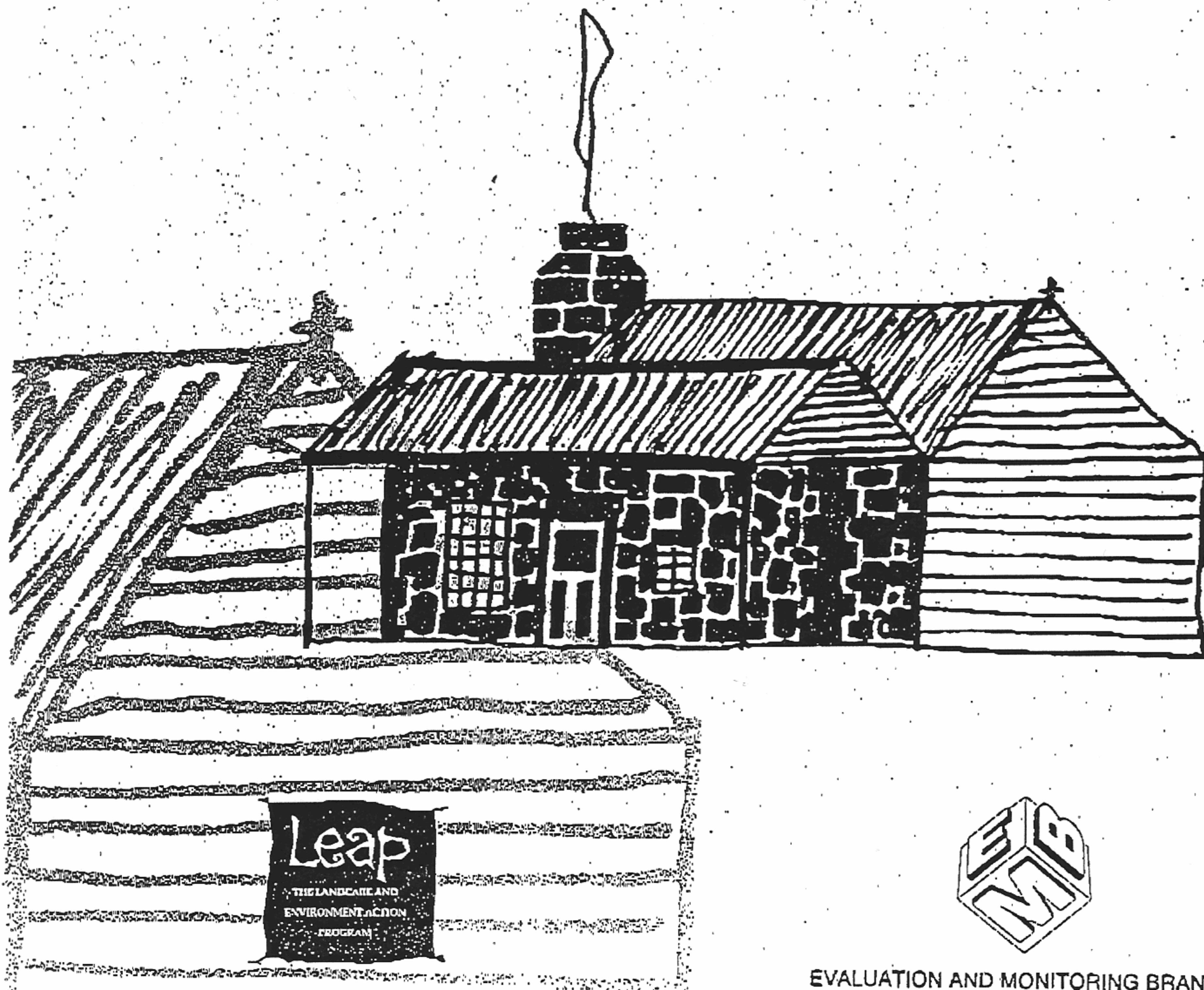




DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT
EDUCATION AND TRAINING

THE LANDCARE AND ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAM

PERSPECTIVES ON EFFECTIVENESS



EVALUATION AND MONITORING BRANCH
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Economic and Policy Analysis Division

LEAP National Monitoring Committee

The Landcare and Environment Action Program: Perspectives on Effectiveness

Pam Lord
David Roberts
David Redway

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper presents the findings of a series of focus group discussions with participants and supervisors from the Landcare and Environment Action Program (LEAP).

Preliminary data on the effectiveness of LEAP are required for input into the Budget processes for 1994-95. This is because LEAP was originally funded for a full two year period only, with substantially reduced funding in forward estimates for 1994-95. The findings of this report will be included in a submission to the Government by the LEAP National Monitoring Committee (NMC).

Methodology

The methodology involved using focus group discussions with participants and interviews with supervisors and project sponsors.

A total of 16 focus groups were conducted. Each group consisted of 10 to 12 participants drawn from a total of 20 LEAP projects. Project sites were selected from Queensland, northern NSW, Victoria and Tasmania, and included both metropolitan and non-metropolitan localities, as well as some rural and remote localities.

The data presented in this report should be regarded as preliminary only. The review does not have the scope of a full evaluation, which will be conducted later in 1994. In addition, it was not possible to canvass the views of participants who withdrew before completing the program. The views expressed may therefore be more positive than those of the full range of program participants. The voluntary nature of LEAP participation may also mean that participants were more motivated and more likely to express a positive attitude towards the program than would otherwise have been the case.

Findings

The majority of participants who took part in the study were enthusiastic about the program and were confident that it had improved their employment prospects. This confidence was echoed by supervisors and sponsors. At only two of the 20 projects visited did participants say that their participation in LEAP had not been worthwhile. All participants, however, said that they would recommend the program to other young people.

Employment and Training Outcomes

Only limited information was available on employment and training outcomes. It was reported that many former participants had found jobs or were engaged in further education. In some instances, participants had found employment in communities with particularly depressed labour markets. While this appears to indicate that LEAP participation has improved the employment outcomes for participants in the communities visited it is only a preliminary indication. A more accurate estimate of the effect of LEAP participation on employment and training outcomes will be made in the evaluation.

Behavioural and Attitudinal Changes

Supervisors stressed that the most important outcomes from LEAP participation were the changes noticed in behaviour and attitude. Many participants had low levels of confidence and self esteem at the beginning of the program. In general, the behavioural and attitudinal changes noticed by participants and supervisors can be summarised as follows:

- improved levels of motivation, discipline and commitment to a work ethic;
- better social skills and the development of strong social networks;
- improved self esteem and self awareness based on practical expertise developed during the program and the personal knowledge of their achievements; and
- the development of practical skills and knowledge through program participation.

Most participants were confident that these changes would lead to improved employment prospects in the long term.

Factors in Changes

Quality of Projects

Projects were more likely to succeed when participants felt that they "owned" the project. The feeling of ownership was helped by involving participants in the decision-making processes. This did not mean that participants had to plan the whole project but that they were allowed the opportunity to participate in decisions.

One of the aims of the LEAP program is to allow participants the opportunity to participate in projects that are of community and environmental benefit. It was important for participants to feel that the project was meaningful, with a clear objective which would produce a visible and recognisable community benefit. A minority of projects appeared to be of doubtful benefit to either the community or participants, although the long term effect was difficult to assess in a study of this nature. In those projects that did seem to be of benefit a significant part of the value was undermined if participants felt that their work was not going to be maintained.

Poor planning and organisation was a central issue in those projects that were not as successful. Projects which participants felt had not been properly planned or organised were associated with lower levels of commitment by participants and fewer benefits.

Quality of Training

Participants rated the skills and certification acquired through LEAP participation highly. However, they had mixed opinions about the effectiveness of the formal training, which most equated with classroom training. Most participants did not think they gained much from classroom training, although some supervisors disagreed.

The formal training seemed to work best when it was seen by participants as relevant to immediate project tasks, there were rewards such as certification, the training was flexible

and participants were given the time to gain required competencies, and participants felt that the teachers valued the students. Active learning situations appeared to be more productive than passive learning situations.

"On-the-job" learning was rated by most participants as the most important source of skills acquisition. The skills and knowledge that participants acquired during the project were considered to be one of the most important benefits of program participation.

Quality of Supervision

Many supervisors exhibited strong levels of commitment to the projects and participants they were involved with. The projects with the greatest reported changes were those in which supervisors were prepared to go out of their way to help participants, were sensitive to the needs and moods of participants, and were able to respond flexibly to changing situations.

In most cases supervisors were responsible for fifteen participants. Some supervisors suggested that groups of ten would be more manageable, although the size of the group appeared to be less important than the interpersonal skills and organisational ability of the supervisor.

In general, participants rejected rules they considered to be unnecessary but wanted trouble-makers to be disciplined. In projects where this did not happen they were critical of the quality of the supervision. The final sanction available in dealing with difficult participants was to terminate their placement.

End of the Project

All participants were concerned about what would happen to them at the end of the project. In some locations there was little likelihood of a job or further training and this led to lower levels of motivation and self esteem in the final weeks of the project.

Where there was ongoing support and encouragement in career planning and job search activities, participants seemed to have a better chance of finding employment or undertaking further study. Some projects organised work experience placements for participants and some supervisors recommended placing participants in Job Clubs at the end of the project.

Training Allowance

The amount of money received under the training allowance acted as both an incentive and disincentive to participation. Those living at home with fewer financial obligations were happy to receive an increased payment while others, because of the loss of ancillary benefits, sometimes received less than they would have received on Jobsearch or Newstart allowance. Although there was no opportunity to interview anyone who declined the program because of the low allowance rate, it would appear that this is an issue and that some people choose not to participate because they would receive less money than they do presently.

Access

LEAP sponsors accepted a wide range of participants. There was, however, a predominance of males. Sponsors advised that fewer females expressed interest in the program. This was thought to be partly due to the physical nature of the work and partly to the fact that males were quicker to accept places on the basis of "first come first served".

There were no participants from non-English speaking backgrounds in the projects visited. Sponsors were unable to point to specific reasons but felt that a lack of communication and promotion among non-English speaking communities may have been factors.

Aboriginal people had high rates of participation in projects that were meaningful to Aboriginal communities. There were few aboriginal participants in projects which did not have an aboriginal community focus. Many aboriginal participants had not previously been registered with the CES and this sometimes caused problems in recruitment.

Most sponsors did not see difficulties in meeting a target of 50% of places for the long-term unemployed. However, the target could be a problem in some remote and rural localities where there were fewer youth registered with the CES.

Funding

Funding was raised in relation to the coordination of sources of funds, and the timing of the availability of funds.

A number of projects were able to obtain funds from a range of sources, including State Government and other Commonwealth Departments. Some projects also used JOBSTART subsidies to employ extra supervisors.

The scheduling of projects was often geared to funding issues. This occasionally caused problems when projects were unable to commence under appropriate weather conditions due to lack of funds. It was a particular problem for some of the smaller Brokers.

Conclusion

The general conclusion drawn by both participants and supervisors was that LEAP was an effective and worthwhile program that had improved the employment prospects of participants.

The main effect of LEAP participation was on the behaviour and attitudes of participants. The program had led to noticeable improvements in levels of motivation and self esteem. In addition, participants considered that they had gained skills and knowledge which would improve their chances of gaining employment.

The full evaluation of LEAP to be conducted later in 1994 will examine the issue of employment and educational outcomes in greater detail.

1. Background

This paper presents the findings of a series of focus group discussions with participants and supervisors from the Landcare and Environment Action Program (LEAP) conducted by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET).

The Landcare and Environment Action Program was introduced as a part of the National Employment and Training Plan for Young Australians announced by the Prime Minister on 27 July 1992. It provides young people who wish to participate in the development and implementation of conservation practices with training and practical experience in a range of landcare, environment, cultural heritage and conservation activities.

The primary objective of LEAP is to improve the long term employment prospects of young people through a combination of formal training and vocational experience. A secondary objective is to provide participants with the opportunity to apply new skills to projects that promote environmental, conservation and cultural heritage outcomes and are of community and environmental benefit.

LEAP is open to young people aged 15 to 20 who are registered with the CES and wish to participate in conservation projects. Participation is voluntary.

The program consists of a mixture of formal training and vocational experience in a six month project designed to promote sustainable landuse and heritage practices. Typical projects include land regeneration and revegetation, restoration and preservation of historical and cultural sites, and rehabilitation of river and stream frontages. At least 25% of placement time is spent on formal training. The remaining time consists of practical vocational experience relating to the project being undertaken.

The LEAP National Monitoring Committee (NMC) was formed to provide advice to the Government on the effectiveness of LEAP in its first two years of operation. The Committee is currently undertaking a series of consultations with interested parties around the country. This report complements the work being undertaken by the Committee and will form a part of the Committee's submission to the Government.

A full evaluation of LEAP is due to be undertaken later in 1994. However, preliminary data on the effectiveness of LEAP are required for input into the Budget processes for 1994-95. This is because LEAP was originally funded for a full two year period only, with substantially reduced funding in forward estimates for 1994-95.

2. Methodology

The assistance and cooperation of all LEAP participants, supervisors and sponsors who took part in the study is gratefully acknowledged.

The study has been undertaken by officers of the Evaluation and Monitoring Branch, and the CES Network, from the Department of Employment, Education and Training. It was conducted independently of those areas of the Department responsible for the administration of LEAP. The assistance of officers from the Landcare and Environment Action Section is gratefully acknowledged.

The methodology involved using focus group discussions with participants and interviews with supervisors and project sponsors.

The aim of using focus groups was to obtain a client-centred perspective on issues relevant to the quality of LEAP projects and to their success or otherwise. The interviews with supervisors and sponsors provided additional information on the effectiveness of LEAP projects and their impact in local communities and regions.

A total of 16 focus groups were conducted. Each group consisted of 10 to 12 participants drawn from a total of 20 LEAP projects. Project sites were selected from Queensland, northern NSW, Victoria and Tasmania, and included both metropolitan and non-metropolitan localities, as well as some rural and remote localities.¹

The data obtained from the focus group discussions are specific to individual projects and not necessarily representative of the views of all LEAP participants.

In the time available it was not possible to adequately canvass the opinions and attitudes of program drop-outs. Because of this the information gathered may be more positive towards the program than would have been the case had a more representative sample been included. The full evaluation will address issues relevant to participants who did not complete the program.

Due to the limited time no focus group discussions or interviews were conducted in South Australia, Western Australia or the Northern Territory. While the projects that were selected represent a range of locations and activities there may be issues specific to these states which are not raised in the current review. The evaluation of LEAP will include qualitative data on projects from these states.

In addition, the voluntary nature of LEAP participation may mean that participants are more motivated and more likely to express a positive attitude towards the program than would otherwise be the case.

The structure used in the focus groups involved asking members of the group to relate a variety of incidents (some positive and some negative) from the LEAP project to the group. Some groups were also asked to draw pictures summing up their experiences of LEAP. The groups then identified the issues that emerged from the stories and pictures and ranked them in order of importance. The discussions were taped and subsequently transcribed, as were the interviews with supervisors and sponsors.²

The data presented in this report should be regarded as preliminary only. The review does not have the scope of a full evaluation, which will be conducted later in 1994.

¹A full listing of projects visited is included at Appendix 1.

²See Appendix 2 for a more detailed discussion of the methodology used in the focus groups.

3. Effects on Participants

... it was just more the case that it was like fifteen of the most unemployable unemployed people, you know, who kind of got together and actually built something. I think it shocked a lot of people, you know, a lot of people were going ... pats on the back and you've done a great job.

(Participant)

... to me with the different programs I've been connected with this is one of the best I've seen in terms of targeting the right sort of group. It's not just throwing money at it, they are truly walking away with something like vocational skills and probably most of all life skills that will equip them well I think.

(Sponsor)

LEAP participants can and do have a wide range of skills, motivation, self awareness, esteem and commitment to a work ethic. These factors are critical to employment prospects and the success of the program depends on achievements in these areas.

Participants who had been unemployed for a long time before doing LEAP presented a picture of themselves as bored, depressed, and feeling of little value. The supervisors considered that many of these long-term unemployed were simply not ready for jobs at the time that they commenced their LEAP project.

It took six months just to work on their attitudes towards people ... they weren't ready for work you see so you need that six months just to improve their attitudes.

(Supervisor)

Other LEAP participants, however, were ready for employment and simply needed work skills and experience. Some had post-school qualifications.

The general conclusion drawn by participants and supervisors was that the program was highly effective and worthwhile. One participant made the following comment to explain the drawing on the following page:

That's just me sort of before the course, it was like being boxed, just all gloomy and lots of good old queues ... occasionally thinking about what I'd really like to be doing but thinking that I'd never get there. And then the telephone ... that I actually got the job or, you know, I got into the course and everything, which I was pretty wrapt about. ... I just love being outdoors and I love the travelling and the friendships. ... And that's like to represent the study part of it, because I also love the study.

(Participant)



At only two of the twenty projects did any of the participants say that their participation was not worthwhile, and at one of those projects the response was mixed, with some participants saying that they gained a lot from doing the project. Participants at three other projects were ambivalent about their participation. Two of the projects about which participants expressed ambivalent attitudes had only been going for a short period (two weeks in one instance and two months in the other). Generally, the reasons for ambivalent or negative attitudes towards LEAP were project specific and are discussed in further detail below (see Section 4.1).

Participants at fifteen of the twenty projects thought that their participation in the program was extremely valuable and useful. At three of these projects the participants identified problems with the project but nevertheless thought that they had benefited from it and would recommend the program to their friends. In fact, some participants commented that they would repeat the program themselves if they could. Even those participants who were negative about their own project said that they would nevertheless recommend the program to their friends if the project specific problems were resolved.

3.1 Employment and Training Outcomes

As soon as they finished they went out and they looked for jobs and they are all working now. The entire gang is working.
(Supervisor)

[Two] got permanent jobs as Aboriginal rangers so we are pretty proud of that.
(Broker)

While focus groups are not an appropriate way of quantifying employment and training outcomes, both participants and supervisors reported that many participants had found jobs or were engaged in further education. In some instances, participants had found employment in local communities with particularly depressed labour markets, including one remote Aboriginal community. Some of the larger sponsors and brokers were also able to employ participants within their own organisations, although this was generally subsidised employment. Supervisors stressed, however, that the most important outcomes were the improvements noticed in practical skills, motivation, self awareness, and the work ethic of participants, and that these improvements were likely to lead to improved employment prospects in the long term.

Some supervisors argued that the outcomes data collected by the Post Program Monitoring (PPM) surveys are not good indicators of outcomes from LEAP as they do not reflect their own knowledge of outcomes for their projects. In particular, the three month follow-up period was thought to be insufficient. This issue will be addressed in the evaluation.

3.2 Behavioural and Attitudinal Changes

Motivation and Work Ethic

It got you motivated and used to a routine and ... getting up here on time.
(Participant)

Better chance [of getting a job] than what we had when we started.
(Participant)

It's just that good, like you get a couple of decent blokes to work with and you just enjoy yourself ... you're working, you're singing away.
(Participant)

Both supervisors and participants reported that many participants, particularly the long term unemployed, did not have a strong "work ethic" when they entered the program. Some supervisors and sponsors commented that their major task was to inculcate a "work ethic". They used the term "work ethic" to refer to routines and discipline, such as meeting deadlines, working hard, accepting direction and being able to work with limited supervision.

Motivation was seen as a major component of the work ethic. The voluntary nature of LEAP suggests that most participants had some motivation at the start of the project, even if it was only the opportunity to do something other than sit at home. Those who were getting little out of the project were free to withdraw and some did so.³ However, participants who withdrew before completing the project were not represented in the focus groups and little is known about their reasons for withdrawing other than what was reported by supervisors and other participants.⁴

³ This has implications for the proposal in the Green Paper on Unemployment to introduce a Jobs Compact. The level of commitment by participants is a factor in the success of projects and may be a consequence of the voluntary nature of the program.

⁴ The evaluation will look into the issue of non-completion and reasons for withdrawing.

Supervisors and participants reported that the level of motivation at the end of the program was greater than before. In one particular project participants were working through their lunch break, into the night and on weekends in order to complete the project. One participant, who gained employment during the project, was coming back on his rostered days off to help.

Some of the participants commented that before the program they were never up before midday but were now up early looking for things to do. It was also reported that nearly all participants were either looking for work more actively than before the program, were doing further training or had found a job. Some former participants who had not found paid employment were doing voluntary work.

It should be emphasised that the motivation needed to participate and remain in the program may differ in level or kind from the motivation needed to gain employment. A few participants, despite improvements in motivation and attitude, seemed unlikely, in our assessment, to get a job unless they became more active in their job-search activities. This view was echoed by some supervisors.

The good ones got work and these are the left overs who don't want to do much work at all.

(Supervisor)

Nevertheless, supervisors were sometimes wrong about participants. Some participants, written off by supervisors, made the decision to go on to further education or went out and found jobs. For many of these participants the project was a positive experience. In some instances it was the first time they had passed or achieved something and the effects on self-esteem and motivation were not always immediately apparent.

Social Networks

Probably the heartening thing about it has been the number that keep coming back and touching base with us ... most of the kids are ones that haven't really enjoyed schooling ... at times I think they have tested the training staff to the absolute extremes of their limits and for them to come back and touch base like that has been a terrific build up for the trainers.

(Sponsor)

One significant benefit of participation in the program appeared to be the social networks formed by participants, and the social support afforded to members of those networks. In all but two of the projects, participants stated that making friends or being part of a team were positive aspects of their participation in LEAP. In a number of cases the participants continued to interact with each other and with their supervisors after the project had finished.

This social aspect of the program is important for two reasons. Firstly, supervisors reported that a number of the participants had very poor social skills and probably poor social networks to begin with. As one supervisor commented, in some instances "it took six months just to work on their attitudes towards people". Secondly, it seems likely that the social networks formed will help to maintain the behavioural changes engendered by the program.

Self Awareness and Self Esteem

Both supervisors and participants talked about the changes in confidence of the participants. One of the sponsors commented that participants who used to walk around town with their heads down now walked with their heads held high and acknowledged people in the street. Another told us of one young man who was illiterate at the start of the project. At the end of the project he wrote a note to the sponsor saying that he was glad that he had done the program because he now knew he could think.

It seemed that many participants were not aware of their abilities and capacities at the start of the program. They did not feel able to point to achievements that demonstrated their abilities and had a poor basis for self-esteem and confidence.

The major basis for the improved self awareness and esteem appeared to be the practical expertise they developed and the personal knowledge of their achievements.

Sometimes this knowledge led participants to change career plans. One person who entered the program because he wanted to be a forester found out that he could not stand the work and is now in the armed forces.

[Work experience] was good in that they saw what it would be like in a real job situation ... one of them that worked in a nursery, she said 'Well at least I know I don't want to do that for the rest of my life'.

(Sponsor)

Others may have found their vocation in the project.

At the start of the course I wasn't really sure about it because I didn't really know anything about horticulture ... but I was glad that I was working ... and at the end of this course I'm pretty happy that I did it.

(Participant)

Skills

I love work. Learn skills out of it.

(Participant)

For this one we planned it and they have the opportunity to learn to drive a tractor and use brushcutters and lawnmowers and how to pull them apart and put them back together ... They loved that sort of thing.

(Sponsor)

They're getting all this fantastic experience. They can go to a job that's saying, you know, you need experience and they say well I do have six months worth of experience.

(Sponsor)

One of the most important factors contributing to improvements in the confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem of participants was the development of practical skills and knowledge. It was raised at every group and was ranked as the most important aspect of the program by participants.

At the start of the program participants had varying degrees of practical skills and knowledge. Their educational attainments ranged from people who were illiterate to people who had partially completed tertiary studies. The majority of participants had very little relevant theoretical or practical knowledge specific to their LEAP project. A few had studied in the area before doing the program and had some theoretical knowledge about aspects of the project. Some had practical experience in some of the skills needed.

At the end of the project most participants felt that they had gained a wide variety of practical skills. However, some felt that they would not be able to use the skills they had learnt.

4. Factors in Changes

Some projects did not work as well as others and even in the best projects there were some aspects that were negative. Participants were asked to identify the positive and negative aspects of their LEAP project and rank them in order of importance. The points below summarise, in order, the issues participants ranked as most important. (It should be noted that these are broad headings only and may cover a range of specific issues, which are examined in greater detail in the relevant sections of the report.)

Positive Issues	Negative issues
Learning new skills	Not enough pay
Practical work/something to do	Lack of commitment by sponsors
Teamwork/made friends	Poor planning and organisation
Certification/new knowledge	Too much formal training
Meaningful project	Can't see results/re-doing other work
Improved job prospects	Not treated as adults
More pay	End of project blues
Treated as adults/trust	Bludgers/difficult workers
Commitment to project	Not busy enough
Improved confidence/motivation	Formal training too basic
Field trips and travel	Project too short
	Poor safety



Analysis of these issues and of the discussion by participants and supervisors suggests that the effects of the projects depended on a number of factors. These factors can be grouped into three broad categories:⁵ the quality of the project; the quality of the supervisors; and the relevance of the training.

4.1 Quality of Projects

The effort the participants put into the project and the subsequent effects varied directly with the quality of the project.

"Ownership"

Perhaps the single most important aspect was the degree to which participants felt they "owned" the project or projects.

They had a couple of groups in before us ... and they stopped and then they would leave it for six months and then put another one on ... so we are just going back over what people have done six months or a year ago.

(Participant)

Each group had to have a discrete and separate project that they had done as a group. This did not mean that each group of participants needed to work on one project only for a group to be successful. Participants with the Green Task Force in Victoria worked on many small projects with local community groups. However, it was important that participants were able to finish their own projects. Most participants did not put much effort into other people's projects (even other LEAP group projects). Finishing off another project was acceptable only when participants were certain they were going to do their own project later.

Leadership and Decision Making

With tools and refurbishment and things around here we got the kids to be involved straight away and we said, you know, 'What do you think we'll need on site?' ...

They rang around and got some quotes.

(Sponsor)

When he came he was a right little ratbag ... we improved the whole performance of the gang just by letting him know he had leader capabilities and everyone tended to follow him.

(Supervisor)

The feeling of ownership was helped when the participants felt that they were involved in the decision-making processes, that it was their ideas and their work that revegetated a river bank or restored an historic building. This did not mean that participants had to plan the whole project but that the project allowed them the opportunity to participate in decisions about details.

⁵ Our thanks go to David Young of Greening Australia (Victoria) who suggested these categories.

Meaningful Projects and Community Recognition

It was also important for participants to feel that the project was meaningful and that it had a clear objective which would produce a visible and recognisable community benefit.⁶ The perception of community benefit was enhanced when the local community was aware of the project and acknowledged its benefit. This was particularly true if the participants personally got the credit for the work they did.

There were a variety of ways to enhance community recognition and ensure that participants received credit for the work they had done. It helped if the participants were known to the local community and were identified to the community as voluntary workers. One group of participants said they had overheard a remark that they had probably been referred by the courts to do community service. This perception had a negative effect on group morale. Clear signs identifying the project, how it was funded, and the participants, helped. The Green Task Force, for instance, adopted a uniform of green overalls to identify the participants. At the completion of a project in Port Fairy a plaque was placed on the wall of the completed building listing the names of participants.

Another factor that was significant was the extent to which the participants felt that the project would last.

Once we finished the course there was no-one to come in straight away and take over what we were doing so ... our efforts just went down the drain.
(Participant)

A significant part of the value of the program was undermined if participants felt that their work was not going to be maintained. They felt devalued by the failure to maintain their work and argued that it showed a lack of commitment. Provision for the maintenance of projects is required before projects can be approved. In some instances this provision appeared to have been ignored or forgotten by the beneficiaries of the project. However, some projects had a legal contract with beneficiaries specifying maintenance to be undertaken.

Once we plant them we have got a four year commitment.
(Broker)

Consideration should be given to making this a standard approach.

Project Organisation

... everyone's been thrown in the deep end. They said 'You will just have to put up with it for a while' but that while has taken about four months of our six months.
(Participant)

The planning and organisation of the project was crucial. It was the most important issue at all those projects where participants were negative or ambivalent about the project (except for the project that had just started).

⁶ See the discussion on community benefit in Section 5.

When things went wrong with schedules, supplies or equipment the participants felt that the project had not been properly planned or organised and that the sponsors and brokers were not fully committed to the project. These feelings were associated with lower levels of commitment by participants and fewer benefits. The organisational problems were reported more often when there were a large number of different players responsible for various aspects of the projects.

4.2 Quality of Training

The requirement for formal training was often (but not always) seen as a requirement for training in the classroom. Consequently, training was generally divided into classroom training and "on-the-job" learning.

Participants valued the certification obtained through program participation. For some it was the first time they had actually passed anything and been awarded a certificate that was widely recognised by the general community (for example, a First Aid certificate). However, they had mixed opinions about the effectiveness of the formal training.

Formal Training

Most of the participants did not like classroom training and did not think they learned much from doing it. They said they learned more from going out and doing things.

A number of the supervisors disagreed, saying that the participants had learned more from the classroom training component than they realised. However, most supervisors agreed that it was very difficult to control participants in the classroom and pointed out that many of them had left school because they could not cope with classroom situations.

Participants did not like being made to sit still while someone talked at them. Many objected to the power imbalance in the classroom and were not interested in abstract thinking, saying they preferred to get on and do things. Some participants also said they had been asked to repeat things that they already knew.

In Tasmania, there was some attempt to acknowledge existing competencies and exempt participants where appropriate. The assessment of prior learning was necessarily brief and in some cases superficial. However, in general it appears to have helped brokers to provide better training for participants.

In some of the projects supervisors were able to fit in formal training when weather conditions prevented more practical activities taking place.

While the way formal training was provided varied enormously, it seemed to work best (whether in the classroom or not) when the following conditions prevailed:

- when the training was seen by participants as relevant to the immediate project tasks and participants were able to see immediate links between the theory they were learning and the tasks they were about to undertake;
- when the training was provided in small bits;

- when there were immediate rewards for the participants such as earning first aid certificates, or certificates required by law for the operation of equipment, such as an agricultural spraying certificate;
- when the training was flexible and participants were given the time and opportunity to gain the required competencies (for example, people with literacy problems were given extra support and the opportunity to re-sit exams while those who were able to demonstrate competency were able to do other things);

... we know that some of our trainers weren't sort of sufficiently focused on the type of people they were going to be trying to train ... we just went straight over their heads.
(Sponsor)

- when the participants felt that the teachers valued the students and treated them with respect;

He was on our level, he wasn't some high and mighty.
(Participant)

Active learning situations appeared to be much more productive than passive learning situations. Participants seem to have learned more quickly when doing things such as bandaging in first aid classes or researching the characteristics of plants they were about to plant.

On-the-job Learning

Participants constantly said that the skills they had learned were very important to them. They, and to a lesser extent their supervisors, thought that they had developed those skills by working rather than studying. They said that they learned most from working alongside people who had the skills and from doing the work themselves, sometimes making mistakes but learning from the mistakes they did make.

The process of learning "on-the-job" was dependent on the approach and attitude of the supervisors.

A great example is [the supervisor] who took these five kids out to build bridges. I mean it was a classroom out in the forest, and they learned team building, they learned communication, they learned how to cooperate with each other, they learned everything you need to know about O H and S [occupational health and safety] and being aware of other workers.
(Supervisor)

4.3 Quality of Supervision

The emphasis on practical learning and vocational experience placed great demands on supervisors. These demands were compounded when the supervisors were working with young people who were unused to the normal disciplines of work or training.

We were spending so much time with the kids with the really bad behaviour problems and it was to the detriment of the good kids.
(Supervisor)

... there are a group of kids, though, who require additional assistance and you just stretch the broker or the sponsors resources to the limit.

(Supervisor)

In most cases supervisors were responsible for fifteen participants and sometimes found it difficult working with groups of this size.

Sometimes fifteen is a good group to do certain work but if you are doing chainsaw training then, you know, you have got to have one supervisor and one trainee virtually with these kids.

(Supervisor)

Some brokers used other resources to supplement the supervision available from LEAP funding. Several brokers in Queensland employed gangers (sometimes using JOBSTART) to lead groups of five LEAP participants. The gangers worked with the participants and taught by example as well as supervising.

It was suggested by some supervisors that the ratio of supervisors to participants should be reduced to eight or ten to one. The group dynamics would be enhanced by smaller groups but this has to be weighed against the cost of such a change. In any event the size of the group was less important than the interpersonal skills and organisational ability of the supervisor.

The sorts of things that participants thought were important can be stated as follows:

- Participants wanted supervisors to be able to show them the practical skills and knowledge required for their project.
- Participants wanted to be trusted and treated as adults and co-workers.

Discuss it with us, not just say 'No, you are doing this today' and we don't have a say in it.

(Participant)

- Participants wanted to be kept busy, preferably by being given responsibility for some aspect of the project.
- Participants rejected rules they considered to be unnecessary but wanted "bludgers" or trouble-makers to be disciplined.

People going to the pub at night-time and stuff, I reckon that was alright, they should have been allowed to do that.

I reckon that's a good idea if we just get docked when we don't turn up because that teaches us responsibility.

(Participants)

Many supervisors exhibited commitment, forbearance and tolerance. Some reported going round to wake up participants to get them to work. This level of commitment

appears to have helped motivate many participants but some remained intractable. In some cases supervisors may have been too tolerant.

We had a guy who put the gangers through hell and she's supposed to be the boss and in normal places the boss would just go "see you later" straight away.
(Participant)

It was sometimes necessary to confront someone who was deliberately flouting an essential rule or requirement. Participants who did not respond were encouraged to leave.

The projects with the greatest reported changes in the participants were those at which:

- supervisors were prepared to go out of their way to help participants meet the requirements of the program, whether that be getting them out of bed in the morning or helping them to re-sit exams;
- supervisors were sensitive to the needs and moods of the group and were able to respond flexibly to changing situations; and
- restrictions and rules were kept to a minimum, and supervisors made sure that participants understood the reasons for restrictions.

One project got the group to work out rules at the start of the project and then sign contracts detailing what was acceptable and what was not. Another developed a manual of procedures and guidelines. Several other projects gave participants responsibility for leading groups for short periods so they could see some of the reasons for the rules and restrictions.

5. Community Benefit

....there's a rather significant koala habitat up around there and that, the thing we found with clearing the lantana is the koalas can now get access to the food trees they previously couldn't get at.

(Sponsor)

Community and environmental benefit was one of the criteria for approval of LEAP projects. It is difficult to assess community and environmental impact in a study of this nature. The expected benefits from LEAP projects varied widely depending on the nature of the project and were difficult to quantify. Apart from speaking to a few local Council representatives we did not have any opportunity to speak to local residents. Although supervisors and participants talked about the impact their projects had on local communities this information was subjective and difficult to use in a comparative sense. What it did provide was a preliminary indication of whether projects were likely to benefit local communities and whether these benefits were likely to be maintained.

To gain support from the community, and for the participants to have pride in their work, the projects needed to be visible and to have a worthwhile environmental impact. Some of the projects appeared to be of doubtful benefit to either the community or the

participants. Participants achieved more when the program had meaning, they could see the results of their work, and there were lasting benefits to the community.

Programs developed for aboriginal communities aimed at improving their own environment and culture appeared to work well. When the programs in Doomadgee and at Lawn Hill National Park in far North West Queensland started it had been necessary to gain the confidence of the community and develop a community commitment. For the young people involved it was an opportunity to learn about traditional aboriginal culture for the first time. The elders at Doomadgee are now keen to continue with programs of this kind. They reported seeing a substantial change in the young people who participated, one of whom was being trained to become part of the village police.

At Port Fairy 15 participants and their supervisor built an environmental education centre out of local blue stone. The building will be used by children from Western Victoria to learn about the history and environment of the area. During the construction stage there was ongoing support from the local Council. Seeing what could be done had changed the opinion of many of the local community about the worth of unemployed youth.

In another project participants said that local residents regularly commented on the good job they were doing cleaning up the river bank. One group were disheartened as part of their project was re-clearing a walking track which had been done previously by another job creation program. They were not hopeful that the track would be maintained.

Maintenance was important to the participants. They were proud of what they had achieved and did not want to see the work deteriorate. Sponsors agreed that maintenance was important, although some stated that the resources for doing this were often limited.

While it seemed important for the participants to have "ownership" of a program and to be able to see the results and say "I did this", one program we visited worked with a range of community groups throughout Melbourne. They achieved satisfaction and wide community awareness working this way. They were also coming into contact with and learning about a range of environmental issues, in one instance assisting in conducting fauna surveys for the Department of Conservation and Environment.

Because they're endangered ... they want to find out how many new chicks are there or where their nests are.

(Participant)

6. Other Issues

6.1 End-of-project Blues

Back on the dole and back in the same situation where we started so we haven't gained any ground except for a couple of pieces of paper.

(Participant)

A lot of them have said to me "How am I going to get a job after this?" and I tell them [our] story. We worked voluntarily here ... before we got jobs here, and I just said ... "Look, jobs are out there, they're just not advertised"

(Sponsor)

What happens to participants at the end of the program is a concern to everyone involved. Most participants had expectations that they would not have to revert to unemployment. It was a disappointment if, at the end, they could see no future. Supervisors advised that in the last weeks of the program many participants became agitated about what would happen to them. Levels of motivation and self esteem would sometimes begin to flag. In most cases participants just wanted a job, any job, and in some locations there was little likelihood of either a job or further training.

The skills that we did gain, they were good to learn but they didn't lead anywhere.
(Participant)

However, increased levels of confidence and motivation appear to be maintained for some time after the program. Former participants who were still unemployed remained positive about themselves and their future. They were still looking for work and some said they may eventually move to areas where employment prospects were better. Others said they were considering further study. They said that before the program they had not really thought about their future and by participating they had proved to themselves that they could work and learn.

6.2 Career Planning and Articulation

In projects where there was ongoing support and encouragement in career planning and job search, participants seemed to have a better chance of finding employment or making the decision to return to further study. Participants said they appreciated being able to go back to sponsors or supervisors for support after the project had finished as this kept their motivation up. However, the projects varied in the amount of assistance in career planning and job search techniques offered. In some projects there was less emphasis on career planning and job search and less support and encouragement at the end of the program. Participants who completed these projects said they felt "dumped".

Finished work and ... a bit of a downer ... then you are unemployed and then you go back where you started from
(Participant)

In a number of projects supervisors produced the positions vacant section of the newspaper each day, had copies of vacancies from the local CES sent over, and discussed future job or training opportunities with participants on a regular basis. Some projects invited local employers to open days. Some supervisors also spent their own time assisting participants in job search.

At least two of the projects offered work experience. This provided opportunities for employers to see the worth of the participants and also assisted participants in making career decisions. Some participants went on to Job Clubs after finishing the program. One of the sponsors felt that it might be worthwhile to include a Job Club at the end of each project.

In one project suitable participants were placed in a four month training program upon completion of the LEAP project using formal training allowance. They were then taken on as apprentices at the end of the four months under a Group Training Scheme. In effect,

the LEAP project was used as one aspect of a developmental program with the end result that successful participants were taken on by the sponsor as apprentices.

In some areas where employment prospects were low participants were encouraged to use their natural talents and develop self employment skills. A few participants volunteered to assist in maintaining the completed project⁷, while others were encouraged to participate in voluntary work in the area. Liability for injury where people were doing voluntary work was not discussed with the sponsor but is an area of concern that should be addressed by sponsors.

Sponsors and supervisors agreed that participants needed encouragement to continue in further training options, and that supervisors needed to be aware of participants' capabilities (including literacy levels) and the courses available in order to be able to advise them correctly. This encouragement worked in programs where the supervisors had the necessary skills to do this. Where segments of the formal training articulated into other accredited courses it appeared to encourage participants to continue with further training.

6.3 Training Allowance

... saw the sign [at the CES], saw the money was double what I was getting on the dole.

(Participant)

They reckon it's slave labour. By the time you take the fares out of it some of them probably could sit at home almost and do nothing for the same amount of money.

(Sponsor)

The amount of money received under the training allowance was important to those participating in the program and acted as both an incentive and disincentive in maintaining the motivation and commitment of participants. Those living at home with fewer financial obligations than others were happy to receive an increased payment while others, because of the loss of ancillary benefits, received little more or less than they would have received on Jobsearch or Newstart allowance.

The loss of ancillary benefits was an important issue for those considering the program. Loss of rental allowance, health benefit card, travel concessions and allowances for child support made participation in the program financially difficult for many people. In one instance, a participant was married and had 2 children. His wife was unable to seek employment and therefore ineligible for Jobsearch allowance.

Although we did not have the opportunity to interview anyone who declined the program because of the low allowance rate it would appear that it is an issue and that some people choose not to participate because they would receive less money than they do presently.

It's not motivating ... I mean they expect us to work hard but most of us don't because it's such a low wage.

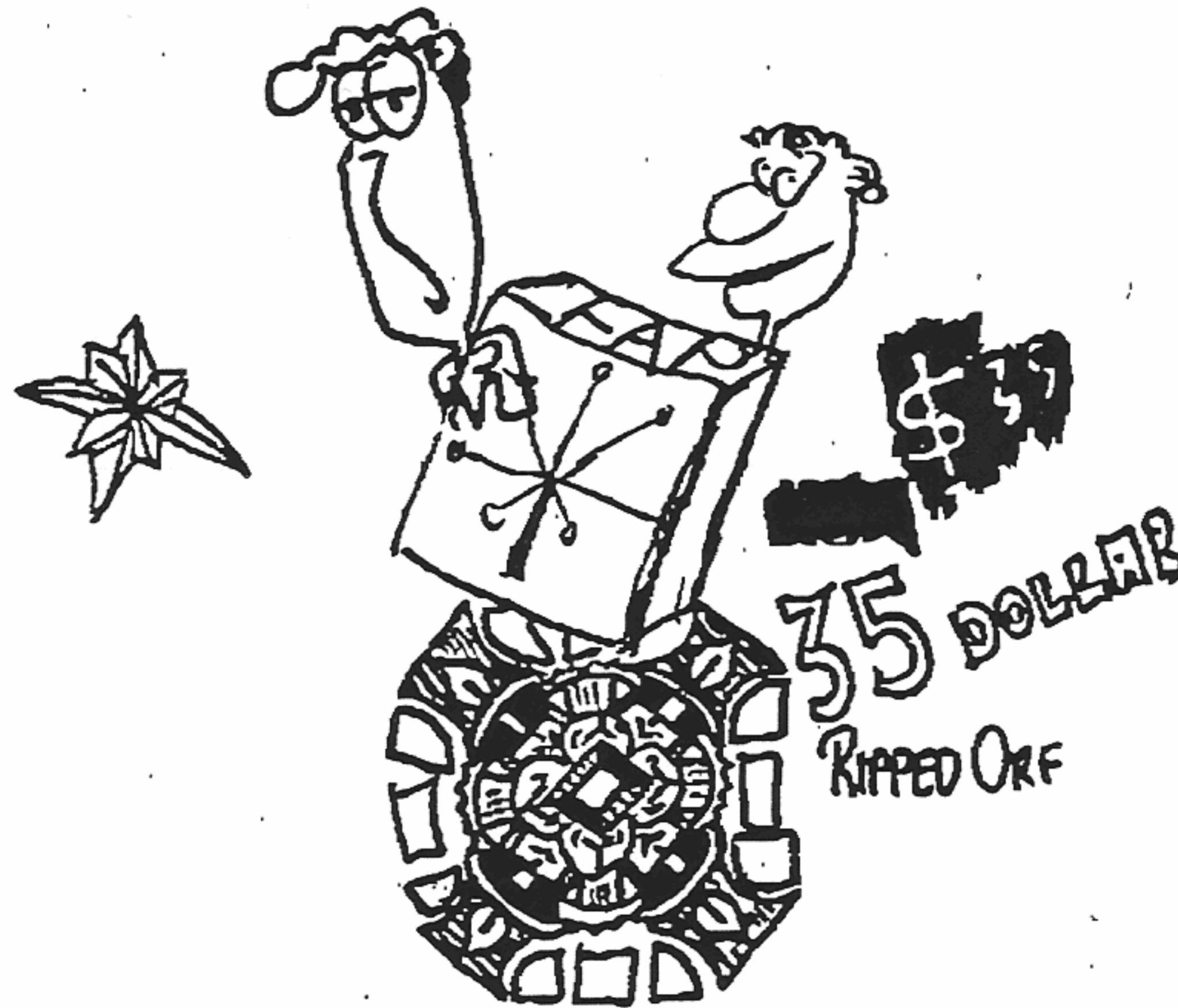
(Participant)

⁷ This is despite the requirement that arrangements be made for maintenance of projects before they can be approved.

I reckon the younger ones should get as much money as the older ones because they are doing the same work.

(Participant)

Some participants felt that consideration should be given to equity in terms of the amount of work performed and the rate of allowance received. They felt that they should receive equal pay for equal work and that age should not be a consideration. However, it was the younger participants who were also likely to say that more money was one of the reasons for participating.



There were many comments from participants about "slave labour". In some projects participants were working alongside regular employees on a site doing similar work and felt they should be paid the same amount of money. From our observation it would appear that participants did not often take into account the fact that they were spending time in training both on and off the job which did not apply to other regular workers.

6.4 Access

... this [program] is one of the best I've seen in terms of targeting the right sort of group.

(Sponsor)

We have probably had a higher proportion of 18-20 year olds than 15-17 year olds, usually about two thirds and probably the way it's panned out about on average ... 18 males, 12 females, that sort of thing. Roughly about that

(Broker)

When I first started I wanted another girl in the group because I felt a bit uncomfortable with just all the boys.

(Participant)

Not all eligible young people participate equally in LEAP. Issues of access to and participation in LEAP have been raised by the National Monitoring Committee in its

consultations. In particular, the Committee has highlighted relatively poor rates of participation by women and people from a non-English speaking background, and has called for on-going monitoring of the participation of other disadvantaged groups such as aboriginals.

Sponsors and brokers at the projects we visited were happy to take a wide range of participants. There was, however, a predominance of males. Sponsors advised that fewer females expressed interest in the program.

In some projects it was thought that the outdoor nature of the work may have been the reason. In one project, however, where the work was less physical the sponsor had expected more interest from females but that had not been the result. Some sponsors said that females were slower to take interest in the program and often missed out on places on the basis of "first come first served". One sponsor gave preference to females to ensure equity.

Aboriginal people had high rates of participation in projects that were meaningful to Aboriginal communities. This was particularly noticeable in rural and remote locations. There were few aboriginal participants, however, in projects which did not have an aboriginal community focus.

None of the projects visited had participants from non-English speaking backgrounds. Sponsors were unable to point to specific reasons for this but felt that lack of communication and promotion among non-English speaking communities may have been a factor.

Lack of transport in country areas limited the access for some people. Most participants who lived outside a certain radius were paid a travel allowance, although this was up to the discretion of the broker. Others who lived closer to town but experienced high travel costs were not always compensated. Some of the projects had car pooling arrangements. One sponsor filled up the car of the participant who picked up the group. Other sponsors had agreements with local bus companies.

6.5 Recruitment

Participants found out about the program in a variety of ways. Some were told about it by friends while others saw signs in CES offices or received letters from the CES. Some were referred by TAFE or school teachers. One sponsor preferred to advertise to ensure that people were aware of the program and had the opportunity for referral. Some sponsors also ran group information sessions for prospective participants.

For aboriginal specific projects recruitment was usually and most successfully done by the aboriginal community. In remote areas the CES often had difficulty recruiting aboriginal participants as many had not previously been registered with the CES.

We have our local aboriginal ganger at Mossman who finds the people and they go and get them registered.

(Broker)

There was considerable variation in the types of participants recruited. Overall, sponsors recruited a wide range of youth, from school leavers to long term unemployed, including

disadvantaged youth and ex-offenders. In some areas sponsors waited until school leavers were available. In other areas it was expected that a high percentage of those recruited would be from disadvantaged categories. Although some sponsors were keen to take the most marketable participants to ensure the success of the project there was also considerable success and some very good employment outcomes reported for some of the more disadvantaged and difficult groups.

Sponsors were happier when they had a choice over who to take into the program. They said that they usually took people who had an interest in the work and were likely to benefit rather than just those who would be easy to manage. Sponsors also believed that it was necessary to have short term unemployed and long term unemployed together so that the groups could build from each other. Most projects had a good range of clients, including long term unemployed and other disadvantaged groups.

In some cases sponsors had little choice about who they took into the program, either because of difficulty in recruiting young people or because they were limited to people who were referred from the CES.

While most sponsors did not see any difficulties in the new target for long term unemployed it could be a problem in areas where there appeared to be fewer youth registered with the CES and therefore greater difficulty in recruitment.⁸ In some country areas sponsors said that families preferred to look after unemployed young people due to the stigma attached to being registered as unemployed. Many aborigines in outlying communities were also not registered with the CES. Amongst these groups would be a large number of long term unemployed. As length of registration with the CES will be an important issue, consideration will have to be given to ensuring that these groups have access to the program.

6.6 Relations with the CES

It's a criticism of the CES, they don't seem to manage the case itself, you know along comes Landcare, well, lets shove these kids in here.....these kids should be counselled.

(Supervisor)

Then the CES sent me out a thing about the LEAP course going.

(Participant)

The amount of liaison between the local CES and the sponsor or broker varied considerably. We were only able to assess this from the sponsor and brokers' point of view, and from comments from participants, as discussions with CES representatives were not part of the project brief.

Lack of understanding of the program on the part of the CES, difficulty in recruiting young people and lack of support for participants when they finished the program were some of the complaints sponsors and brokers brought to our attention. On one occasion there had been a breakdown between the CES and DSS resulting in one former participant having a two month delay in returning to Jobsearch allowance.

⁸ The revised guidelines for LEAP for 1994 specify a target of 50% of places for the LTU.

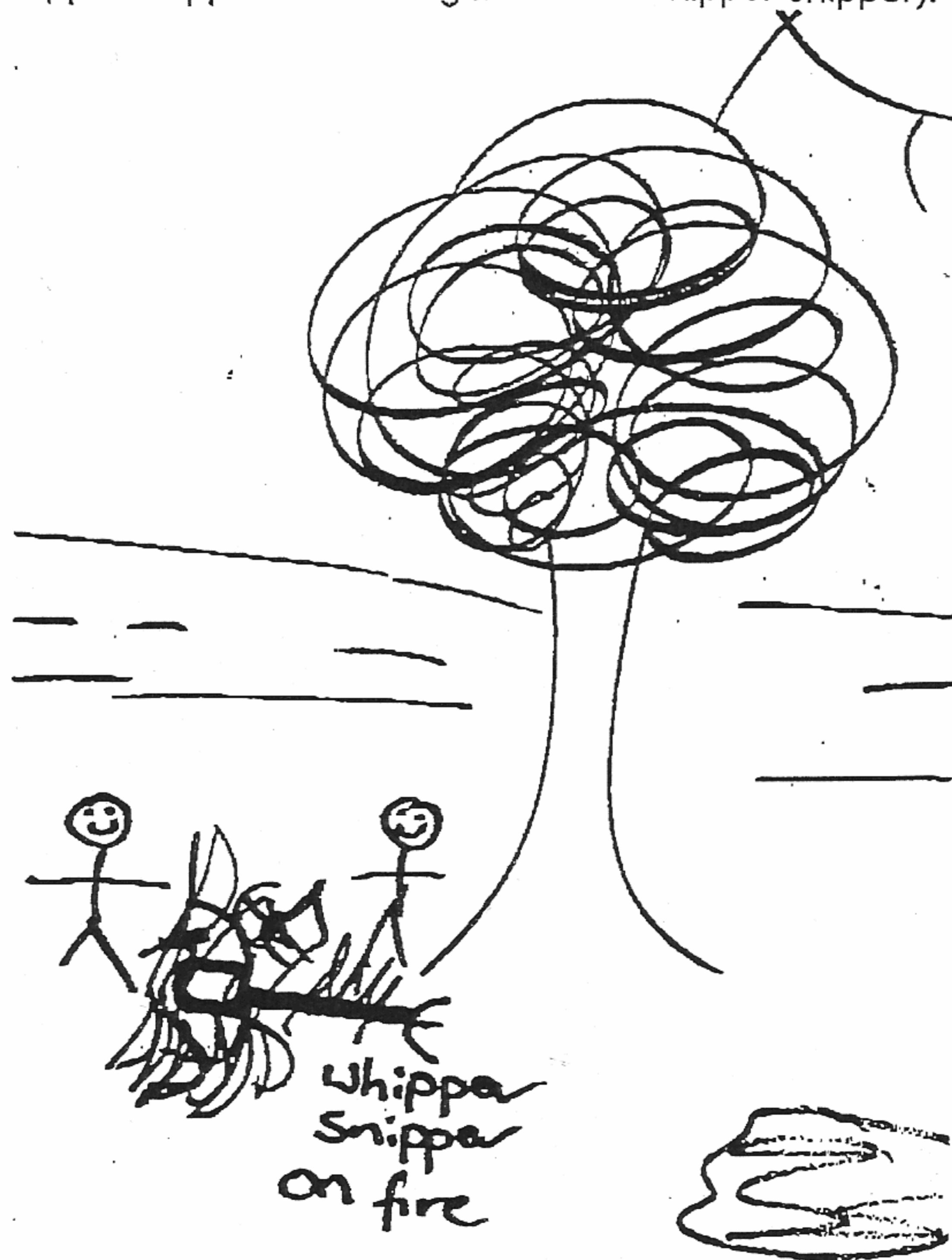
In areas where the liaison was established, however, it was reported that sponsors and brokers and the CES worked well together.

6.7 Occupational Health and Safety

Sponsors and supervisors were well aware of the need for occupational health and safety and said training was carried out early in the project. Where it involved use of power equipment, it was usually done in groups of three students and ranged from use of equipment to pulling down and putting together tools. Participants agreed that the training had been carried out well and few were critical of what was taught.

Some participants thought they were experienced in using power tools before coming on to the project, but supervisors realised it was often those participants who needed to have the training reinforced to prevent misuse of equipment.

There were a number of accidents reported by participants. In almost all cases the participants told us that they had been taught the correct procedures but had been negligent when using the equipment (for example, lighting a match while pouring out the petrol from the whipper snipper and setting fire to the whipper snipper).



Supervisors advised that there were a few cases where participants were a danger to themselves and to the other participants and steps had to be taken to ensure more responsible behaviour. In some instances this meant taking them off the project. One

supervisor reported *"One guy got terminated because he was bringing shotgun primers on site"*.

Some issues arose with the use of spraying equipment. In one project participants complained that the sprays they were using leaked and the equipment was difficult to use. They also said that the gloves issued were not suitable. The participants said they had been told the spray was not toxic but were, nevertheless, concerned about it.

In at least two of the projects boots did not fit properly. This had been a particular problem for the female participants. The supervisors we spoke to said they were aware of the problems and had ordered different equipment.

One group of participants brought up the fact that their supervisors did not have first aid training and felt that this was important when working in the bush using equipment. The participants in this program did not receive first aid training either.

Like they [the supervisors] haven't got first aid training ... a piece of glass fell down and sliced the back of my leg, and luckily we had someone who knew first aid and he was just a "LEAPer".

(Participant)

6.8 Funding

Funding, as an issue, was raised in relation to the coordination of sources of funds and the timing of the availability of funds.

Some projects were able to obtain funding from a range of sources. In at least one of the Queensland projects the State Government provided funding under the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). This was used alongside Commonwealth LEAP funding. Some of the brokers and sponsors did not differentiate between State and Commonwealth funding and spoke of the projects as YCC programs.

The Commonwealth Department of Primary Industries was also providing funding for reforestation projects in Northern Queensland and this assisted some LEAP projects.

At this stage we have got OLMA money too which is to provide an economic model for this particular project.

(Broker)

JOBSTART subsidies were used at times to employ extra supervisors, some of whom had recently completed JOBSKILLS programs. In two projects the supervisors employed under JOBSTART were former LEAP participants. Extra funding allowed projects to have extra resources. In Queensland a supervisor or ganger often supervised a group of five which made supervision more manageable. In other States there was often only one supervisor to fifteen participants.

Timing of the projects came up as an important issue. In Northern Queensland, where tree planting was an integral part, projects could not start until the Wet. In Tasmania it was preferable that projects were not scheduled for winter. The scheduling of projects was often geared to funding issues rather than to the practicalities of undertaking

activities during appropriate conditions. The delay in rewriting the guidelines had caused additional problems in this area for some of the smaller Brokers with fewer resources.

6.9 Other Administrative Issues

Comments from brokers and sponsors about the organisation of the administrative side of the program varied. Because the guidelines were so broad some were concerned about whether they had interpreted them correctly.

Many brokers and sponsors felt that the lead time for commencing programs was far too rushed for the first round. It was not until the second round that they were properly organised and had their administrative structures in place.

While acknowledging that it was the responsibility of the broker to brief sponsors, one sponsor believed that the program had not been sufficiently explained, particularly in the area of extra budgeting and additionality. This resulted in the sponsor financing more than had been expected.

Some smaller sponsors said that they would prefer to become a broker and thereby have more control of funding. However, because they could only manage small groups of participants (15 rather than the 30 required to become a broker) they were prevented from doing so. This was a problem in rural areas.

In some projects there was a constant replacement of participants, some being recruited 18 weeks into the project. In these cases it was difficult to provide all the off-the-job training segments. In one instance the broker was worried that the replacement participants would bring the program over budget on allowance payments.

There were some problems experienced by participants in delayed and incorrect payments. Most problems were sorted out reasonably quickly by the broker. Ensuring that participants who had withdrawn from the program were not overpaid by the broker was better monitored in some programs than others. In one instance the broker and the sponsor spent considerable time assisting one ex-participant who was having problems getting back on to Jobsearch Allowance.

6.10 Responsibility for Injury

There remains a grey area around who is responsible for payment of medical bills and loss of allowance through injury while on the job. Some cases were reported of brokers who told participants they would have to pay their own medical costs as they were trainees only, not employees, and not covered by insurance. The fact that they may not be covered for injury worried many of the participants and they said they would not have participated in the program had they known.

The issue of liability should be investigated and a clear statement made available and relayed to all bodies connected with the program.

7. Conclusion

The principal aim of the Landcare and Environment Action Program is to improve the long term employment prospects of participants. To date, about 9,000 people have participated in LEAP. However, the majority of LEAP projects commenced after March 1993 and were not completed until the final quarter of 1993. This means that there are insufficient data, at this stage, to accurately estimate employment and training outcomes for LEAP.

The preliminary indications, however, are encouraging. The majority of participants who took part in this study were enthusiastic about the program and were confident that it had improved their employment prospects. This confidence was echoed by supervisors and sponsors. Although there was an element of bias in the sample which may mean that the views expressed were more positive than those of all participants, it was a widely held view and one that was sometimes expressed strongly by both participants and supervisors.

The main effect of LEAP participation was on the behaviour and attitudes of participants. The program had led to noticeable improvements in levels of motivation and self esteem. In addition, participants considered that they had gained new skills and knowledge which would lead to better employment prospects.

Not all the projects visited worked equally well. While community and environmental benefit was a criteria for approval, a small minority of projects appeared to be of doubtful benefit to either the local community or the environment. In some projects participants were not confident that their project would be maintained. In these projects poor organisation and a lack of involvement by participants in the decision-making process led to lower levels of motivation and commitment. Participants in these projects felt that they had gained fewer benefits from the program, although most still considered the program good in principle.

The full evaluation of LEAP to be conducted later in 1994 will examine the issue of employment and educational outcomes in greater detail. It should be borne in mind that the client group targeted by LEAP is particularly disadvantaged. Young people between the ages of 15 and 20 generally have few skills and little in the way of work experience. They may also have low levels of education. In addition, some of the LEAP projects visited were located in areas with particularly depressed labour markets. The issue of measuring the success or otherwise of LEAP needs to be addressed in this context.

The preliminary indications are that the program provides significant assistance to clients, including clients who have not succeeded in formal education, and that this assistance is likely to lead to improved employment outcomes. In this light the program appears to be of benefit both to the individuals concerned and to the wider community.

Appendix 1: LEAP Projects Visited

- 15 Dec 1993 - Lawn Hill and Doomadgee
Two remote Aboriginal projects in northern Queensland sponsored by QLD Dept of Environment and Heritage
- 16 Dec 1993 - Cardwell and Ingham
Rainforest re-afforestation - North Queensland Afforestation Joint Board
- 17 Dec 1993 - Tarragindi Environment Park
Brisbane City Council
- 17 Dec 1993 - Warrawee, Brisbane
Camp Warrawee - sponsored by YMCA of Warrawee
- 20 Dec 1993 - Kempsey Advisory Training Enterprises
Two current & one completed project - ridge & riverbank regeneration
- 21 Dec 1993 - Ipswich
Quarry rehabilitation - sponsored by Ipswich SkillShare (YUPI)
- 21 Dec 1993 - Toowoomba
Toowoomba District SkillShare
- 13 Jan 1994 - Three projects sponsored by Mersey Skill Training, Launceston
Sherwood Hall - movement and restoration of historic building
Kelcey Tier - construction of walking tracks & planting indigenous species
Museum Development - cataloguing, mounting photographs, restoring building
- 13 Jan 1994 - Northern Job Link, Tasmania
Between Two Bridges project - riverbank restoration and re-vegetation
- 14 Jan 1994 - Fingal, Tasmania
Environmental restoration and rehabilitation
- 14 Jan 1994 - Hollybank Forestry Training Centre, Tasmania
Regeneration of forest areas and riverbank
- 17 Jan 1994 - Green Task Force, Melbourne
Community Development project assisting community groups with specific short-term tasks sponsored by Greening Australia, Victoria
- 18 Jan 1994 - Southcombe Park, Port Fairy
Construction of an environmental studies centre from bluestone and timber
- 19 Jan 1994 - Yarra Bend Trust
Restoration of old boathouse and conversion into restaurants and kiosk

Appendix 2: Focus Group Methodology

Introduction and Welcome	10 min
Group Building Exercises	30 min
Analysis of Participants' Experiences (3 stories) Positive Experiences Negative Experiences Barriers to Participation Demand for skills/Relevance of Course (completed projects)	70 min
Tea/Coffee Break (Write up Issues)	20 min
Discussion on Remaining Issues Employment Intentions How to Measure Success	40 min
Participant Priorities	10 min

Explanatory Notes

The session on "Analysis of Experiences" comes from Action Research methodology. It involved asking members of the group to relate a relevant incident to the group. The group took notes and identified the issues that emerged from the story.

Each group was asked for three stories, under various categories, depending on the group. As an alternative, each group member was asked to draw a picture representing their experiences on the program and then explain the diagram to the group. Most issues relating to program participation addressed in this report emerged from this process.

Any important issues not covered in the first phase were canvassed in the next session.

The session on "Participant Priorities" asked participants to indicate which of the identified issues were most important from their point of view.