

Tingha Regeneration Program – Overview and Update

Progress - 30-9-2008 to 24-7-2011

Tingha Community Regeneration Program Background:

The Program commenced officially on September 30, 2008 in highly challenging circumstances.

When any community reaches this depth of social and economic challenge, there is serious lack of will to change or belief that change is ever possible. Too many people become locked into serious cycles of thinking and behaviour which are self and community destructive. It was clear that holistic uniting of the community towards a common vision in the short term would be impossible. For Tingha to come out of more than 30 years of serious decline, a long term strategy and committed process would be needed, one positive step at a time until the momentum of slow but progressive change could set in.

The Natural Science of Small Community Regeneration identifies this kind of challenge, and its only solution. In order for a community to reverse its downward spiral, it would be necessary to plant the seeds of positive example, one at a time, and show the pathway “back to the future.” Tingha’s children are the seed of its future hope and now, the Tingha Regeneration Program in its third year has already done very substantial ground-breaking work that will progressively start to break the cycles.

What has been achieved so far?

Indeed much, in terms of laying solid foundations for progressive regeneration.

The following is but a brief summary of most significant milestone achievements, but there has been much more on a day to day basis of slowly and painstakingly networking, building relationship and support, both inside and outside the community.

- One of our first challenges was to establish an effective home base for the Program. The UAICC Hall/Office in Tingha was much in need of massive clean-up initially, but facilities were highly inadequate.
- By early 2009 we established a Community Representative Incorporated Body, Tingha Regeneration Inc. (TRI). Its role is to be the on-the-ground management organisation in Tingha, through which we could encourage community involvement, manage regeneration planning and implementation in a professional way, and most importantly, have a body that could have potential to access extensive and diverse funding.
- By February 2009, The Tingha Gems Caravan Park had been abandoned and virtually left to die. TRI applied to the Lands Department to take over management, seeing it to be a crucial link in the overall plan of Tingha’s holistic regeneration. Since then we have been progressively redeveloping the park which is also the important symbol of Tingha’s Regeneration Program strategy of “Breaking the Cycles” of social and economic challenge.
- In parallel, there was a need to upgrade the Program’s Hall/Office facilities, which were likewise in sad state of neglect. Since April 2009 to the present, TRI has invested through raised funding and cash in kind community support, around \$25,000 to renovate and refurnish the facility, including: Building in Offices, recarpeting, repainting, staining the Hall floor, new Seating and Tables, relocating/renovating the kitchen, installing a Gas stove and much more. Church funds have also complemented this with essentially needed Air Conditioning and Security (after two attempted break-ins). This has provided a safe, comfortably, excellent community service facility, professionally managed, centrally located and increasing in diversity of activity, unparalleled in Tingha.
- TRI has established two very important Community Newsletters:
Tingha Rocks – up to twice each year as a Tingha Regeneration Program Information Medium to the public. This has been sponsored by the Program’s primary funding supporters (UAICC,UCA and UC as well as BEST Employment Inverell.)
- Tingha Pebbles – which is sponsored by BEST EMPLOYMENT and other Tingha Community Groups including Tingha Sport & Recreation Club Ltd, Tingha Neighbour Aid HAAC Program, Tingha Billycart Darby Association and published every month now for the last 2 years, providing a regular social and

information medium for Tingha. These Publications, particularly the Pebbles, provides the only Community Social Medium available to the Tingha Public outside Facebook.

In addition, UAICC published a very significant Cover Story in the 2010 Autumn Edition of Message Stick in 2010, which summarised the positive progress of the Tingha Regeneration Program

- TRI has established and maintained excellent working relationships with Anaiwan Aboriginal Land Council. Greg Livermore, ALALC CEO works with TRI. We support each other and he is also a founding member of TRI. TRI has also supported other activities within the Aboriginal community, including funding of repairs to a Bus for children's cultural field trips.
- TRI has established and maintained excellent working relationships with Tingha Public School, as we progress towards increasing school involvement in our "Breaking the Cycles" initiative.
- In 2009 TRI won a special Grant through FRRR and ABC Rural to establish the foundations of our "Breaking the Cycles" Planning and Program. This gave our Program National publicity combined with a visit from Olympic Swimmer Geoff Hugel. The Project resulted in the planting of the Tingha Breaking the Cycles Memorial Hedge Maze at the Tingha Caravan Park, by May 2010 – with all children from the Tingha Public School planting a tree which is to be tagged with their name in October 2011.
- Since 2009, TRI been progressively establishing the Tingha Rocks Community Nursery, initially with a \$21,000 support Grant from Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority. Also, Feijoa Australia Trust and more recently, In 2010 Joblink Plus provided \$18,000 from their Community Grants Program to build a 9mX9m Storage/Working Shed for the Nursery.
- In 2009, TRI established a Community Technology Centre (as a member of the State-wide CTC Network) in the front of the UAICC Hall, providing internet connected public access computers and community service information/referral. This included a Seniors Kiosk, with computers and support valued at \$25,000 and some furniture donated by Guyra Shire Council. A CTC Colour Brochure was produced promoting the CTC, TRI and the Regeneration Program.
- The renovated Hall/Office facility has been used weekly by BEST Employment, to provide a venue for interviewing Job Seekers each week. Donations from BEST Employment contribute to TRI's Insurance costs and publication of Tingha Pebbles Newsletter.
- Hall facilities have been used weekly for at least a year now for an Exercise Group Activity, facilitated by Aboriginal Health worker, Bridget Jerrard. Also, the ladies Craft, Coffee and Chat Group has been running weekly now for 2 years and has provided very important social contact for a growing number of previously isolated women in the community. This group is openly available to all women in the community. We also host community activities, such as Australia's Biggest Morning Tea.
- Hall facilities are also used to host Community Training activities and also for monthly Sunday worship Services.
- In 2010 TRI, in association with three regional Job Service Providers and Inverell Community College, also facilitated a 13 week Certificate Training Course in Horticulture from the Hall and from our Tingha Rocks Nursery. TRI volunteers prepared provided lunches daily for this Course. This involved around 20 participants (about half of whom are Aboriginal). Selective participants from this course are in line for jobs which will progressively become available at the Nursery once fully established.
- In 2010, TRI negotiated with the owner of the land behind the UAICC hall to allow us to clean it up, bring in sand and gravel and make it accessible as a Rear Entrance Car Park for the Hall.
- In 2010, TRI applied for and received a grant to conduct a Carers BBQ in recognition of those who serve the aged and frail in both cultures in the Tingha Community. In the same year, TRI Members organised and supported the first ever International Women's Day event in Tingha, an outstanding success with 60 women of both cultures in attendance. TRI members also serve on Meals on Wheels in the Tingha Community.
- In 2011 TRI designed and initiated excellent, broad based community support for a major social reform project with strong economic benefits. "The Healing Tingha" project, involving developing of Australia's

Rock Garden on the Guyra Hill, is designed to pull together a fractured community and provide a project that Aboriginal people can embrace in healing wounds of conflict over generations.

- In April 2011 – TRI facilitated the next crucial stage of the “Breaking the Cycles” Program in inviting all children from the Tingha Public School to plant a Tree in the Memorial Maze. This was an outstandingly successful event, and combined with the subsequent Tingha Pebbles Newsletter featuring the event this was a turning point in the level of Tingha awareness and support, particularly among Aboriginal families involved. (The event was videoed by supportive Tingha residents, Burnie and Colleen Graham for future reference).
- Tingha Regeneration Program Designer/Facilitator wins Award – August 4 - 2011 Tingha Regeneration Program Facilitator Bob Neville took out the individual Category in the “Building Inclusive Communities Awards” – facilitated by Macquarie University and the Ethnic Communities’ Council NSW Inc. for commitment and service to the Tingha Regeneration Program. Awards were presented at Parliament House in Sydney, by Hon. Barry O’ Farrell – Premier of NSW.
- TRI has established and maintained an excellent working relationship with all four Regional Job Networks and is working closely with these to support unemployed and initiate training and job opportunities. (BEST Employment, Job Link Plus, Jobs Australia and Advanced Personnel Management.)
- TRI is currently facilitating the establishment of the first stage of a most significant Industry Development Project for Tingha, which, when successful will not only be the first local employment-generating initiative of substance in Tingha for generations, it will be a turning point in our Breaking the Cycle of economic stagnation and decline in Tingha. In stage two, this project will have potential to initiate the establishment of a Tingha Industrial Estate over the next few years, substantially opening up training and job opportunities locally. A location has already been identified.
- Each year TRI has facilitated Clean-Up Days, as part of our strategy for “Breaking the Cycle” of environmental decline. This has been extremely successful, well supported by all age groups, fully documented and each year, the task has become easier, providing a clear indication that people are starting to take more pride in the look of their community.
- TRI’s Management Charter is based on the structure provided by the Community Gold Program Operational Manual/procedures/code of Common Unity. This provides stable and focused governance for TRI and membership is slowly increasing as more people become aware of what we are achieving and most importantly, realise that we are here to stay.
- In October 2011, TRI will host a National Tingha Regeneration Program Awareness Campaign. This will be the most significant even so far in promoting/extending/supporting our Breaking the Cycles ongoing Campaign.

In conclusion:

When one considers the achievements provided in this report, there is no doubt that we are making outstanding progress in what is a very challenged community – **indeed we ARE building an inclusive community and in fact, we have achieved more even in the first 18 months alone, than any other individual, group or organisation has been able to achieve in over 30 years, at least, thanks to the support of members, involvement of the community and support from our growing list of sponsors and supporters.** Further, we slowly building trust and trying to engage more with Aboriginal people of Tingha, under very difficult circumstance and across a large diversity of activities and projects.

Does this indicate that the Natural Science of Small Community Regeneration is working or not?

We believe there is no argument about that, and as we keep up the momentum, one step at a time, the community and broader support from outside the community, will increasingly come on board

Our future outlook is one of a sustainable future for Tingha Regeneration Inc and for Tingha.

Bob Neville
Program Designer/Facilitator
7.8.2011