

Keeping On Country: Addressing Recidivism in Remote Aboriginal Communities. The Offender's Perspective

Associate Professor Glenn Dawes¹, Ms Andrea Davidson, Mr Edward Walden ¹*James Cook University*



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Abstract Template

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Authors: Glenn Dawes, Andrea Davidson, Edward Walden

Affiliation/s: James Cook University; North and West Remote Health, North and West Remote

The over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system continues to be a major problem in Australia. An associated concern are the high numbers of Indigenous Australians who reoffend within six months of release from prison. This paper documents recent research into the problems encountered by people living in remote communities who cycle through the prison system and face hurdles in attempting to reintegrate back to their communities. This project was funded as part of the Federal Government's "Breaking the Cycle" programme and was a partnership between James Cook University and North and West Remote Health. The research conducted in depth interviews with offenders their families and community agencies to identify strategies for reducing recidivism among Indigenous people in two remote communities. This presentation focuses on the perspectives of recidivist offenders and highlights their suggestions for reinvestment into community based programmes with a particular emphasis for the development of on country bush camps for returning prisoners as a way of breaking the cycle of reoffending. Finally, the paper concludes with a description of what progress has been made to address the recidivism problem in these communities.