to raise their levels to at least 17% above state averages. In another example disciplinary problems were reduced by 67% in one inner school.

Since there is documented evidence, wouldn't it be in our best interests to trial (and if successful, implement) PE4life in areas of need?

During my experience at running a youth program at Petford, I sort of figured out that diet played a big part of the reason why many people (in particular Bama - Rainforest Aboriginal people, from Ingham in the south to Cooktown in the north) were having troubles. By accident I worked out that flour greatly affected some residents. When I came across Dr Anthony Hulbert's book "Omega Balance", it helped to connect the dots between physical / mental well-being and the detrimental effects of wheat flour, additives and processed food.

Dr Hulbert writes that in the last 50 years there has been an imbalance created with Omega 6 intake against Omega 3s. This imbalance has resulted in serious consequences and it has been believed to be a major reason for an increase in Diabetes, allergies, asthma and other inflammatory diseases.

In 1990 Hulbert said he was "scientifically aware" of the imbalance between Omegas 3 and 6, and thought "this knowledge would permeate society" and provide the information to correct the imbalance, but it didn't.

Although the promotion of this physical and nutritional information relates primarily to students, adults too can adapt these ideas and realise that physical activity can influence the brain.

School communities support their students to do better. Why don't we extend this to our whole community, and see what we can achieve?

Geoff Guest OAM

Founder of the Petford Program

Petford Wellness Association

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PETFORD WELLNESS ASSOCIATION GENERAL PROPOSAL - OVERVIEW

1) To produce two training programs based on the success of Geoff Guest OAM's proven methodology utilised to transform >4,000 troubled/vulnerable youths since the 1970s, some bound for the justice system or addiction, suicide, or recidivists, into confident, achieving young adults. Geoff continues to educate families who come to him for help or whom he visits in their homes upon request (early intervention).

Parents of Young Children: food cultivation, healthy nutrition/cooking, daily exercise, healthy

self care in pregnancy (diet, foetal alcohol syndrome, etc), and many other aspects of foetal, newborn and young childhood health influencing the physical development and behaviour patterns of children.

A separate but mergeable training program utilising the on country program previously used by Geoff Guest at Petford Training Camp, viz Healthy Diet, exercise, horse husbandry, Horse breaking and riding, cattle mustering, basic bushcraft, trade skills, respect, cultural connection, survival skills including bush tucker and bush medicine, team skills, care of engaging with community, mental health, self care and more.

2) Fodder box to assist in feeding/educating families that continue to seek support

3) Computer and neurofeedback system/EEG to support family mental health

4) Further print of Geoff Guest's proven methodology, a valuable training tool.

OUTCOMES

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2) Fodder box to assist in feeding/educating families that continue to seek support

3) Computer and neurofeedback system/EEG to support family mental health

4) Further print of Geoff Guest's proven methodology, a valuable training tool.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS AND HOW THEY ARE MET

a) The Geoff Guest Way, written by James Michie, describes the methodology used by Geoff.

With little promotion aside from community social media, the book has just about sold out.

Now seeking new sponsors.

b) Social media (Community groups) postings invited testimonials for Geoff, the response being quite overwhelming. Some of these are attached as Appendix B. Geoff and Petford Training Camp are very frequently mentioned on Cairns Crime pages.

On Cairns Crimes & Alerts, a post about his methodology received 92 comments, 201 Likes, 54 Loves and Six Cares.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/303926386420291/search/?q=geoff%20guest>

Crime and Justice Action Group

<https://www.facebook.com/page/108133274138155/search/?q=geoff%20guest>

60 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pq8y3Y7z-Nk>

Geoff is very well known through numerous media interviews and by reputation.

Recently, not long after a public forum addressing the exploding crime rate in Mareeba, on the Atherton Tablelands, Mareeba Shire Council's Mayor Angela Toppin went public in announcing her Council's support for sending young offenders into rural areas for training.

In Mareeba Shire Council's response to the Queensland Government's Parliamentary Inquiry into the Decriminalisation of Certain Public Offences, and Health and Welfare Responses 2022, the Mayor stated:

“Council also advocates for increased resourcing for services that provide support to people who are experiencing homelessness, alcohol and drug dependence, mental health issues and family violence. The funding of culturally appropriate public intoxication service responses, diversion services or appropriate "places of safety" would also provide social welfare response options that are currently unavailable in the Mareeba Shire.”

There is rapidly growing frustration evidenced on all local community group crime-oriented pages, particularly related to the exponential growth of car thefts and stealing carried out by children as young as 10 years old. The efficacy of Geoff's methods frequently appears on these public posts.

c) There is tremendous support for Geoff's model, as it is evident no other initiatives have worked in the Cairns and Tablelands region, and youth crime is reaching a point where vigilantes have been touted on social media. The community is desperate to hear of a positive step forward, as it is well known and discussed locally that young children are becoming violent, aware they have the power due to their being no recrimination for their actions. Geoff has huge networks, and is skilled at engaging people on the street, as he is extremely well known and has exceptional communication skills at all levels. The message from the (predominantly Indigenous) families with whom he is continually engaging,

particularly in Mareeba, where the young crime rate has rocketed on a par with Cairns but with less police presence, is that Geoff's model should be reinstated.

d) Recognising the importance of early intervention in prevention of the development of unacceptable behaviours in growing children, our proposal will address the health of families, including in pregnancy that has a proven effect on the behavioural development of children.. The main thrust of this application is the establishment of a training program based on Geoff Guest's methodology.

INCLUSION WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

Geoff Guest is a product of the stolen generation. North Queensland Indigenous community members hold him in the great respect for his proven success in diverting young people from the Youth Justice system, recidivism, or even suicide. Known affectionally as 'Old Man' (well before this became reality), he is treated with reverence and awe at his knowledge and accomplishments. Geoff was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his achievements.

His many decades running the Petford Training Camp with his late wife, Aunty Norma (from Yarrabah Aboriginal Community), saw Geoff forge enduring relationships with community elders throughout the Far North and beyond, and all those who saw the positive results of his work with young Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids.

Geoff communicates cross culturally with ease. His opinion and knowledge has been sought from afar, and he has been a guest speaker at many notable events over very many years. He has travelled and worked in various parts of the world.

GOALS

- To create two dynamic, mergeable training programs as described earlier that will address youth offending behaviours through early intervention / on country diversionary, therapeutic, goal oriented skills training
- General health: diet, exercise, self esteem, confidence building, personal relationships, communication, mental health.
- To improve mental health and positivity/attitude to life through the use of EEG / Neurofeedback therapies
- To ultimately deliver training via established training programs that address health / environment / poor life choices as causal factors in unacceptable / criminal behaviours. Training to be delivered to families and children and also, with relevant supports, to youth at risk of offending / recidivists / mental health issues / no social skills / culturally disconnected.
- Using proven, tested methodology to improve juveniles' life choices, social skills, practical skills, respect, care for others and health to reduce criminal behaviour / recidivism / depression / addiction / suicidal tendencies. This methodology includes learning horsemanship, horse husbandry, Horse breaking and basic medical treatment, cattle mustering, basic trade skills. Bushcraft, bush tucker and medicine, other animal care/bonding, cultural knowledge, skills and connectivity. Daily exercise, mentoring, healthy diet.

Requested Grant	Budget (\$)	Expenditure	Expenditure Cost (\$)
Community Partnership Innovation Grant	\$140,412.00	Initial writing of training programs	\$30,000.00
		Training program consultant	\$20,000.00
		Neurofeedback / EEG equipment	\$13,500.00
		Fodder Box for interim family health work	\$20,000.00
		Reprint of The Geoff Guest Way book	\$7,592.00
		Administrative costs	\$15,000.00
		'Client' family support at Petford - ie food, electricity, household supplies. \$300.00 per week	\$31,200.00
		Fuel costs - program writer to meet Geoff Guest in Mareeba once weekly	\$1,040.00
		Fuel costs - Geoff Guest weekly meeting	\$2,080.00

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT GEOFF GUEST, GOALS OF METHODOLOGY

Geoff Guest is the Vice President, former President of Petford Wellness Association and has well over 40 years' experience working with youths (and adults) of all ages and cultures in danger of incarceration, entering the Youth Justice System or recidivism. Geoff has successfully rehabilitated male and female youths with mental health issues, cultural separation, physical health issues, addiction of many sorts, violence or at risk of suicide. Many of the people he has helped over the years keep in touch with him, occasionally returning to see him if their mental and/or physical health is compromised. Due to Petford no longer being the ideal place to host a training camp (being considered less 'remote' now), it is prudent that Geoff passes his methodology to others given his increasing years.

The main project outcome of a deliverable training program is to emulate the proven methodology used by Geoff Guest in operating the Petford Training Camp over decades and successfully rehabilitating innumerable youths. Geoff continues to work tirelessly both with youths sent to him or turning up at his door at Petford to ask for his help, as do parents with children seeking guidance. Thus the inclusion of a neurofeedback/EEG package to replace the old, existing impaired equipment that has recently malfunctioned. The current working laptop is not sufficient to run the software. Neurofeedback has been proven to reduce recidivism. With strong belief in the power of early intervention in preventing future criminal behaviours, much of Geoff's work is now focused on the physical and mental health of mothers from prenatal onwards, and their young families. His knowledge is vast. Although the writing of the two mergeable programs will be based in Far North Queensland, the completed project is intended to be utilised throughout Australia to duplicate Geoff Guest's successful model to address the burgeoning rate of youth crime.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Please see the supporting documentation enclosed within the submission on the following page.

THE GEOFF GUEST WAY

**An Evidence-based Framework
for Building Healthy Young People**

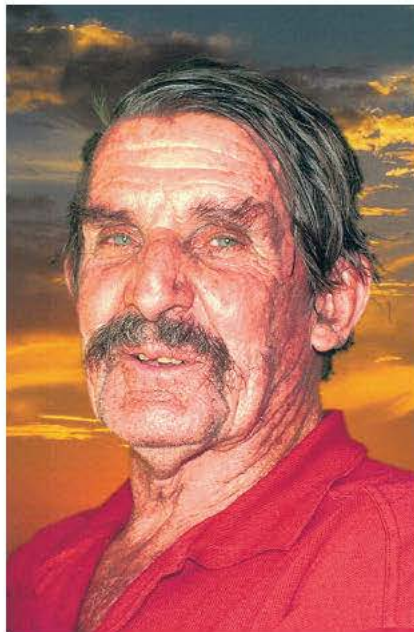
2020

“

Young people do better on land,
not in detention centres

”

Geoff Guest



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Author: James Michie
Editor: Suzy Grinter, Word Factory
Cover Design: Nettie O Design
Layout: Nettie O Design
Printed by: Lotsa Print

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of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located
and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. Petford
Wellness Association Inc. is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'
unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.*



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Assembling Geoff's work has been a collaborative effort. Like the many young people who have benefited from Geoff's guidance over the years, many more of us have been fortunate to come across Geoff and be impacted by his contagious passion for people and his unwavering life's work in revealing the underlying good in all of us. Often after others had long since given up.

I would like to thank Dr Les Spencer for enabling us to use some of his words and photos from his Lacweb site. His insights, observations and writings offer an invaluable perspective in trying to understand the seemingly magical processes of Geoff's work. These, of course, run far deeper than the mere outline this document can provide. I would also like to thank Dr Ernest Hunter for his input and suggestions. Everyone involved in the Petford Wellness Association, in particular Suzy Grinter for her tireless efforts editing the final document. Tess Smurthwaite helped draw together the initial version, and thanks to Nettie O'Connell (Nettie O Design) for her superb work formatting the final copy.

The Geoff Guest Way has emerged from a collection of scattered thoughts and big ideas into a document we hope offers an important guide for social workers, communities and governments attempting to understand one of the most significant youth interventions that has occurred in Australia in recent memory.

James Michie

Contact

Geoff Guest OAM
Petford Wellness Association
PO Box 213
Dimbulah, Queensland 4872
Australia

Telephone: 07 4093 5365
International: +61 7 4093 5365
Email: petfordwellness@gmail.com

Writer's note

*Every attempt has been made to correctly acknowledge sources used in this document.
If further amendments need to be made, please contact the writer at jnjmick@gmail.com*

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The content of this work has been authorised by Geoff Guest in its entirety.





INTRODUCTION

There is an urgent need now, more so than ever, in many Aboriginal and other communities across Queensland and other parts of remote Australia for proven, effective programs to address the needs of vulnerable young people.

As statistics confirm, young people, particularly from Indigenous backgrounds, are at a disproportionately high risk of succumbing to a large range of issues, including:

- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Declining physical and mental health
- Behavioural issues and violence
- Dysfunctional home environments
- A high incidence of incarceration, recidivism and suicide
- A lack of mentors
- A lack of meaningful pathways to employment
- A disrespect of cultural values in institutions

Conventional juvenile justice approaches to working with at risk youth are failing. Many 'alternative interventions' are having little long-term impact due to failures of program design, delivery and a lack of pathways beyond the duration of the program. It should be noted that this program refers to Aboriginal people much of the time, but is designed equally for any young people who fall between the cracks in the same way.

This document details the findings, supporting evidence and the methodology of Geoff Guest OAM and his Petford Youth Training Farm and subsequent Petford Wellness Association in the district of Mareeba in Far North Queensland, Australia. Over a period of more than 40 years, Geoff Guest has engaged over 4,000 young people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

The aim is to provide an appraisal of a highly successful and significant youth intervention, and now that Geoff is approaching the midway point of his hundredth decade, ensure that his invaluable methods and wisdom are passed on through a Program Model and guidelines. These can be adapted by other communities and youth intervention initiatives for their own specific circumstances.

“

It is crucial that governments and communities collaborate and look at what's worked and what hasn't in terms of previous interventions to address the dire state of many young people today... We've got to be adaptable and take the current approach in a new direction. I've been doing this for the best part of 40 years, mostly successfully and I hope for the sake of these and future generations these methods will be implemented, on a wider scale.

”

Geoff Guest

It should be stressed that, over the years, others have tried to emulate the Geoff Guest Program by cherry-picking aspects of his approach and methodology. These piecemeal attempts by government, doctors and other organisations have ultimately proven unsuccessful. Geoff attests that his program's success is due to its focus on addressing existing nutritional deficiencies as a key component within its unique equine therapy and psycho-social framework for working effectively with problematic young people.

While it is hoped that the methodology and recommendations outlined in this document can ultimately provide a framework for a future 'Youth Training Farm' as an alternative to a conventional juvenile remand centre, Geoff has also made some valuable recommendations for Aboriginal and mixed communities in how to address some of the problems he has seen in the young people he works with today.



GEOFF GUEST

Geoff Guest was born in 1926. His early life as a member of the Stolen Generation is explored in: 'Old Man – His youth as a Stolen Generation Member', available at www.laceweb.org.au

Geoff spent much of his life in the saddle and has a reputation as one of Queensland's most capable horsemen. Geoff was separated from his Aboriginal mother when he was three, placed in an orphanage, then fostered by a white family who worked for a large pastoral company. This was during a period when light-skinned Aboriginal children were taken from their families for 'the chance of a better life'. Geoff ran away from his foster family when he was nine and went on a lone 12-month walkabout with three horses. He later started working as a rabbit controller, and then as station hand when the owner discovered his skill as a horse breaker. "I had it tough," he said, "but because I was fair-skinned I could always go places."

At 16, Geoff signed a contract to join the American Merchant Navy and was later seconded to accompany a US Army group sailing to Bombay, India and then overland to the Chinese border. The aim of the journey was to train Chinese soldiers how to handle mules and light artillery. When the group made it into China, they came under fire from the Japanese army, and Geoff used his bush medicine skills to treat a wounded mule. Seeing his skills, the Chinese soldiers used Geoff as their medic when soldiers were injured. In 1945, after the war, Geoff returned to the Queensland bush.

Over the years, Geoff has had a number of occupations, including shellfish diver, timber cutter, buffalo and crocodile shooter, tin miner, soldier, mounted police drug enforcement officer in South America, rodeo trick rider, and stockman. Overriding all of his occupations is Geoff's extraordinary understanding of, and love for people. He has spent his entire life helping others.

Back in the early 1970s Geoff drew a crowd of Aboriginal boys watching him break in horses. Many of them were heavy drinkers and were getting into trouble with the law. He invited them to stay with him on his property while he taught them to ride and to

develop the necessary skills to find employment on stations. In those days, he employed no more than 10 staff to care for up to 40 young people living on his property, all paid for by his substantial tin mining operation. For several years, with increasing numbers of young people arriving at his farm, Geoff would work all day with the horses and teaching his skills to young people, then work a 10pm-3am shift with his pickaxe in a nearby tin mine in order to keep the place going.

In the late 1970s, Geoff developed a special relationship with a local Aboriginal woman from Yarrabah near Cairns named Norma and they formed an inseparable bond until Norma's passing in 2015. In time, Geoff and Norma's outstanding work with young people caught the attention of the state welfare department, police and magistrates. They were looking out for effective programs, and asked Geoff and Norma if they could refer young people to them. Geoff has testimonials from countless numbers of former residents and thousands of national and international supporters, including state and federal members of parliament, judges and magistrates, psychiatrists, doctors, psychologists, social workers, teachers, police officers, university professors, and many more. They have all publicly confirmed the effectiveness of Geoff's rehabilitation methods.





THE GEOFF GUEST PETFORD YOUTH CAMP

Geoff established the Geoff Guest Petford Youth Camp back in the late 1970s, and it ran until 1999. The camp subsequently became The Petford Wellness Association, which continues to operate today, and is located in the bush near the small town of Petford in Far North Queensland. Geoff and his late wife Norma, who were affectionately known by young people as 'Old Man' and 'Aunty Norma' are well known for their outstanding success in working with young people, particularly young Aboriginal Australians.

The camp was developed to help young people who are suicidal, suffering from drug and alcohol abuse, petrol sniffing, aggression or habitual offending. The initial aim of the camp was to confirm and strengthen the young participants' identity and pride in being Aboriginal, to elevate their confidence, self-esteem and respect for themselves and others. Geoff and Norma opened their doors to all, and hundreds of non-Indigenous young people have also attended his programs and benefited from their methods over the years.

The primary activity of the Geoff Guest Petford Camp was horsemanship. Geoff would teach the young people how to catch wild brumbies from the surrounding land and the skills of horse breaking. These skills were tangible and valuable due to demand from cattle stations in the region. After attending the Petford camp, many young people found employment in this way, and discovered a direction and purpose in life.

Appraisal figures

The program's positive impact on at-risk youth has been widely acknowledged. While it is difficult to ascertain in quantifiable statistical terms, it is estimated that between 60-70% of young people who attended the program have not been recidivists, instead leaving their former life of offending behind, and the same number of young people gaining productive, long term employment.

Early conclusions

The Geoff Guest Petford Youth Camp was initially guided by the widely accepted belief known as



'symptom theory'¹ which proposes that many socially disruptive and self-harming behaviours—such as suicidal behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse, petrol sniffing, aggression and habitual offending—are reinforced by the social environment.

Negative social forces often prove to be insurmountable obstacles to young people, with penalties for non-conformity ranging from unpopularity, loss of status, loss of livelihood, exclusion, or in extreme situations, death. The more one deviates from the group's shared attitudes and beliefs, or norms, the greater the pressure the group will exert to bring a young person into line. These forces can be seen at work in the stories of many young people. Take for example the following words of a 17-year-old Aboriginal boy from the Mossman Gorge Aboriginal community:

"You can't stop the drinking here, it's too strong. If you want to stop, others will force you into it, you can't say no, they will make you. If you don't drink with them they think bad of you. The only way to stop is to get out of this place."

When a young person believed that their family or group environment was having a bad effect on them and they wanted to get away for a while, the Geoff Guest Petford Youth Camp endeavoured to provide them with that opportunity. Old Man and Aunty

Norma had the ability to interact with young people directly and effectively, pointing out their irrational ideas and behaviours and providing them with ways to overcome them. The goal was that eventually the young person would learn new coping skills and behaviours that supported their own wellbeing and ability to self-regulate destructive behaviours or impulsive urges, ultimately enabling them to make better decisions in their lives.

Unlike many therapeutic programs, the Geoff Guest Petford Youth Camp was not conducted in the closed artificial environment of psychologists' or clinical professionals' rooms. In contrast, the camp provided the opportunity for young people to leave their community for a time, and live with people who modelled more effective beliefs and values, providing them with a stable environment in which to develop essential life skills and behaviours, as well as pathways to employment.

A unique feature of the training farm is that it successfully accommodated mandated young people through the juvenile justice system alongside young people voluntarily attending the program, without distinction or prejudice between individuals of different colour or belief. The high numbers of young people who voluntarily attended the training farm attests to its effectiveness.

Widening parameters

Over the years of much observation, practical trial and error, reflection and broad study, Geoff developed an approach to working with young people that expanded on the widely accepted premise that the immediate dysfunctional social environment is the dominant impactor causing disruption in a young person's psychological development. Geoff's approach includes consideration of a wider context, including key biological indicators across generations.

A history of poor diet, mental health problems and alcohol and substance abuse can often be traced across generations. Alcohol Fetal Syndrome (AFS) and male health at time of conception are proven factors in low birth weights and a range of subsequent physical and mental health problems.

There is much supporting evidence that points to many presenting mental health issues, behavioural problems and even susceptibility towards substance and alcohol addiction having an underlying root cause of biochemical imbalances due to nutritional deficiency. Identifying these nutritional deficiencies is crucial to Geoff's success in working with young people.

“

We have a long-standing problem with alcohol and substance abuse up here (North Queensland). There's an addiction epidemic going on. We have to address these addictions head on. I also believe a lot of mental health problems are due to the body being starved of the right nutrients. Violent tendencies, suicidal ideation, even schizophrenia can be modified. Treating vitamin and mineral deficiencies goes a long way to doing that on a biochemical level. It's called Automolecular medicine. This has been proven time and time again in international treatment programs and interventions. We've got to take this approach seriously here now.

Addressing generational vitamin and mineral deficiencies alongside a program that seeks to address key psychological developmental stages and at the same time teaching life skills and vocational training directed towards an employment pathway beyond the program, is the way, I think, to turn this problem around.

I've been having success with these approaches for decades. I hope communities and governments will be receptive to these ideas and the supporting evidence from programs in other countries, because they work.

”

Geoff Guest



THE GEOFF GUEST WAY

The Geoff Guest Way centres around these key approaches:

1. 'Relationship Model' approach to working with young people based around mentorship
2. Equine therapy to address key developmental markers and provide vocational pathways
3. Nutritional modification and vitamin, mineral supplementation to address deficiencies
4. EEG or Neurofeedback sessions to highlight important neurological imbalances
5. Addressing family, generational and cultural considerations that potentially impact on a young person's current mental and physical health.

Geoff has also developed early intervention considerations for communities, based around:

- a. Raising awareness (in conjunction with relevant services) about health at and prior to conception and early infancy
- b. Advocating for improved education programs and support service provision to young mothers
- c. Advocating for the establishment of a family advisory committee to help facilitate magistrates and sentencing recommendations for young parents.

Issues affecting many at risk young people are multifaceted and each must be considered in relation to the whole.

1. Relationship model

Geoff often states that he had no formal education but that his extensive knowledge base has evolved from devotedly reading all the relevant published literature that he could access. Many of Geoff's learned skills and psycho-social approaches to working successfully with young people have been endorsed by the esteemed psychiatrist Neville Yeomans, the former coordinator of Community Mental Health for the New South Wales Health Department. Neville was also the Director of Fraser House at North Ryde Psychiatric Clinic, Australia's

“

A community that's fed up with repeating the same flawed youth intervention models and getting the same result needs to take the plunge, and implement a program that addresses these points. Establishing a Youth Training Farm model based around the framework outlined in this document could have a huge impact on young people across this country... I truly believe that.”

”

Geoff Guest

first family therapeutic community. Fraser House had a revolutionary contextual approach that treated psychiatric disease on a family and community basis instead of only treating the individual. Patients were rehabilitated and returned to society rather than being locked away and restrained with drugs or straitjackets. Many of his peers did not understand this radical approach to treatment, and Neville was frequently vilified for being out of step with the mainstream. It is interesting to note that 40 years later, his approach to psychiatric treatment has become the norm rather than the exception.

Neville published many papers on psychiatric treatment which are now held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. In 1969, with his colleague Alfred Clark, he authored *Fraser House: Theory Practice and Evaluation of a Therapeutic Community* published by Springer, New York. Neville linked with Geoff and Norma Guest at their Aboriginal Youth Training Farm in Petford in 1988. Neville reported that when he first met

Geoff and Norma they were superbly mirroring the therapeutic community model of Fraser House even though they had never heard of it. Neville made many visits to Petford, learning from Geoff and Norma and passing on his processes to them until his death in 2000.

Geoff is grateful to Neville for encouraging him to gather as much history about individual health as possible, especially pre-birth conditions which certainly play a role in presenting mental health problems. This is discussed further in Section 5.

Looking at what is behind presenting behaviours

As noted by Professor Ernest Hunter of James Cook University, previously Regional Psychiatrist (Cape York and the Torres Strait) for 25 years:

“Central to Geoff’s successes in working with young people is his adherence to the approach of observation over time. Geoff is not only an astute observer but has the ability to observe Aboriginal kids over lengths of time that enable him to be more attuned to their rhythms than is the case for conventional mental health practitioners. That is also critical in relation to the ability to make sense of interventions such as nutritional change and environmental modification.”

Pivotal to his work with a young person, Geoff often reiterates:

“

One must find out what prior learning and beliefs this young person has...

This is crucial to understanding their presenting issues.

A key indicator of where a young person is at developmentally is their level of self-control. Often young people haven’t learnt this skill from a young age so they’ve become very impulsive, have very short attention spans and engage in risk taking behaviours at the drop of a hat...

These destructive patterns get taken into young adulthood and the problems keep occurring.

Often in a family context, particularly in larger families where food and drink can be scarce at times, young people learn a bingeing approach to consumption. An ‘eat or drink as much as you can whilst it’s there’, approach.

This is often role-modelled by parents or other family members.

A big part of what I aim to do is teach young people how to self-regulate impulsive urges and learn self-control.

”

Geoff Guest

Two theoretical models that have influenced his approach are **Erik Erikson’s Stages of Development model²** and **Cheryl McMullin’s 4-Stage Relationship model³**. Geoff uses both models concurrently in his work with young people.

4-Stage Relationship Model

The 4-Stage Relationship model is widely used in social work settings globally and offers a valuable framework in which to place Geoff’s psychological methodology in working with young people.

Stage 1: Engagement

Geoff is a firm believer that a worker must earn a young person’s respect—not demand it. By inviting a young person into his home and space at the training farm he is in effect offering himself completely to the young person without judgement. This can go a long way towards earning a young person’s trust and respect. In so doing he is valuing their presence by trusting them within his space and at the same time offering a degree of assumed protection within this space to the young person.

This offer opens him up to both scrutiny and

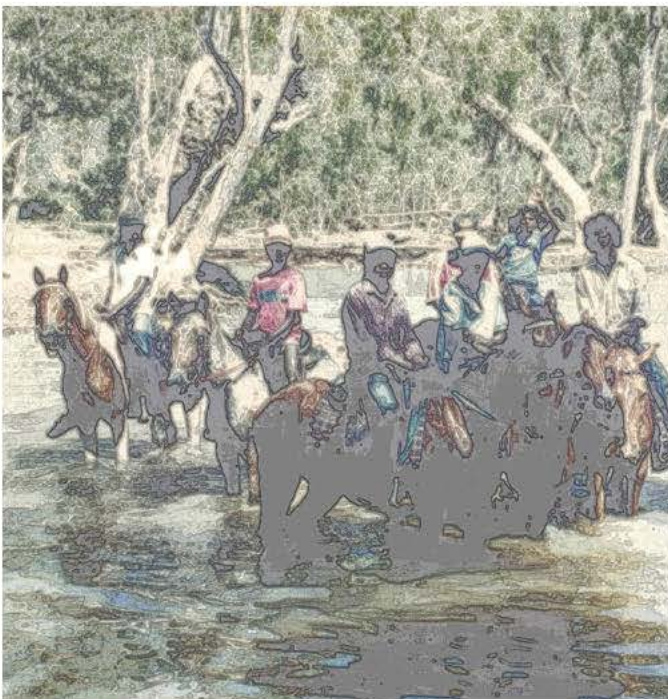
rejection, but it is the young person who is put in the position of power and decision-making, perhaps for the first time in their life. This can be disarming to a young person's resistance, and cultivates trust.

“

Simple things like eating meals at the same table with the young people and showing a genuine interest in them can break down hierarchical structures and make young people feel valued. Acknowledging each young person individually is an important step in this trust building process.

”

Geoff Guest



Stage 2: Negotiation

Geoff negotiates boundaries and expectations through role modelling rather than 'laying down the law'. This is another disarming approach that potentially invites a very different response to past experiences and responses to authority.

“

I'll give you an example... Young fella had been brought out to the camp by the police in handcuffs earlier that day, he was obviously struggling... At lunch he flipped his plate of myie (food) upside down on the table and stormed off, standing down in the yard with his arms crossed. All the boys were looking at me, wanting me to yell at him and punish him or make him clean it up. Instead I let him be for a few minutes and I cleaned up his plate and went and offered him a glass of water and sat with him.

“When I asked him what was wrong, he told me his brother had just gone to jail, another was in hospital and his youngest brother was on the run, hiding down the creek somewhere. His family had been torn apart. Overreacting and blowing up at a kid doesn't get to the underlying reasons for the behaviour.

“If a boy runs away, I never make a big deal of it or other young people will learn to play up for attention. I always keep them a plate of food, too, if they miss a meal. Like with the horses I never punish by the removal of food.

”

Geoff Guest

Stage 3: Enabling

This is the most empowering aspect of Geoff's interpersonal work with young people. Enabling change and growth through the completion of manageable tasks and challenges lays the foundation for building autonomy and self-belief. Geoff's use of encouragement and positive reinforcement is central to this.

Guidance through positive reinforcement and verbal repetition of desired aims and outcomes are key approaches in which Geoff demonstrates his firm commitment to working with the young person. In exchange for this commitment, Geoff asks for 'effort' from the young person.



On the back of successful completion of tasks, an accumulation of verifiable skills and abilities emerges, enhancing self-esteem and paving the way for a young person to form a picture of themselves as being capable of change.

Pointing this out (often repeatedly) over time is Geoff's way of working through a young person's resistance to receiving praise and allowing their sense of self to gradually become accustomed to the formation of a new identity.

An example of Geoff's approach to working individually with a young person is beautifully demonstrated in the transcript compiled by Clinical Sociologist Dr Les Spencer, titled 'More Healing

“

I focus on rewarding good behaviour rather than punishing bad behaviour and try to make it easier to do good things by minimising temptations to do wrong like stealing. Many people are raised that way and don't know anything else.

”

Geoff Guest

Ways of Old Man', found at www.laceweb.org.au. This is often a young person's first opportunity to form a picture of themselves as a valued, capable individual with self-autonomy. Geoff cultivates this by encouraging future visioning of a young person's desired future life.

Another very significant transcript compiled by Dr Spencer of Geoff's methods taking place in a group setting can be read at 'Healing Ways of Old Man', located at www.laceweb.org.au

Stage 4: Endings

Geoff's approach values transparency by offering feedback to the young person regarding their progress. This encourages self-reflection and awareness about behaviour, progress and obstacles.

Acknowledging the fragility of many young people is a key consideration in Geoff's approach and positive reinforcement is a key guiding tool he uses to promote notions of progress, self-reflection and behaviour modification.

Geoff describes a young person's 'readiness' to leave the training program and get a job in tangible terms that the young person can comprehend. At the same time, when he discusses 'readiness' he is equally alluding to the more ambiguous or less tangible (to the young person) psycho-social progress the young person has made in the program and their ability to function and self-regulate without his immediate support.

2. Equine Therapy

Young people on the land

Many young people arrive having experienced breakdowns in their key relationships growing up. Identifying and acknowledging these missing developmental connections is crucial to working effectively with challenging young people.

“

Young Aboriginal people who come out to land these days are usually ‘urbanised’. It takes them some time before they stop complaining about the heat and cold. It’s similar to what they found in 1870s in USA where Native American Indians found it very difficult to adapt back to land after living in towns and cities... It often takes a while to get the grog, drugs and poisoning from heavily processed foods out of a young person’s system before they can reconnect... You can see when it happens, they become a lot more in tune with themselves within their environment, and that’s when changes can happen.

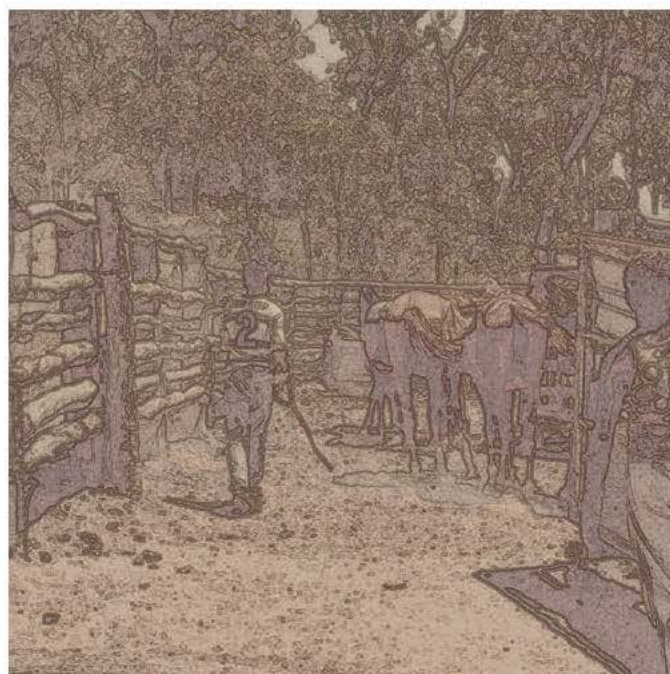
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Geoff Guest

These observations fit with esteemed psychologist Erik Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development.

Erikson’s stages of development

Equine-facilitated psychotherapy involves teaching horsemanship to re-create, the first 5 of 8 developmental tasks outlined by Erikson (1950): *Trust vs. Mistrust*, *Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt*, *Initiative vs. Guilt*, *Industry vs. Inferiority*, and *Identity vs. Identity Confusion* ⁴.



Geoff’s work with horses acts both to identify a young person’s stage of development and as a symbiotic relationship tool offering a mirror to the young person.

Early sessions of horsemanship seek to address Erikson’s first developmental stage: *Trust v Mistrust*. Commitment, struggle and challenge can trigger previously unacknowledged responses such as fear, rejection and anger and if supported and guided through, can awaken and cultivate healthy relationship emotions such as trust, forgiveness and empathy.

Anger often presents as a typical response to working with a horse that is non-compliant. This

can often reflect past rejection a young person may have experienced in their life. Working through this response to its root causality is key to Geoff's approach. Being able to encourage a young person to identify, acknowledge and verbalise their own existing fear is often a big step in their developmental progress. This can highlight an established level of trust in the worker-young person relationship through a willingness to expose themselves beyond conditioned behavioural responses such as false bravado.

Highlighting 'fear' as a shared emotion felt by a young person and horse begins the process of relationship formation by awakening often dormant emotions of empathy and forgiveness. Pointing out that the horse is equally (if not more so) fearful, confused and untrusting normalises these presenting frustrations and acknowledges them as something shared between a young person and horse. This often has the effect of lessening the severity of these negative emotions for the young person.

Geoff believes that allowing the young person to 'spit the dummy' and walk away is as important as allowing the horse to have regular breaks when it gives off the signs that it has had enough for the time being.

“

You can't come down (on a young person) like a tonne of bricks.. Often you need to back off and do something different... come back to it. If you're both angry it won't work.

You never want a young person to fear you. The authoritative, stand over approach used in many jails and detention centres is repeating a really dysfunctional pattern many young people have experienced growing up.

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Geoff Guest

“

Standing in front of a wild brumby can offer a really clear reflection to a young person of themselves in many ways. It's such a valuable process... often very confronting. But in that interaction and process there's many of the tools for addressing a lot of what's been missing in their childhood and adolescence.

”

Geoff Guest



Geoff believes strongly in re-exploring fearful and challenging situations in small manageable doses with guidance, support and active encouragement. He sees this as key towards instilling an ability to self-regulate emotions. This should then lessen the severity of resistance to overcoming challenges.

“

A lot of these young people have been beaten up, stood over and pressured all their life... Their response is to rebel... this is an important point to get... the stick doesn't work.

Acknowledging that young people are very fragile is important in working with them.

Programs that push and keep pushing fail. A lot of these young people have mental health issues. If you push them, you'll break them.

”

Geoff Guest

Erikson's second stage, *Autonomy v Shame and Doubt*, and third stage, *Understanding Initiative v Guilt* are interwoven and principally explore notions of autonomy and self-reliance.

Working (at times) unsupported with the horse raises issues of power and dominance and can reveal the need for collaboration and communication. For both the young person and horse to progress, going over simple routines of rope work, touch and familiarity with taking on and off bridles and saddles establishes a line of learned and understood commands and tasks. Repeating these steps when other more advanced steps are not working reinforces a verifiable baseline of progress when doubts and frustrations arise.

Positive reinforcement from afar during this time is how Geoff helps to reduce feelings of shame or doubt

a young person might be feeling, particularly when comparisons arise to other young people who may be faster learners.

“

Being able to distinguish between learned behavioural habits and underlying mental health issues is critical to how you work with a young person... We can't always fit in the same shoe. Individual assessment and approaches to working with young people are often brushed over or missing, and a school model is adopted where everyone is expected to learn at the same pace. It doesn't work that way with young people who have a whole range of underlying issues, often all going off at once.

”

Geoff Guest

The fourth stage, *Industry v Inferiority*, links skill development with an ever-expanding sense of self confidence (or inferiority). Boundaries and previously perceived limitations are increasingly challenged, and identity formation and a sense of self is being encouraged and (hopefully) established.

Praise is increasingly offered by Geoff at this stage, only upon completion of set tasks, which assumes a level of competence and expected effort from the young person.

At the *Identity v Confusion* stage, it is hoped that a young person has successfully established and maintained a relationship with their horse. This bond presumes notions of fidelity, a psychological virtue characterised by an ability to relate and form a genuine relationship. This is often new territory for a young person and can potentially be expanded to forming mateship with their peers based on a commonality of shared skills and identity formation. Expanding this beyond the boundaries

of the program can show the integration of learnt skills within different contexts, such as the wider community.

“

We took the boys to the rodeo and we volunteered to clean up afterwards. They got a real pat on the back by the community. They loved that. Same when they acted as a Guard of Honour to the then Prime Minister Bob Hawke. They took this responsibility very seriously.

Hopefully by the end of their stay at the training farm young people have learnt to self-regulate urges and have become less compulsive. In so doing, they're beginning to form an identity of themselves around the skills they've learnt here (horsemanship) and this lays the groundwork for allowing them to develop a direction in life.

”

Geoff Guest

3. Nutritional considerations and vitamin supplementation

The link between nutritional deficiencies and chronic diseases has been recognised internationally for decades. Given the myriad of behavioural, mental and physical health problems presenting in the young people coming to the training farm, Geoff was already beginning to suspect a correlation between physical and mental wellness.

A. Wheat and mental health

A major breakthrough in addressing the myriad of psychological and behavioural problems presenting among the young people at the training farm was discovered purely by chance by Geoff.

One day in 1995, a pack horse carrying two drums of flour bolted, spilling its load, much to the amusement of the boys. Unbeknownst to them at the time, the ruining of the flour would render the camp flourless for one month.

Geoff reported that 5 of the 25 boys at Petford at the time had 'serious mental health problems', and within a couple of days erratic behaviours calmed down. After a week, all five boys experiencing schizophrenia-type symptoms reported that 'the voices (in their heads) stopped'. Conversely, the boys reported to Geoff that the 'voices in their heads' returned shortly after the reintroduction of wheat to the diet at the camp.

Geoff's observations are supported by a rapidly growing body of published medical studies confirming the links between wheat and a higher prevalence of both neurological and psychiatric problems, in particular schizophrenia.^{5 6} Several support Geoff's findings that a drastic reduction and often cessation of schizophrenic symptoms occurs after wheat is removed from the diet and conversely, a recommencing of schizophrenic symptoms with the reintroduction of wheat.⁷

Being an avid learner and keen observer, Geoff devoted himself to studying the topic of nutrition and its effects on psychological health.

Geoff noted similar positive results by removing wheat from the diet of young people experiencing Autism and ADHD. Again, these observations are supported by published scientific studies.^{8 9}

While in 1980's and 90's there was a growing number of medical publications highlighting the negative implications of introduced diets consisting largely of white flour and refined sugar on physical health, comparative studies were only in their infancy linking the effects of diet on mental health in Indigenous Australian populations.

A key international study on Indigenous populations identifying biological differences with wheat assimilation was conducted in 1984. Only two chronic schizophrenics were found among over 65,000 examined or closely observed adults in remote regions of Papua New Guinea (PNG, 1950-1967) and Malaita, Solomon Islands (1980-1981), and on Yap, Micronesia (1947-1948), places where grains were not consumed during these years. Researchers noted that when these peoples became partially Westernised and consumed wheat, barley beer, and rice, the prevalence of schizophrenia increased by an alarming 65-fold.¹⁰

“

Unfortunately even today current government programs pay only passing attention to nutrition, and when they do many of their recommendations are well meaning but are decades off what current science is concluding about the link between diet and mental health, particularly around refined sugars and current strains of wheat and their effects on mental health.

Either government bodies don't know or they don't want to know for fear of getting the wheat and sugarcane industries offside.

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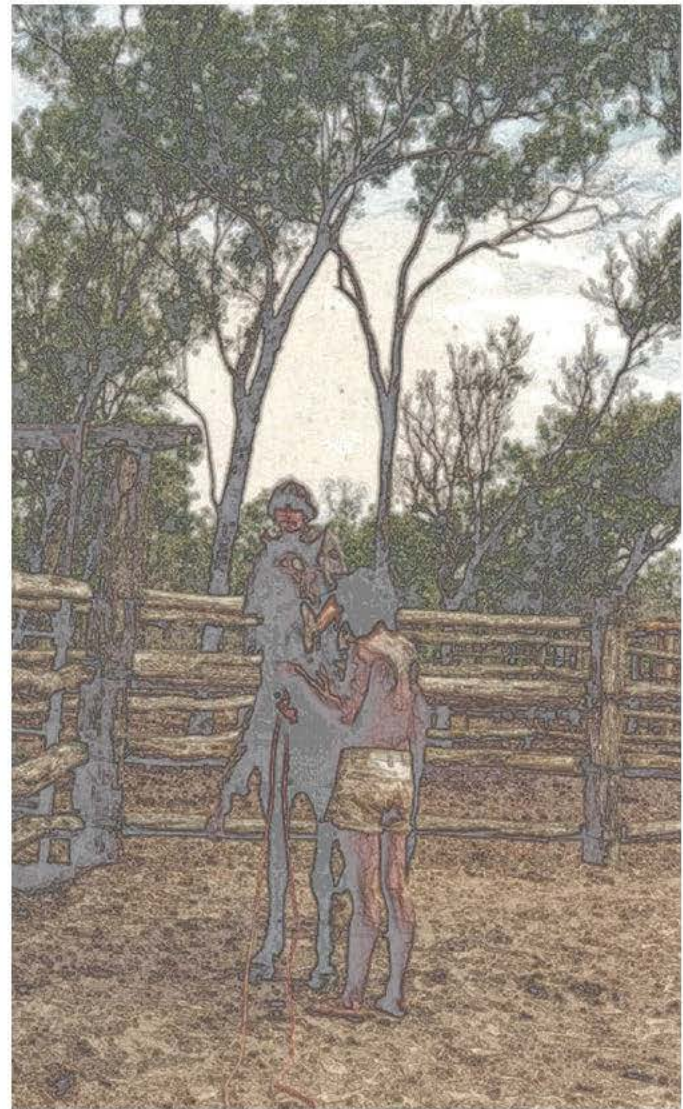
Geoff Guest

Diet recommendations are still centred around an outdated food pyramid, which is largely based on the consumption of refined wheat carbohydrates. Even many healthy people, unknowingly, struggle with a diet based around so-called healthy foods like bread, noodles, pasta and cereals. If someone has problems with hypoglycemia, diabetes or mental health issues, these so-called health food recommendations can cause all sorts of problems.

B. Sugar

It is well documented that traditional Aboriginal diets were low in simple sugars. Anthropologists believe that sugar and sweet tasting food were rare and only eaten on occasion in traditional Aboriginal culture.¹¹ Geoff suspects that this may explain the seemingly addictive role sugar plays in many young people's current diet and the extremely high prevalence of diabetes in Aboriginal populations.

Former Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion made this observation: "I think we can all agree that poor diet in communities with consumption of fat, salt and sugar has a large impact on life



expectancy in communities. Full sugar soft drinks are a major contributor... I think particularly in remote communities and very remote communities sugar is just killing the population.[It's] putting them [young people] into that very high risk area before they get to an age where those chronic diseases are evident."¹²

The National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities summarised the consequences of poor nutrition, concluding that it is estimated that up to 19% per cent of the national Indigenous health gap (which is currently 9.5 years, comparing life expectancy differences between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal women, and 10.6 years, between Aboriginal men and non-Aboriginal men) is attributable to diet related causes.¹³

Given this evidence, it's baffling that the government's 'Close the Gap' strategy, which was implemented Australia-wide in 2007 and reviewed annually to reduce disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, doesn't include improved nutrition as one of its seven key target areas.

C. Diabetes

The hypothesis promoting the idea of 'thrifty genotype' or 'thrifty gene' promoted in 1962 by geneticist James Neel,¹⁴ and later known as DOHAD (Developmental Origins of Health and Disease) has been widely challenged. The hypothesis traces sub-nutrition through pregnancy and infancy and is thought to have been demonstrated in Aboriginal communities to explain the chronic health problems experienced by Aboriginal people globally.¹⁵ Much less contested are the findings that the health of Aboriginal people declined rapidly as a result of the introduction of Western foods.

With the forced transition from a traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle to a sedentary westernised existence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diets, traditionally omnivorous in nature, varied and rich in nutrients, was replaced by an energy-dense Western diet high in processed fats and refined sugars.¹⁶

Some studies suggest that Australian Aboriginal people appear to have a susceptibility to insulin resistance, which is a precursor of Type 2 diabetes.¹⁷ While the contested assumption that genetic factors are an important contributor to insulin resistance, the evidence for the role of lifestyle factors is much stronger.

Health statistics draw strong correlations between the adoption of Western dietary and lifestyle habits and high rates of obesity, impaired glucose tolerance, high blood pressure and heart disease, high levels of triglycerides (fats) in the blood, and excessively high insulin levels amongst Aboriginal Australians.¹⁸

There has been a marked increase in the prevalence of Type 2 diabetes among all Australian youth over the past 20 years, but especially so among Aboriginal youth. Type 2 diabetes has an incidence of 12.6 per 100,000 person years in Indigenous youth aged 16 years or less, compared with an incidence of 0.6 in non-Indigenous youth—an alarming 20-fold difference.¹⁹

In 2013, diabetes was the second leading underlying cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with an age-adjusted death rate six times higher than that for non-Indigenous people.²⁰

Strong links have been made between diabetes and increased risk of heart attack or strokes, damage to kidneys, eyes, nerves and blood vessels throughout the body. However, seldom acknowledged are the conclusive links between diabetes and mental health conditions.

D. High sugar diets and vulnerability to mental health problems

It is encouraging that Australian government bodies are finally joining the dots between particularly high sugar consumption and its links to physical disease. However, they are unfortunately still some way off acknowledging the considerable supporting evidence linking excessive sugar consumption or wheat consumption to mental health problems.

A comprehensive study in Britain over 22 years involving 10,308 participants, known as the Whitehall II study, provides a verifiable connection between high sugar consumption and mental disorders. There was strong evidence to show that depression and mental illness occurred as a result of large amounts of sugar and not, as is commonly believed, as a consequence of being depressed.²¹

Researchers found that men who consumed more than 67 grams of sugar daily from sweetened foods and beverages were much more likely to develop anxiety, depression, and other common mental disorders after five years, compared with men with a lower daily sugar intake.²²

Such findings are startling when laid alongside statistical data that conclude Aboriginal males aged 14-18 consume on average 106 grams of free sugars daily, or the equivalent to 25 teaspoons.²³ These findings indicate that young Aboriginal males could be at extreme risk of mental disorders due to their extremely high sugar consumption.

There is a strong body of work led by Dr Dale Bredesen, an expert in the mechanisms of neurodegenerative diseases, supporting the contention that high blood sugar levels can cause inflammation and neuronal damage to the brain. Importantly, he notes there is a strong link between diabetes and Alzheimer's disease, further supporting

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After a couple of weeks, the boys' behaviour and mental health were noticeably improved.

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Geoff Guest

the claim that sugar toxicity has a role in brain health.²⁴

Geoff reported marked improvements when he and wife Norma removed simple sugar from the diet at the training farm.

E. Good fats

Good fats are crucial to brain health. As our brains are composed of over 60% fat, and brain tissue is reliant on good fatty acids to regulate moods and behaviour. The problem with modern processed foods is that they are laden with high amounts of trans fatty acids which impair the brain's ability to make its essential brain fats.²⁵

Despite dire warnings from Omega 3 research pioneers like Dr Donald Rudin, Omega 3 oils found to be prevalent in many traditional Indigenous diets have been replaced by excessive Omega 6 linoleic fatty acids from supposedly 'healthy' vegetable oils such as corn, sunflower, safflower and soybean.²⁶

As well as contributing to impaired brain functioning, international studies have also observed an increase in aggressive behaviours and even an increase in suicide rates when Omega 3 levels are low.²⁷

F. High sugar diets and vulnerability to alcohol and substance abuse

Geoff reported that many of the young people attending the training farm had been consuming large quantities of refined or processed sugars as a way of self-medicating to compensate for the effects of alcohol or substance abuse withdrawal.

Again Geoff's observations of the symbiotic relationship between sugar and alcoholism are supported by the current scientific studies.^{28 29}

According to a study conducted at California State University, it's exactly the same dopamine receptors in alcoholic brains that are triggered when sugar is consumed. In fact, it's this same D2 dopamine receptor that identifies alcoholics that we see in sugar addicts.³⁰

These findings suggest that people recovering from alcohol addiction and abuse should avoid the widely used but outdated approach, that advocates treating their cravings for alcohol with sugar. By continuing to strengthen these neural pathways, the likelihood of relapsing back into alcohol abuse is potentially be much higher.³¹

“

We need a good mix of healthy omega 6 fats from sources like nuts and seeds and crucially Omega 3 fats from fish, and seafoods to have the right balance of fats for optimal brain functioning.

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Geoff Guest

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Often when young people arrive, their blood sugar levels are all over the place because they're withdrawing from the grog... And they've been stuck in this cycle of needing to continually top themselves up with sugars. Many specialists I've read studies from, say that sugar hits the same neuro-pathways to the brain that alcohol and some drugs use... one published study even concluded that refined sugar was even more addictive than cocaine.

I found, instead of treating people's withdrawals with more sugars, we really had to get them off that too if they were going to stand any chance of breaking that link with the grog.

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Geoff Guest

Dr James Milam, author of the acclaimed book *Under the Influence: A Guide to the Myths & Realities of Alcoholism* draws a strong connection between alcoholism and hypoglycemia. As a hypoglycemic experiences a sudden drop in blood sugar, the brain goes into self-protection mode and the person craves the sugar in alcohol to quickly raise blood sugar levels.

Milam reports:

"Alcohol is one of the fastest ways to raise blood sugar because it goes straight to the blood, bypassing digestion. This is why it is essential for those in recovery to follow a nutrition plan that avoids spikes and drops in blood sugar."³²

Roger J. Williams, a biochemist dedicated to alcohol research, demonstrated that animals given the choice between alcohol and water chose alcohol more frequently when they were nutritionally deficient than when they were fed a nutrient dense diet. The study was so effective that Williams was able to shift alcohol consumption up and down in the test group based solely on the deliberate removal and addition of vitamins to their diet.³³

G. Nutritional deficiencies and other key considerations

Geoff observed that the young people with drug and alcohol problems coming to stay with him at Petford often had poor dietary habits. He suspected that they were "starved for nutrition".

“

I read that alcoholism leads to the body leaking out many of the body's essential nutrients. which can cause a whole range of problems...³⁴

”

Geoff Guest

Geoff became interested in the research of Dr. Charles Gant, the medical director at Tully Hill Hospital, a drug and alcohol detox centre in New York. Gant reported an over 80% success rate in addiction recovery to patients whose bodies



are nutritionally replenished through food and supplements.³⁵

"There's no denying, the right food is a crucial medicine in the treatment of alcoholism, as well as drug addiction,"³⁶ Gant said.

Dr Gant's successes since establishing the Tully Hill Treatment Centre in 1990 are evidenced by the treatment of over 18,000 people, prioritising the revolutionary approach of correcting biochemical imbalances in the brain through case specific nutritional and supplementation programs.

Gant's remarkable success rate (83% abstinence 12 months after completing the program) across a range of alcohol and other drug addictions begs comparison to more conventional psycho-spiritual approaches such as the Alcoholics Anonymous 12 step program, which boasts a 10-30% success rate of abstinence.³⁷

In his book, Gant raises the key, often overlooked, consideration when treating addiction:

"The recovery process is frequently described as the restoration of body, mind and spirit. The problem is that many programs have focused only on the latter two and have ignored the 'body' component of recovery. Addictions are physical substances causing physical changes to a physical organ, the brain. So how do we conventionally treat them? With group therapy and spiritual counseling. Doesn't make sense, does it?"³⁸

Dr Gant believes that our brain chemistry can become disrupted in the following ways:

- Prolonged use of alcohol, drugs and cigarettes
- Toxins in the environment
- Physical or emotional stress
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Genetic predispositions³⁹

Dr Gant attributes his phenomenal success in treating addiction to understanding the role of neurotransmitters within the brain. He wrote, "Each of our brain cells is a tiny but very powerful

manufacturing plant that assembles these chemical molecules out of nutrients and passes them along to other neurons. When our brains have enough of the nutrients necessary to manufacture all of the neurotransmitters we need, we're able to feel relaxed and alert, focused and free of fear, happy and pain-free.

"When we're unable to produce neurotransmitters in the necessary quantities, our moods, intellectual capability, and behavior tend to deteriorate."⁴⁰

He went on to say, "If neurotransmitter deficiencies persist over time, we're often led to use prescription drugs, alcohol, so-called "street drugs," and other substances, including nicotine, to substitute for our neurotransmitter shortages. They're capable of temporarily alleviating the symptoms of neurotransmitter deficiencies, but continued use of these substances can, often quite quickly, result in addiction, a situation where our brains adapt and

begin to rely on these neurotransmitter substitutes to keep us going."⁴¹

Geoff's approach to helping young people address their alcohol and substance abuse issues is also influenced by the work of Joan Matthews Larson and her renowned work, *Alcoholism: The Biochemical Model*.⁴²

Central to Dr Larson's findings was that the majority of patients suffered from one or more of five disorders:

1. Nutritional Deficits—most notably B-complex vitamins, basic amino acids and key minerals such as zinc, magnesium and calcium.
2. Food allergies to everyday table items such as corn, wheat and dairy products.
3. Thyroid disorders, most often what we call subclinical hypothyroidism or 'sluggish thyroid'.
4. Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar levels) that cause a whole range of poorly understood symptoms (anxiety, fatigue, depression, panic attacks).
5. Candida-Related Complex (CRC), a common disorder resulting from an overgrowth of yeast but can be triggered by an excessive use of broad spectrum antibiotics for such conditions as sinusitis, bronchitis and upper-respiratory infections related to heavy smoking, all common problems for alcoholics.⁴³



Larson's findings support what Geoff had suspected that alcoholism is caused by physiological imbalances in the body and does not originate primarily as a psychological disorder. Larson was frustrated with the current status quo for drug and alcohol treatment programs nationally, in which 90% come under the psychological treatment model, similar to in Australia.

Larson went on to say:

"It became clear to me... that no amount of psychological counselling could talk a diabetic out of his or her metabolic disorder, psychological counselling of alcoholics was not enough. Successful treatment required proper medical intervention, dietary counselling, meal planning and similar efforts."⁴⁴

One of Larson's key recommendations, which Geoff strongly endorses from his wealth of experience, is that people attempting to address their alcohol and substance issues need to avoid sugar, nicotine and caffeine as much as possible, because:

- Caffeine pumps large quantities of adrenaline into the bloodstream and in doing so shunts stored glycogen (sugar) into the bloodstream, which in turn increases insulin levels. This sugar-insulin response is exactly what needs stabilising to help with glucose metabolism
- Refined sugars intensify hypoglycemic symptoms (sometimes referred to as 'dry drunk behaviours')⁴⁵
- Nicotine stimulates the adrenals and releases glycogen similar to caffeine, causing the same hypoglycemic cycle. In addition, nicotine strips the body of vital nutrients including Vitamin E, calcium and Vitamin C. Some studies conclude that additional Vitamin C supplementation of 1000mg is essential for smokers to slow the serious depletion of the crucial anti-oxidant Vitamin E.⁴⁶

Geoff implemented these changes with the young people with whom he worked and despite what is often assumed by support workers, removing three highly addictive substances didn't cause an increase in unmanageable behaviours but instead "improved them, very quickly, because the key factor of stabilising the young people's sugar levels was being addressed," he reported.

H. 4 Types of alcoholism

Geoff found the use of Larson's Health Recovery Centre model, which identifies four types of alcoholism, an essential tool for helping young people affected by alcohol dependence.

The four types include:

1. Non-alcoholic: Hypoglycemic Chemistry (may mistakenly be labelled alcoholic)
2. IIADH/THIQ Alcohol Chemistry
3. Allergic addicted Alcoholic Chemistry
4. Omega-6 EFA (Essential Fatty Acid) Deficient Chemistry.⁴⁷

Geoff believes that about 80% of people he had seen at Petford experiencing addiction issues had Hypoglycemic (low blood sugar level) issues. "A tell-tale sign is they're constantly craving sugar and caffeine," he said. The literature supports these observations.

I. Pyroluria, histamines, mental health and suicide

Geoff's studies led him to Dr Carl Pfeiffer's work, who to date has published in excess of 300 scientific research papers in leading medical journals globally, highlighting the link between mental health and nutrition.

Based in the USA, Dr Pfeiffer and his research team have provided evidence that nutrient deficient diets are responsible for causing and exacerbating existing mental health problems. Dr Pfeiffer identified that "the greatest factor in teenage suicide is pyroluria, the stress induced deficiency in B6 and zinc. With such a deficiency, the teenager is confused, anxious, depressed and sleepless. The onset of this disorder is often between 15 to 17 years".⁴⁸ Dr Larson concurred, stating "The pyroluric teenager is a good candidate for drug and alcohol use, which only worsens the stressful situation, making his or her depression continue on into and through the adult years."⁴⁹

According to Dr Pfeiffer's studies, a second biological cause of teen and adult suicide is the presence of too much histamine in the body. He goes on to draw connections between drug and alcohol consumption and high histamine levels, or histadelia.⁵⁰

Dr Pfeiffer wrote: "We know that heroin and methadone are both strong histamine releasing agents. The histadelic person is depressed and compulsive, and has abnormal thinking. Therefore, heroin, methadone, uppers, downers, alcohol and sugar are often craved to compensate for these

feelings. The compulsive day-in-day out drinker of alcohol is usually found to be histadelic.”⁵¹

He advises that moderation must be introduced tactfully to these individuals as they slowly but surely improve on their nutritional program.⁵²

The early identification of pyroluria and histadelia could well be a vital and potentially lifesaving step in reducing the extremely high rates of suicide amongst Aboriginal young people.

J. Mental health begins in the gut

There is an increasing body of scientific evidence linking the gut and mental health. It is thought that gut microbiota works in partnership with the central nervous system (CNS) and could play a role in disorders such as diabetes, autoimmune disorders and obesity as well as neuropsychiatric disorders including autism, anxiety, major depressive disorders and a range of other mental health problems. A leader in this field of research, neurologist Dr David Perlmutter, goes so far as to say:

“Chronic inflammation and free radical damage are concepts that lie front and centre in neuroscience today, but no pharmaceutical approach can come anywhere close to a dietary prescription for managing your intestinal bacteria.”

He also notes that “I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that by embracing this information, we will completely revolutionize the treatment of neurological illnesses.”⁵³

Through his extensive research, Geoff concluded that our gut health has altered dramatically over the past 50 years due to a range of factors, including:

- Pesticides
- GMO foods
- Increased consumption of refined carbohydrates and sugars
- Antibiotics (which are often essential)
- Greater disposable income resulting in increased consumption of fast foods and heavily processed meals.

Geoff is a firm advocate of the scientifically supported perspective that the increased incidence of mental health issues over the past 50 years is closely linked to our gut microbiota being wrecked by poor nutrition. Repairing gut health through a diet that includes fermented foods is a crucial factor.

K. Nutritional deficiencies and their impact on violence and recidivism

In his ground-breaking work, *Diet Crime and Delinquency*, based on his study with incarcerated youth in 1980, Alexander Schauss takes the presenting evidence further and and boldly states that, “Like alcohol or drugs, ordinary foods or the lack of them can alter the mind and unleash criminal behavior. Sugar starvation, vitamin deficiencies, lead pollution, food additives and food allergies can convert a normal brain into a criminal mind.”⁵⁴ Dr Larson believes “Prisons today are full of undiagnosed hypoglycemics who are paying the price for their uncontrolled behaviour”.⁵⁵

John Appleton’s paper ‘Is there a link between Diet Crime and Delinquency?’⁵⁶ is a crucial document highlighting the wealth of studies going back to the 1970s which confirm the premise that nutritional deficiencies have clear links to psychological health and behavioural responses.

Removing wheat and substantially reducing simple or refined sugars in the diets of the young people at the Petford camp resulted in a marked improvement in psychological disturbances and behaviours.

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Looking specifically at each young person presenting problems allowed me to consider much of what the literature was suggesting, which was that high copper levels and low zinc and Vitamin B3 and B6 would cause a noticeable deterioration in behaviour and often a tendency towards aggression.

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Geoff Guest

In addition, following the published findings and recommendations of the scientists, nutritionists and medical practitioners mentioned above, Geoff began supplementing young people's diets with additional vitamins and minerals.

According to soil nutritionist John Koehler, "Australian soils are quite deficient in trace elements. "This results in many foods we consume not providing us with a complete nutritional profile required to maintain mental health and support the immune system. These deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals can however be compensated for through additional supplementation.

Dr Carl Pfeiffer's extensive studies focusing on trace metal build up in violent offenders were so conclusive that in blind studies he was able to identify violent people through testing their trace metal chemistry. Trace metal elements can be tested most effectively through a simple hair follicle analysis.

Hair analysis is often a better indicator than blood testing of deficiencies and toxic built-up minerals, trace elements and toxic metals as metals may be stored in tissues even when they don't show up in the blood.⁵⁷ Dr Pfeiffer concluded that high levels of lead, copper and zinc were often the culprits and recent studies have found that lead and cadmium are predominant in many people with strong violent tendencies.⁵⁸

Treating adolescents who present with antisocial behaviours such as violent tendencies with nutritional supplementation warrants a high level of focus in future program design and delivery.

Dr Bill Walsh and Dr Carl Pfeiffer's studies have drawn these documented and verified conclusions from their sample groups internationally. For more information, see:

'The Effectiveness of Targeted Nutrient Therapy in Treatment of Mental illness', *ACNEM Journal*, Vol 29, No 3, November 2010, accessed at www.walshinstitute.org/uploads/1/7/9/9/17997321/293801829-pyrrole-and-methyl.pdf

'Elevated Blood Copper/Zinc Ratios in Assaultive Young Males', *Physiology & Behavior*, Vol 62, No 2, 1997, pp 327-329.

'Micronutrient Therapy for Violent and Aggressive Male Youth: An Open-Label Trial', *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology*, 2017, pp 1-10.

'Reduced violent behavior following biochemical therapy', in William J Walsh, *Physiology & Behavior* 82, 2004, pp. 835-839.

A list of papers about drug-free nutrient therapies to heal biochemical imbalances can be found at www.walshinstitute.org/researchstudies.html.

4. Neurofeedback

Geoff continued to develop his knowledge and was lucky enough to be introduced to Neurofeedback or EEG (Electroencephalogram) by Social Worker Rob Buschkens in Cairns—one of the first in Australia to use this approach with his clients. Through Rob, Geoff came across the work of Dr Barry Sterman at UCLA and Dr Douglas Quirk in USA.

Dr Sterman and Dr Quirk pioneered the use of Neurofeedback or EEG—a form of therapy in which the brain's electrical activity is assessed and measured to help correct dysfunctional or abnormal brain wave patterns. Quirk's longitudinal study conducted between 1970 – 1995 provides a comprehensive testimony to the effectiveness of Neurofeedback.

From 1970 until 1995 Quirk the resident psychiatrist at Ontario Correctional Institute (OCI) in USA supervised biofeedback training of 2776 felons, and trained staff to apply peripheral and EEG biofeedback methods.⁵⁹

His results were extraordinary: **A 70% reduction in recidivism rates amongst felons who completed his EEG treatment program. These results placed OCI as having the lowest recidivism rates of a mainstream correctional facility in the Western World.**⁶⁰

A follow up found that only 15% of felons completing his program were rearrested in the three years following their release.⁶¹

An intriguing finding is that recidivism is a function of the number of training sessions. Half as many felons who were treated for 16 sessions were successful at remaining out of jail as were those who received 32 sessions.⁶²

Neurofeedback has been used to treat a variety of conditions, including attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, epilepsy, sleep disorders, anger, addictions, PTSD and concentration.

Encouraged by these results, Geoff flew to California

to undertake one of Dr Sterman's training courses. He later became a qualified Neurotherapist.

Between commencing Neurofeedback in 2010 until 2015, Geoff reported conducting an average of 60 sessions per week with young people. Geoff stated that: "Two sessions weekly of 30 minutes was the minimum required to see results." He notes that the best results were recorded when two sessions per day were completed.

Geoff's research and experience confirmed that people suffering from addiction were experiencing "Low Alpha brainwaves, and addressing ECG points on the head C-4, O and O1, combined with correct nutrition, had a very noticeable effect on reducing their symptoms."

Geoff also reported seeing impressive results in these ECG points with ADHD sufferers. He noted symptoms were reduced and concentration levels went "through the roof... some people even started to voluntarily read for the first time in their lives".

Geoff reported noticeable improvements in alleviating symptoms caused by petrol sniffing and alcohol abuse, decreased aggression, reduced levels of depression, increased attention spans, better comprehension and improved sleeping patterns.

He states that he had excellent results working with young people experiencing methamphetamine or ICE addiction with two daily, 30-minute ECG sessions, and that community services in both Atherton and Mareeba requested Neurofeedback sessions. Geoff set up a Neurofeedback room in each community and provided sessions, counselling and diet talks.

He trialed EEG with seven professional people and one blue-collar worker. The seven were keen to be cured and the blue-collar worker seemed indifferent. The seven professionals were cured of their addiction at the end of the course and the blue-collar worker started reading books for the first time in his life.

Timothy Horrell confirmed similar findings in his comprehensive 2010 paper into treating cocaine addiction through EEG.⁶³ In 2011, Afsaneh Moradi extended these findings to include alcohol and even video game addiction.⁶⁴

Word of Geoff's success using Neurofeedback to help people with severe drug and alcohol addiction spread and he was asked to travel to Mintabie, near the border of South Australia and Western Australia. Petrol sniffing was endemic in this area and Geoff reported that "it was rare to see someone without a

tin of petrol around their neck." Geoff saw very good results from EEG sessions and found it to be very effective in treating petrol sniffing addiction.

“

Neurofeedback sometimes gets labelled as pseudoscience. This is a mistake. Many knowledgeable professionals incorporate EEG work into their treatment programs to great effect. I had tremendous results using it. Unfortunately, I had to close the public space I was using to offer EEG sessions to the community in Dimbulah due to public liability insurance skyrocketing.

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Geoff Guest

Unfortunately, Geoff was also forced to cease offering EEG treatments at Petford in 2015 due to a lack of funding to replace worn out equipment.



5. Family, generational and cultural considerations

Esteemed dentist and health anthropologist Weston A Price wrote in 1939, “The rapid degeneration of the Australian Aborigines after the adoption of the government’s modern food provides a demonstration that should be a matter not only of concern but deep alarm that human beings can degenerate so rapidly by the use of a certain type of nutrition, particularly the dietary products used so generally by modern civilization.”⁶⁵

After reading the works of Weston Price and several other anthropologists who undertook studies on the declining levels of mental health amongst Aboriginal Australians since the advent of white settlement, and following the recommendations of Dr Neville Yeomans, Geoff began drawing connections across generations as possible physiological impactors in the young people with whom he was working.

Even when many Aboriginal people were on mission rations, they would still supplement their diets with traditional bush foods and were therefore to some extent minimising the nutritional deficiencies of attempting to exist solely on ration foods.

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Current studies of mental health incidences amongst Aboriginal people show alarming numbers... I’m convinced that a cause of this is generations of poor diet and being deficient in essential vitamins and minerals across generations.

It is important for people to know the cyclical nature of dysfunction and its causes. Proper nutrition and supplementation over generations is key to changing a big component of these generational problems that keep repeating themselves.

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Geoff Guest

Once road transport came to remote communities in the 1950s many Aboriginal people had access (often for the first time) to alcohol. This included Aboriginal women, and had a major effect on the fetus. The shift to a wage economy was another major impactor. People became dependent on store bought processed food, which was of a much lower nutritional value. Birth defects rose, which Weston Price attributes to a Vitamin A deficiency among mothers and Alcohol Fetal Syndrome (AFS), discussed below, which was first recognised in 1973.⁶⁶

Rations given to Aboriginal people were not necessarily adequate either in quality or quantity.⁶⁷ Nutritional problems from this diet included inadequate supplies of protein, iron, calcium, Vitamin B2, Vitamin A and Vitamin C.⁶⁸ It was believed sugar was eagerly sought by Aboriginal people and was thought to be consumed by many in large quantities from early contact.⁶⁹

In his book *White Flour White Power*, historian Tim Rowse highlighted that regardless of when they left traditional lands and lifestyles, by the 1960s almost all Aboriginal people were controlled by distant governments, and local functionaries operated, in various ways, by creating relationships of dependence—the politics of ‘white flour, white power’.⁷⁰ Rationing was used as a fundamental and devastating instrument for achieving this objective.

Aboriginal stockmen and their families relocated to towns and fringe camps with the collapse of Aboriginal involvement in the pastoral industry in the 1970s, taking up a diet of processed foods with a dramatic increase in sugar, processed fat and salt consumption. Accompanying this was a dramatic shift in the social environment and legal access to alcohol from the early 1970s.⁷¹ Into the late 1970s and early 80s, the inception of the ‘passive welfare’ system meant that the need for employment was replaced by an unconditional welfare support program for Aboriginal people, resulting alcohol abuse becoming widespread in many communities, and a further decline in dietary habits.

As historian David Trigger notes in relation to the Gulf area of north Queensland, “The introduction of ‘rations’ by the colonisers established a material basis for the beginning of a prolonged process of pauperisation among Aboriginal residents of camps fringing towns, cattle stations and police depots. Creating relationships of dependence.”⁷²

In Cape York the situation was compounded in the 1980s by the setting up of alcohol canteens in almost all communities and the ultimate dependence on

canteen revenues for funding 'local government' activities. Historian David Martin writes that in relation to Aurukun, an Aboriginal Community on the Gulf of Carpentaria, "...at least five times and possibly up to nine times as much of their income was used to obtain alcohol as was the case for those in the broader community."⁷³

'Demand Sharing' or pressure from family members and others grew out of this drinking culture,⁷⁴ which also contributed to the widespread reliance upon fast food as a dietary staple in many communities.

Geoff believes there has been a huge increase in the developmental 'stunting' of young people growing up from the late 1970s and 80s as a direct result of the passive welfare programs imposed in Aboriginal communities. "The effects of this are still being felt today. I see it every day in the young people I work with now."

Conception and early infancy

A. Male sperm considerations

Studies confirm that a full sperm generation cycle in men takes around 64 days.⁷⁵ All chemical exposures experienced by the man during this period including alcohol, drug use, chemicals, tobacco and pesticides have the ability to damage this process, resulting in offspring at risk of genetic limitations.

There is a misunderstanding that as the male produces millions of sperm daily, activities engaged in weeks or months earlier cannot impact upon sperm quality. This is incorrect. There is at least a two-month period prior to conception in which the father can be impacted by environmental factors that potentially harm the development of a healthy sperm cell.⁷⁶ This can lead to a range of issues from birth defects to learning and behavioral problems.⁷⁷

There are also strong links between a father's habitual drinking habits and miscarriages as well as lower birth weights in babies. A study outlined in the June 19, 1986 *Miami Herald* and reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* was conducted by epidemiologists Ruth Little and Charles Sing at the University of Michigan. As part of the study, the researchers questioned 377 mothers about their drinking and smoking habits before and during pregnancy, as well as about the drinking habits of their husbands in the month before they conceived. To their surprise, the researchers found that the fathers who drank an average of two drinks a day per month had the lower weight babies.

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Highlighting these facts to young men is of vital importance and may go some way towards breaking down a culture of habitually blaming the mother for birth defects and associated problems in new-born babies.

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Geoff Guest

Dr. Little states: "The father's drinking was significantly related to the infant's birth weight independently of the mother's alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use. There are lots of theories. If you expose the reproductive material to enough of anything, you'll damage it and the offspring will be damaged."⁷⁸

Dr Little's research concludes that even consuming relatively small amounts, such as two standard alcoholic drinks per day throughout the time of male sperm production could impact negatively on the development of the fetus.⁷⁹

Published research is still lacking on the effects of a man's drug use on a fetus. However, drugs taken by men before conception can damage the sperm and their genetic contents, creating harm for future fetal development. Studies have shown that an increased risk of birth defects and childhood cancer occurs when a father smokes cigarettes, even when the mother does not.⁸⁰

B. Mothers' health and alcohol

Alcohol consumption during pregnancy is detrimental to a fetus' health. Alcohol consumed by a pregnant woman is absorbed by the placenta and directly affects the fetus within, leading to a variety of malformations and fetal disorders known collectively as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Some physical characteristics of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome include:

- Mental retardation
- Problems with speech, thinking, and social skills
- Prenatal and postnatal growth deficiencies

- Narrow, small eye openings
- A small head
- Undersized jaw and upper lip
- A small, underdeveloped brain
- Joint, limb, and heart malformations
- Poor coordination and decreased muscle tone

According to The National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum disorders Australia (NOFASD): Learning and behavioural problems for people experiencing FAS may include:

- learning difficulties
- memory problems
- impulsiveness
- limited attention span, ease of distraction or hyperactivity
- difficulty relating actions to consequences
- difficulty following instructions (but able to repeat them verbally)
- difficulty with abstract thinking—such as about mathematics, money or time
- slow cognitive processing (thinking)
- difficulty with social relationships⁸¹

While studies into the numbers of Indigenous Australian women affected by FAS are largely inconclusive, it is assumed the levels could be higher than with non-Indigenous Australian women given their reported alcohol use generally at “higher harmful levels”.⁸²

Aboriginal women were also twice as likely to produce babies of low birthweight than non-Aboriginal women.⁸³

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I've worked with many young people who show these symptoms and when we start talking about families and environments they grew up in it seems likely that some of their presenting issues could well be related to a father's drug and alcohol abuse and or exposure to pesticides and possibly FAS too.

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Geoff Guest

C. Vitamin deficiency in mothers and children

A comprehensive study conducted by National Health and Medical Research Council in their paper ‘Nutrition in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’⁸⁴ highlights vitamin deficiencies among mothers and their children across generations. In a study of 12 Queensland settlements, the levels of folate, iron, carotene and Vitamin C were all identified as being lower in children with poor growth versus children with normal growth.⁸⁵

Iron-deficiency (anemia) in infants and children has been linked with impaired cognitive development which if left untreated is thought to go onto play a significant detrimental role in learning difficulties and mental performance during adolescence and adulthood.⁸⁶

The high prevalence of anemia and poor growth in Indigenous children suggests that low intake of zinc may also be an important, overlooked factor. Low Vitamin B1 levels have been described for most age and sex groups, but were particularly low in women of child-bearing age.^{87 88}

In 1990, British epidemiologist David Barker promoted the hypothesis that poor fetal and early postnatal nutrition may predispose the individual to the development of Type 2 diabetes in later life. ‘Barker hypothesis’ proposes that diseases including coronary heart disease, strokes, high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes originate through adaptations the fetus makes when it is undernourished. Barker writes “These adaptations may be structural, metabolic or endocrinal and may permanently change the structure and function of the body, which introduces the concept of fetal ‘programming’ of susceptibility to chronic disease in adulthood.”⁸⁹

The hypothesis presupposes that the prevention of these diseases requires early intervention at the time of fetal growth or between prenatal and post-natal growth cycles. Barker does however note the importance of preventative measures during infancy and beyond as proving effective.⁹⁰



PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Early intervention—community

Geoff strongly recommends that governments need to introduce two welfare programs streams, comprising:

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One tougher one and the other more flexible with incentives, but requiring active participation in education programs like preconception considerations, future planning, child rearing, parenting skills, nutrition, budgeting etc. Young people, and older people for that matter, need something to do; something that engages them, keeps them stimulated and interested and at the same time teaches them skills they can use... Providing opportunities for people to do this should be the main objective of government policies.

Too much spare time and access to unconditional money (passive welfare) has wrecked too many generations of young people growing up in Australian communities.

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Geoff Guest

Geoff suspects there are huge hidden numbers of this dysfunction amongst young people.

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IQ levels are dropping at an alarming rate... This is well documented.

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Geoff Guest

Consider three generations

More must be done before problems start. Government bodies such as the Family Responsibilities Commission run through the Cape York Institute need to be expanded and their scope broadened.

A collaborative approach with state government agencies such as the Departments of Education and Child Safety need to continue to be strengthened and prioritise education and more education.



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Education programs directed at young people prior to and at conception age are underfunded and of vital importance. Young people need to be made aware of the current scientific findings around sperm production and AFS, and how they both impact the health of the fetus. It's a shared responsibility. Young males need to be made aware of this. Getting young people to look forward and to plan... that's when you can talk about responsibility.

“Education programs that focus on reducing the high rate of unplanned pregnancies are so important... One possible way would be to make attending educational workshops around these issues a condition for young people receiving welfare payments and perhaps offer a food voucher for those in education, employment or not on welfare to attend. Educating potential parents about nutritional deficiencies over generations is so important. Then hopefully potential mothers and fathers are in a better position to make better decisions for the next generation.

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Geoff Guest

Residential and outreach— young mother support

Geoff observed that many large families have problems with behaviour in their children.



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I think this often directly relates to their diet. Priming kids with soft drinks sets them up for all sorts of problems including alcoholism.

I believe that if two workers went and visited a family home one day a week and helped them prepare food, talked about diets with families, helped tidy the house and gave them encouragement, great success could be achieved.

Many families load up on white bread, two-minute noodles, sausages, margarine and soft drinks because they're cheap. This stuff is killing gut bacteria and in turn brain health. Vegetables, especially the green leaf variety are often expensive in remote communities and don't last well in the heat, so they often don't get eaten.

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Geoff Guest

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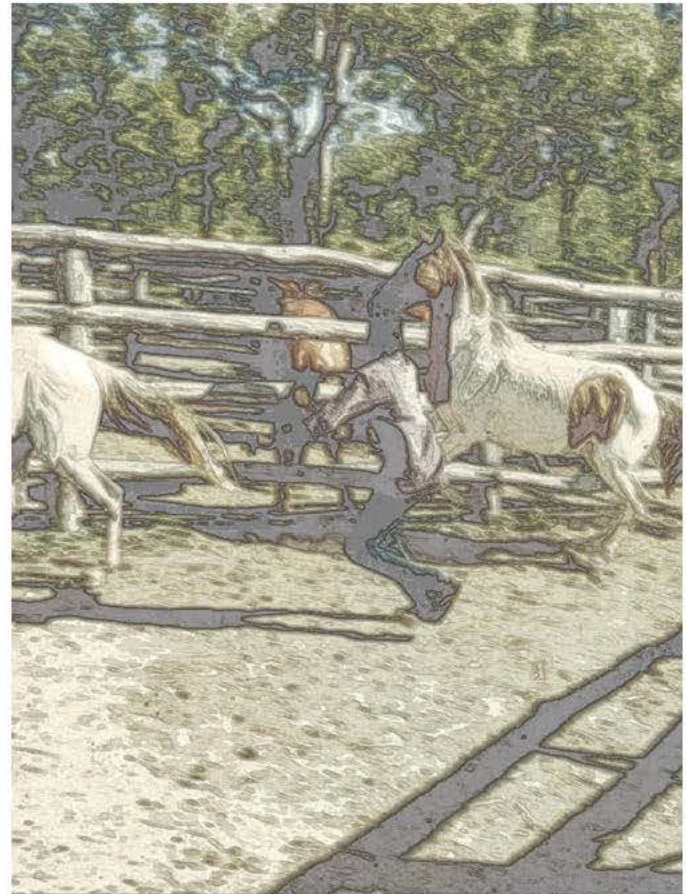
Workers could hold a group session one day a week within communities and offer small prizes, awarded to encourage participation—a simple prize like an inscribed tea cup for ‘best cooking’ or ‘best salad dressing’ would be great. Acknowledging effort makes people feel valued. This is really important.

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Geoff Guest

One example of what this program could provide is one worker looking after five families, which would benefit up to 100 people yearly. Early identification of problems is crucial.

Introducing simple microgreen boxes into households, schools and communities and teaching families how to grow their own sprouts and leafy greens would be a great way of encouraging more nutritionally dense foods to be eaten. They're simple to grow and could easily be grown on a windowsill or verandah.





We need to acknowledge that the current approach isn't working. It's far more complex than visiting a GP once per fortnight and getting a script.

These are multifaceted issues that require a collaborative approach across a range of professions, working together. This is the key point that has the potential to change the current dire situation within which many at risk young people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous find themselves in.

Medical doctors such as GPs need to work alongside social workers and psychiatrists, allied health professionals and importantly read up on orthomolecular medicine and the effects it's been having in international contexts...

Having a naturopath involved identifying and treating vitamin and mineral deficiencies in people could really complement and increase the effectiveness of other modalities such as psychiatric interventions.

Tests for allergies, food intolerances, leaky gut, heavy metals, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and hypoglycemia need to happen. We've got to get to the root cause as early as possible. These aren't expensive tests and could be easily done within community or through a training farm model. This could spare a lifetime of preventable health problems and save the government hundreds of thousands of dollars in reactive treatment costs... Getting in early is the key.

We need to be identifying individual problems from a range of factors often not considered. As well as the above mentioned, these include: identification of family and generational history of mental health, addiction, and low birth weights. Indicators like these tell us a huge amount about possible nutritional deficiencies across generations and in turn can allow us to identify possible instances of Alcohol Fetal Syndrome (AFS).

Identifying if someone is hypoglycemic can have a huge impact on addressing behavioural issues. I've seen evidence of this over 20 years with hundreds of young people.

Knowing what some of these weaknesses are, we can do something about before it gets to a more critical stage. It is important that we do something to overcome these problems that have been going on for generations.



Geoff Guest

Alcohol and addiction treatment in community

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Treatment options have to be made available that are safe and effective and get to the root cause of the problem, which is biochemical imbalance.

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Geoff Guest

We use a harm minimisation approach to address drug and alcohol problems in Australia. The positive side of this approach is that it doesn't punish addicts with the law for their addiction but instead uses the premise of teaching people how to use substances more safely until they are ready to decide for themselves to start reducing or ceasing use. The negative side of this approach is that treatment options centre around pharmacotherapy programs which are aimed at addressing the symptoms of withdrawal. Residential detox stays are theoretically a treatment option but are non-existent in most remote communities, and if someone can manage to get through the lengthy wait lists and access one of the few detox units in an urban setting treatment, it is often limited to a period of short abstinence before the person returns to their environment and often recommences their addiction.

Family Advisory Committee

Geoff advocates strongly for the formation of a Family Advisory Committee to help court magistrates make more informed sentencing recommendations pertaining to the specific circumstances of the offender. Considering the specific family situation and effects sentencing could have on any children is crucial.

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Perhaps considering deferred sentencing in appropriate

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circumstances if dependents are involved and an offender agrees to undertake the community education programs around effective parenting.

“Courts are so overburdened these days, which I feel forces magistrates into making hurried sentencing orders without having the full picture of an offender's wider circumstances and who'll be affected by them being locked up. I know this is not an easy one but it's about thinking forward to the impacts on children and future generations. A family advisory committee recommending intensive parenting programs as a mandatory requirement and suggesting deferred sentences would do a hell of a lot more good in many cases than incarcerating a young person in a detention centre or jail.

Mandated parental education programs could be the way. I'm a firm believer in education instead of legislation, but if the legislation is for more specific education and training programs, I'm all for it.

“Why are there two or three child protection workers in each town? It's because kids are being neglected due to poor parenting. Kids will naturally copy their parent's behaviours, who, in dysfunctional households, can be unconsciously role modelling poor self-control and impulsive behaviours. This can

often manifest in a young person's behaviour in anything from unsafe sex to substance abuse or high-risk activities such as violent crime."

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Geoff Guest

Geoff and other community elders have also expressed their belief that the more young offenders seen in the magistrates court and sentenced to attend a proper youth training farm, the better.

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The more time a young person spends in remand or in custody awaiting sentencing, the longer and harder it is to rectify problematic behaviours."

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Geoff Guest

Growing our own food: an Aeroponics Organic Food Production Program

Many community market gardens established in Queensland have been successful when seasons are good. The drawback is the need to use large quantities of pesticides due to the often challenging climates and damage caused by pests. However, many community gardens have also ceased to operate due to poor supervision and climatic issues.

There is considerable supporting evidence that top-soil levels are decreasing rapidly both in volume and nutrient content. This has resulted in an ever-increasing use of petrochemical fertilisers and potent chemical pesticides. These factors, combined with a recent influx of extreme weather conditions, lower rainfall and drought in many areas of Australia have resulted in an increasing reliance on imported

vegetables, often leading to inflated prices due to high transport costs. This can have the effect of discouraging local families on small budgets from consuming adequate amounts of vegetables, particularly the green leafy variety.

These factors have a tremendous flow-on effect to physical and mental health, which research is proving has impacts across generations. As outlined previously in this document, there is a comprehensive body of evidence highlighting the links between the brain and gut. Our mental health is inherently linked to our gut health and what we ingest.

Unfortunately, government and widespread public knowledge is slow to catch on to this knowledge, to the detriment of the health of the community, particularly our mental health. This point can't be emphasised more strongly.



Aeroponics is a variation of hydroponics using 98% less water than conventional methods. Using an enclosed environment and vertical growing model, it eliminates the need for pesticides and enables rapid nutrient dense harvests without chemical fertilisers and with minimal labour.

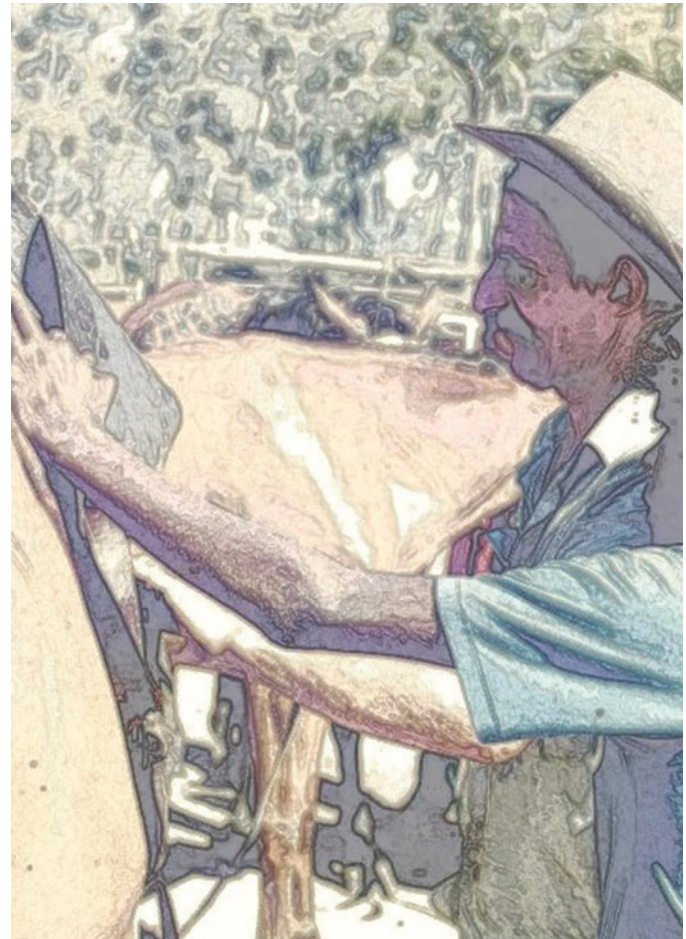
Geoff is in the process of developing a prototype of the aeroponics food boxes to show to communities. The eventual aim is to provide these boxes to communities (particularly those on limited budgets and those in remote, arid locations) so as they can produce their own vegetables. This could also be rolled out to training farms, schools and community

settings as education tools.

In addition, large scale production through aeroponics systems could be further developed by farmers to produce locally-sourced, cost effective, high yield organic produce for local markets. Horse and cattle fodder can be produced at a fraction of the cost of conventional means and could potentially provide a much-needed income stream to farmers and communities having to import increasingly costly animal feed.

This is certainly not an attempt to undercut local farmers, but instead an opportunity for them to enhance their production capabilities and open new markets considering the declining soil and nutrient values and extreme adverse weather conditions.

Federal politician Bob Katter has long recognised this missing nutrient problem and has for a number of years been urging the Prime Minister's Department to provide funding to rejuvenate community vegetable gardens throughout Aboriginal communities across the north. Katter set up a committee of community representatives and agronomists from across the north to guide the project. So far, no funding has been forthcoming.





TRAINING FARM RECOMMENDATIONS

Changing the status quo

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We really need to consider what are the true motivations of Juvenile detention centres and youth intervention programs. Is it to get the young off the streets and away from causing harm to the community?

Or is it a serious commitment to addressing the underlying issues these young people have and preparing them to become functional valued members of society?

If it is genuinely the latter, we need to consider all of these factors together and commit to changing the status quo in terms of service delivery, otherwise this cyclical dysfunction will just continue.

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Geoff Guest



Program location



It's important that the program is on remote land. Ideally it should be 50km or more from towns and not situated on a main road. If young people have the option of walking to a nearby highway and hitching a ride into town the moment things become challenging for them, the work we are doing gets set back.

This isn't about being fenced in... Young people often run off and spend a day or two in the bush. It's about them having this time alone on land and coming back for another go under their own steam. This is them taking control... If town is too close, the temptation's always there and they can get fixated on it.

"It's about creating a setting where young people can be exposed to enough of what they need to repair and grow into healthy, functional young adults.

Proper nutrition, vitamin supplementation, ECG, mentoring and equine therapy: they're all about fixing existing deficiencies and when addressed together, it works... I've seen it over and over again through decades.

"This is a process. Having a closed training farm environment is a good idea initially. This can have a mix of both mandated and voluntary young people, but it's important that young people commit to the program for a substantial stint.

Six, 12 or 24 months can be truly transformative. Having a consistent length of time for these initiatives to work is important.

"Then the young person can see big changes without dropping in and out for a week here and there which would mean that we just really deal with the immediate symptoms and behaviours. Cutting to the core issues takes time.

I really feel that when a successful trial of this model is up and running and has been evaluated, it could be rolled out across Australia. This would dramatically change the dire state of at-risk young people in Australia.

I've used these methods extensively and know they work.



Geoff Guest

Accommodation considerations and 'house parents'

“

Having separate houses or buildings for differently aged young people would work much more effectively than housing them all together in a dormitory type set up.

For example, age ranges could be: 14-16, 17-19 and 20-21.

Having two workers, a male and female in the roles of 'house parents' for each age range is a way of role modelling appropriate behaviours and providing an opportunity for more one on one interaction than a larger group setting would allow. It also means house parents are able to observe more closely any issues or concerns that might easily be missed. Having a four-day on, three-day off roster could work for staff.

”

Geoff Guest

Training house parents in cooking the appropriate meals for young people is essential. Staying away from wheat, simple sugars, many grains and heavily processed foods is the objective. Rebuilding often chronically damaged gut health should be prioritised through regular consumption of kefir, kombucha, sauerkraut and apple cider vinegar.

Training house parents to become Neurofeedback therapists through a simple short course would be advantageous and help the young people greatly, as well as providing workers with valuable new skills.

Program mentors

Staff involved in vocational training and equine therapy components of the program must see themselves as mentors and be keen to develop skills and approaches that can work effectively with young people. Geoff is a firm believer that these skills and techniques can be taught and learned.

“

Workers need to be open-minded, receptive and be wanting to learn new skills and approaches. Having a good grasp of horse [equine] therapy objectives and a strengths-based approach to working with young people is a good starting point for workers.

”

Geoff Guest

Intake assessment and testing

As with the 'in community' treatment recommendations, looking at a range of possible impactors is crucial. These include: generational history, family incidences of mental health issues, possible effects of AFS, blood tests to determine hypoglycemia, and hair follicle analysis to determine specific nutrient deficiencies and prevalence of heavy metals.

“

I'll give you an example.... many people around Mt Isa test high for lead and copper. In high levels these metals can be toxic and cause all sorts of problems especially to mental health. Testing for these things is relatively inexpensive and can be life changing.

”

Geoff Guest

Having a naturopath visit the training farm weekly to monitor an individualised vitamin and mineral supplementation program for each young person is essential.

“

This isn't about replacing medical doctors and psychologists. Some young people need to be on a carefully managed pharmacotherapy program. It's about these programs running in conjunction with orthomolecular medicine, which aims to address specific nutritional deficiencies.

”

Geoff Guest

Exercise and body work

Geoff has been a long-time advocate of regular exercise in addition to a day's work.

“

As much as possible, over the years I'd get the boys up before breakfast for a quick run. It helps set the day up and get them focused for what's ahead... It needn't be anything too long but I think science is starting to show that 20 minutes of continuous exercise daily gives tremendous health benefits.

”

Geoff Guest

Geoff is a keen body worker and has used a range of physical treatment modalities such as trigger point therapy, massage and red laser work to help the boys with injuries and raise awareness around looking after their physical bodies.

“

Often just the individual focus and care from a worker can be really beneficial to young people who haven't had that before.

”

Geoff Guest

Overall program costs

This needn't be an expensive process. It's just about shifting the focus to treating the underlying causes of the problem.

“

Just endlessly treating presenting behaviours has limited success. I've found this to be the case and this is the hurdle that many programs that fail never overcome.

I saw a politician recently [Bob Katter in December 2019] on TV talking about it currently costing over \$500,000 per year to keep a young person in juvenile detention in Queensland. A properly designed and structured program for a youth training farm could be run for under a quarter of those figures.

”

Geoff Guest

Vocational program design considerations

There have been considerable changes to the cattle industry in the last 15 years. These include:

- Increased usage of motorbikes for cattle musters.
- Decline in full-time stockman positions except around specialised brief cattle musters.
- Lack of awareness from station employers about the loss of earnings due to hurried (motorbike) cattle musters, often resulting in calves being separated from their mothers and generally poor stock management.
- Lack of opportunity (on musters) for young people to train their horses into specialist, high value cattle horses of which there continues to be a considerable shortage.

Geoff notes that there is still very high demand for 'broken horses'—horses that have been trained to be rideable.

“

This is still a lucrative industry and there's a shortage of skilled horsemen and women to do the job. I think a training program based on the Strathburn certification program coupled with the addition of motorbike skills, basic mechanics and fencing would make young people extremely employable in terms of what cattle stations are looking for nowadays.

”

Geoff Guest

Possible vocational focused program areas

Horse, cattle and station work, including:

- Breaking in horses
- Saddlery, fitting and harness care
- Basic veterinary skills and feeding

- Riding and training
- Basic horse and cattle husbandry procedures
- Cattle work including mustering by horse and helicopter
- Stress-free stock handling and yard work
- Trap yard use
- Stockyards, water and fencing
- Camp cooking and nutrition
- Leatherwork including whip making and saddle repair
- Bush skills
- Firearm training

Motorbike skills (with consideration to current changes in mustering approaches), including:

- Quad bike riding and safety
- Motorbike maintenance and repair

Other skills, including:

- Chainsaw use, maintenance and safety
- Windmills, water pumps and small engine maintenance and repair
- Station operations and bookkeeping
- Conservation and land Management (a pathway to Ranger certification)
- Gaining a station manager certificate
- Rural fire fighting

Key problems of detention centres and youth intervention programs that fail:

- They don't consider individual problems beyond medication—proper assessments aren't conducted
- Diet is terrible and does not consider the latest research
- Mentorship and a relationship model of practice is not genuinely prioritised. Often institutionalised programs have a top-down authoritarian approach to working with young people, which often just triggers negative past conditioned responses and sabotages the potential for working effectively with complex young people
- A rigid mindset of workers can undermine the trial and implementation of new approaches
- Workers must be keen to learn new skills and methods in challenging environments and be willing to work collaboratively within a broad treatment framework involving other modalities such as naturopathy and neurofeedback
- Program design lacks stimulation and learning opportunities tied to vocational skill development
- Pathways beyond the completion of the program are vague and not properly facilitated



A LAST WORD

Even at 94, Geoff is still doing what he does best. People from around Australia continue to call him day and night for counsel and young people continue to find their way to Petford where he still takes in those in need. Geoff does this without any Government support except for his aged pension.

“

The right mix of diet, supplements, some mentoring work and some work with the horses... They're the right mix of factors to be effective working with young people.

I'd love a community and a youth program to take up these methods going forwards. The success I've had at Petford is transferable to other contexts by other workers. It just takes some committed people ready to change things and try a different approach.

”

Geoff Guest

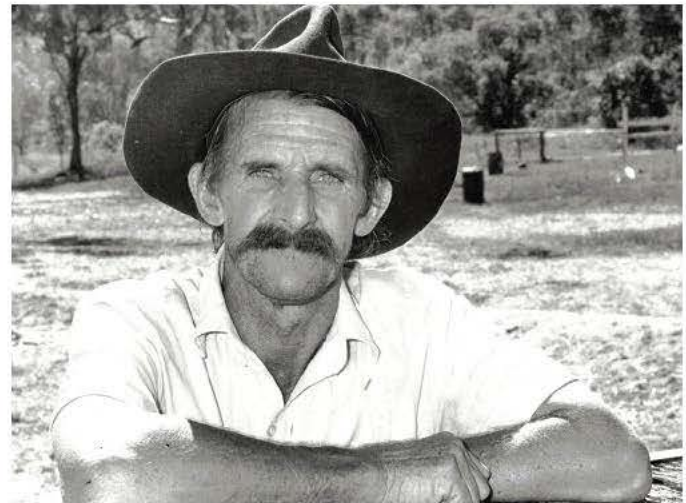
“I'm still above ground,” Geoff jokes and is happy to offer guidance and support or help design a program for communities and workers to trial these methods.

“

My door is always open... come up and see how I work with young people and I'll be happy to pass on what I've learnt.

”

Geoff Guest



Geoff is one of the truly great Australians—a tireless man who has dedicated his life to selflessly serving those in need. His methods, continually evolving with the latest research and findings, have been proven effective over four decades and urgently need to be implemented in current youth intervention programs across Australia.

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OVERVIEW OF THE GEOFF GUEST PETFORD CAMP

Geoff Guest OAM established the Geoff Guest Petford Camp back in the late 70's. The camp is located in the bush, near the small town of Petford in Far North Queensland.

Geoff, affectionately known by people as the 'Old Man' is well known around the country and overseas for his outstanding success in working with people, particularly Aboriginals.

The Camp developed primarily to help people, who are suicidal, suffering from drug and alcohol abuse, petrol sniffing, aggression or habitual offending. The overall aim of the camp is to confirm and strengthen the participants' identity and pride, to elevate their confidence, self-esteem and respect for themselves and others.

Activities include nutrition, neuro-feedback therapy, leather work, swag making, eucalyptus and tea-tree oil production, tin smelting and pewter ware, and health and illness education.

The Geoff Guest Petford Camp operated independent of government funding. People attended the camp living with the Old Man as members of the household. They were responsible for the cost of their own board and keep.



Old Man and Aunty Norma

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GEOFF GUEST

Geoff Guest was born in 1926. His early life as one of the stolen generation is explored in the paper

[Old Man - His youth as a Stolen Generation Member](#).

Geoff spent much of his life in the saddle and has the reputation of being one of Queensland's best horsemen. Geoff was separated from his Aboriginal mother when he was three and fostered by a white family at a time when light-skinned Aboriginal children were taken from their families for "the chance of a better life". Geoff ran away from his foster family when he was nine and went on a lone 7,000 km walkabout with three horses. He started working as a rabbit controller and then as station hand when the owner discovered his skill as a horse breaker. "I had it tough" he said, "but because I was fair-skinned I could always go places".

At 16 Geoff joined the USA army in a small group that took 50 Australia stock horses across India and the Himalayas into China so the Chinese soldiers could use them to breed mules. The group came under fire from the Japanese army and the Chinese soldiers had Geoff use his surgery skills to treat a wounded mule. On seeing his skills they used Geoff as their surgeon when they were injured.

Over the years, he has taken up a number of occupations, including trochus diver, timber cutter, buffalo and crocodile shooter, tin miner, soldier, mounted police drug enforcement officer in South America, rodeo trick rider and stockman. Overriding all these occupations, Geoff has an extraordinary understanding of, and love for people and has spent his entire life helping others in one form or other.

Back in the early 70s Geoff would draw a crowd of Aboriginal boys to watch him break in horses. Many of them were heavy drinkers and were getting into trouble with the law. He invited them to

stay with him on his property while he taught them to ride and to develop the necessary skills to get work on stations. In those days he employed up to 10 staff to care for up to 40 young people living on his property, all paid for by his substantial tin mining operation. In the late 70s he developed a special relationship with a local Aboriginal woman named Norma and they have been living together ever since.

In time, Geoff's outstanding work with people caught the attention of the state welfare department, police and magistrates. These people were on the lookout for effective programs and asked Geoff and Norma if they could refer people to them. Geoff has testimonials of countless numbers of former residents and thousands of national and international supporters, including; past and present State and Federal members of parliament, Judges and Magistrates, psychiatrists, doctors, psychologists, social workers, teachers, police officers, university professors, and the list goes on. They have all publicly confirmed the effectiveness of Geoff's rehabilitation methods.



Old Man, Aunty Norma and a group of young residents

GENERAL THEORETICAL BASE

The Geoff Guest Petford Camp is guided by the belief that many socially disruptive and self-

harming behaviours, such as: suicidal behaviour; drug and alcohol abuse; petrol sniffing; aggression; and habitual offending, are the product of the person and their environment. The household helps these people to change their behaviour by providing them with a new, more positive environment supporting their self-help in developing a better life.

Most of us would like to believe that our personal values, belief and feelings are much stronger than our surrounding social forces. Often surrounding social forces are much stronger, with penalties for non-conformity ranging from unpopularity, loss of status, loss of livelihood, exclusion, or in extreme situations, death. The more we deviate from the group-shared attitudes and beliefs, or norms, the greater the pressure the group will tend to exert to bring us into line.

These forces can be seen at work in the stories of many people. Take for example the following words of a 17 year old Aboriginal boy from Mossman Gorge Aboriginal Community:

- "You can't stop the drinking here, it's too strong. If you want to stop others will force you into it, you can't say no, they will make you. If you don't drink with them they think bad of you. The only way to stop is to get out of this place".

And again, from a 16 year old boy from Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Community trying to explain why he committed a number of offences:

- "I never thought about it before, all the other years I was just going to school, but then I was hanging around too much with these other boys and started getting into trouble".

In situations where a person believes that their family or group environment is having a bad effect on them and want to get away for a while, the Geoff Guest Petford Camp may be able to provide them with that opportunity.

The Old Man has the ability to directly interact with people and point out their irrational ideas and

beliefs and provide them with ways to overcome them. The goal is that eventually the person will learn new ideas and beliefs that are more effective.

Unlike many therapeutic programs, the Geoff Guest Petford Camp is not conducted in a closed artificial environments applied by psychologists or other professionals. In contrast, the Camp is for people who have chosen to leave their community for a time and live with the Old Man who models more effective beliefs and values, in an environment that provides them with new activities and valuable life skills.



The Old Man giving some young people an introduction to horse riding

SOME DETAILS OF THE GEOFF GUEST PETFORD CAMP

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the Geoff Guest Petford Camp is to help people live happy, productive, and respected members of their community.

The objectives include:

- to create a safe, supportive environment for people to develop and enjoy their lives

without doing harm to themselves and others;

- to provide knowledge and skills relevant to living and working in rural and remote areas;
- to develop greater confidence, self-esteem, self-discipline, self-reliance, respect for themselves and others and their property.
- to reduce boredom, anxiety and depression;
- to improve physical health and fitness;
- to promote an understanding and respect of the natural environment;

Other benefits

In addition to the objectives, the Geoff Guest Petford Camp can provide the following opportunities to participants.

- The opportunity for people from different parts of the country to gain a greater understanding of each other, to live and work in cooperation and develop new friendships.
- The opportunity for people to gain new ideas and learn practical skills that can assist them to establish their own enterprises that may generate a livelihood and help provided autonomy and economic independence.

Living and activity expenses

People referred to Geoff Guest Petford Camp from outside the area live with the Old Man as members of the household on the bank of Emu Creek. The camp is not funded by any government department and Geoff discourages welfare dependence which robs people of their independence and dignity. People attending the camp are therefore required to pay for their own living and activity expenses. The various ways they can do is explained at the time of referral.



Young residents saddling up to go riding

Horse riding and horse care activity

People who attend Geoff Guest Petford Camp are often withdrawn, low in self-esteem, mistrusting of authority figures, or a believe that they have little control over their lives. Geoff knows how horses can be used to help rehabilitate people and he has been doing so for most of his life.

When people attend the Geoff Guest Petford Camp they will be given a practical education on riding and caring for horses and the parallels between the behaviour of horses, themselves and others. Through expert riding instruction people develop courage, self-confidence and control. They will learn that horses have personalities like people and with proper care and attention you can earn their trust and respect. They will be taught how to take responsibility for the needs of their horse, as well as their own needs.

Horses, according to Geoff, are great levellers; "It does not matter what you look like or whatever your past, it all means very little to a horse, they will take you as you are".

In addition to their therapeutic potential, horses can provide employment and income. Horses are Australia's third biggest industry, when taking into consideration the horse racing industry, national and international breeding sales, rodeo riders,

stockmen, show and pleasure riding and working horses

Neuro-feedback therapy

Geoff is always willing to try out new ideas in order to help people improve the quality of their lives. For the past 4 years, Geoff and others have been pioneering the use of neuro-feedback therapy to help Aboriginals over-come a number of disorders including ADHD and Tourettes type behaviours.

All human behaviour originates in the nervous system, of which the brain is the most important part. The nervous system is made up of thousands upon thousands of individual nerve cells called neurons. Neurons communicate to each other by using electrical impulses and chemical secretions. Neuro-feedback therapy involves placing small sensors against certain areas of the skull, which are able to detect some of the small electrical impulses taking place within the brain. These impulses are then relayed to a computer, which is programmed to display these electrical impulses in a visual form on the computer screen. In this way the participants are able to view their own brainwave activity on a moment by moment basis.

This visual neuro-activity feedback can then be used as a form of neurological skill training whereby participants can learn to self-regulate and influence their brainwave patterns to achieve a more balanced mental state.

Neuro-feedback therapy is being used by a number professionals around the world for the treatment of drug, alcohol and food dependency and addiction, dangerous offenders, learning disabilities, Attention Deficit-Hyperactive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, certain types of depression and other mood disturbances, and certain closed-head injuries.

Geoff has testimonials from academic and practitioner world leaders in neurotherapy stating that Geoff's work is 'state of the art'.



The Old Man connecting up a young boy to the neuro-feedback computer

Nutrition

Geoff has had significant success in changing long term behavioural issues through changing residents' food habits Geoff speaks of having clear nutritional boundaries.

Here at Petford people get for perhaps the first time, clear boundaries as to what they can and cannot eat. We have no white sugar and no white flour at Petford. These two things messes their brains.

We also have no cigarettes, alcohol or drugs. These also set the people back; they lose their confidence - I can tell if they have had just *one* cigarette - it shows in their confidence and ease in working with the horses.

This same point about white sugar and white flour is made by psychiatric anthropologist John Cawte (1974, 2001). Annie Jubb and David Jubb (2003) report the experience of teachers and staff at Central Alternative High School in Appleton, Wisconsin:

Most aberrant behaviour that we see around us in the world, such as crime and violence, can be corrected or greatly affected through proper

nutrition. This was dramatically demonstrated when staff and teachers at Central Alternative High School in Appleton, Wisconsin, took action against the violence, gun-toting, wisecracking, and truancy that had become regular behaviour among the students. In 1997, they challenged the system and changed the menu at the cafeteria, and removed all of the candy and soda vending machines. The cafeteria switched from offering hamburgers, hotdogs, French fries, cookies, cakes, chips, and soda to offering wholesome fresh fruit and vegetables, hormone-free eggs, cheese, and meat. They cut out all food containing the preservatives BHA, BHT, TBHQ, and synthetic colours and flavours. They started preparing meals using old fashioned recipes. Principal LuAnn Coenen now files stunning figures each year with the state of Wisconsin. Since 1997, she has reported a figure of zero dropouts, student expulsion, and for students discovered using drugs, carrying weapons and committing suicide. Zero. These problem behaviours simply disappeared when a wholesome diet was introduced and the worst chemical additives were removed. One resident summed it up, 'Now that I can concentrate, I think it is easier to get along with people.'

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