



**STRONGER
COMMUNITIES
OF CHILDREN**

STORYBOOK



**NINTI STRONGER
ONE COMMUNITIES
FOR CHILDREN**

Aboriginal
and Torres Strait
Islander people should
be aware that this publication
may contain images, voices
or names of deceased persons
in photographs, film, audio
recordings or printed material.
Ninti One sincerely apologies
for any distress, sadness
and/or offence this
may cause.



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NIAA



NINTI ONE STRONGER
COMMUNITIES
FOR CHILDREN

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Knowledge Sharing Seminar, Ltyentye Apurte, April 10th & 11th 2018



Knowledge Sharing Seminar, Alice Springs, March 26th & 27th 2019



Knowledge Sharing Seminar, Darwin, October 29th & 30th 2019



Knowledge Sharing Seminar, Darwin, October 29th & 30th 2020

What is Stronger Communities for Children?

Stronger Communities for Children (SCfC) is a community development program in 10 sites in the Northern Territory.

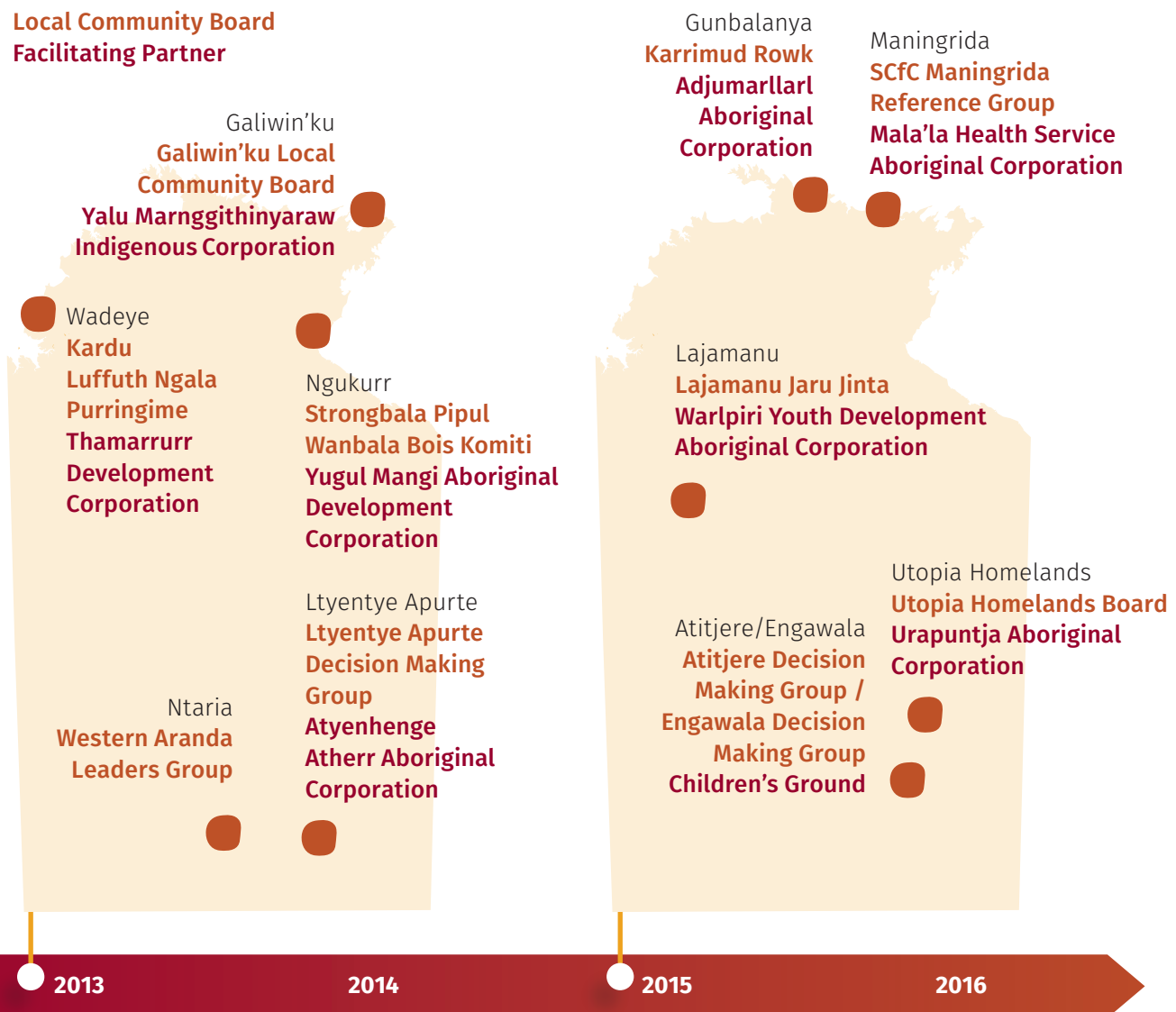
It supports safe and healthy communities, families and children. It ensures that local people are in control of local decision making.



KEY

Location

Local Community Board
Facilitating Partner



As of
August
2021

Statistical overview of SCfC for the period 2019-20

16,388+
participants in
198
activities
involving
97
organisations.
93%
of stakeholders
reported
satisfaction with
Service delivery



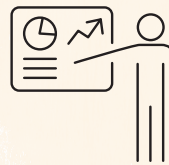
Activities

675
Indigenous
people worked
101,929
hours,
making up
83%
of the
workforce
for SCfC



Workforce

49
training
and study
opportunities
for SCfC
staff and LCB
members plus
17
for other
community
members



Training

Limitations

The figures are based on 18 months reports from 9 communities and 6 months report from 1 community between January 2019 and December 2020 to NIAA.

All statistics are aggregated from reports by Facilitating Partners to the Federal Government. Additional details outside the standard report format are not available.

The definitions of 'workshop', 'activity' and 'number of participants' vary between communities.

Restrictions due to COVID-19 led to a significant fall in the number of activities and participants, especially during the second half of the period covered by these statistics.



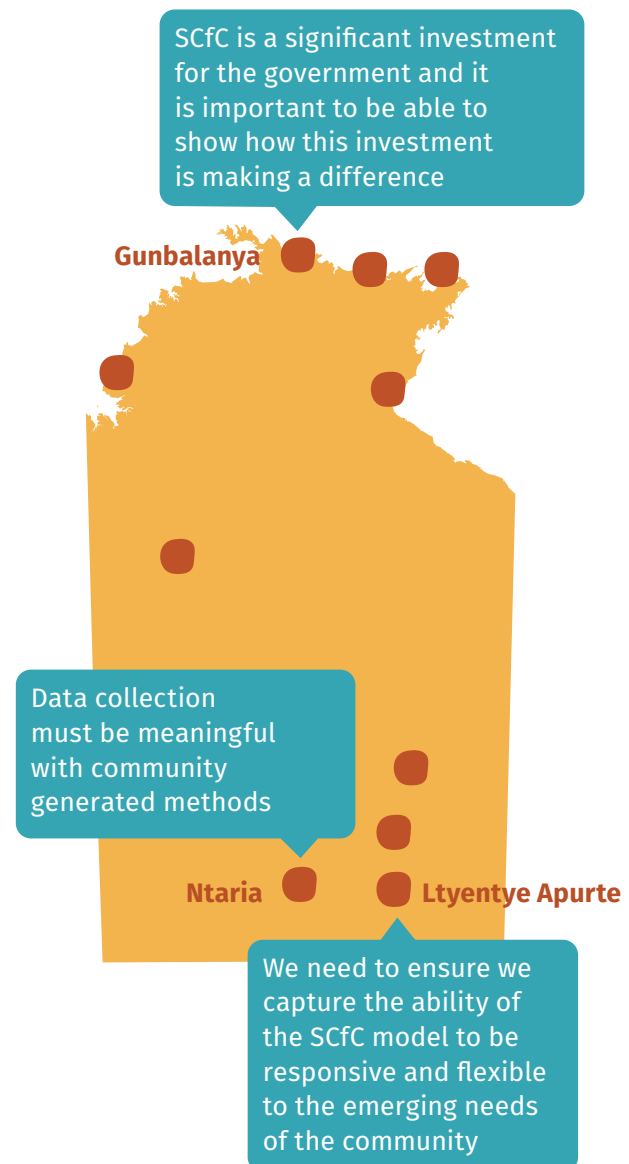
Introduction

Stronger Communities for Children (SCfC) aims to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people the best possible start in life through safer families and communities, nurturing educational environments, positive participation opportunities and cultural events. Our approach has been to ensure that local communities have a real say in local decision making, including what services they need and how they are delivered.

Locally led impact measurement has been key to this approach. Local Community Boards (LCBs) for SCfC invest their time and use their knowledge and experience to improve services and activities for families and children. They make decisions that reflect the choices they feel are best for the community, and recognise that assessing the impact of those choices is essential to the program's success. By engaging in continual learning and improvement, LCB members demonstrate strong commitment to being accountable to their community.

This Storybook documents the impacts of SCfC so that communities, governments, and service providers can share in this ongoing learning process. Each chapter tells the story of impact in a particular SCfC community to provide a rich contextual understanding of what has been achieved and what lessons have been learned. Each story is grounded in evidence collected by local researchers to assess the value of SCfC activities for children and families in their community. These stories provide valuable local perspectives on the diverse range of activities LCBs have chosen to target the specific needs and aspirations of their communities.

Local leaders talk about telling the SCfC story:

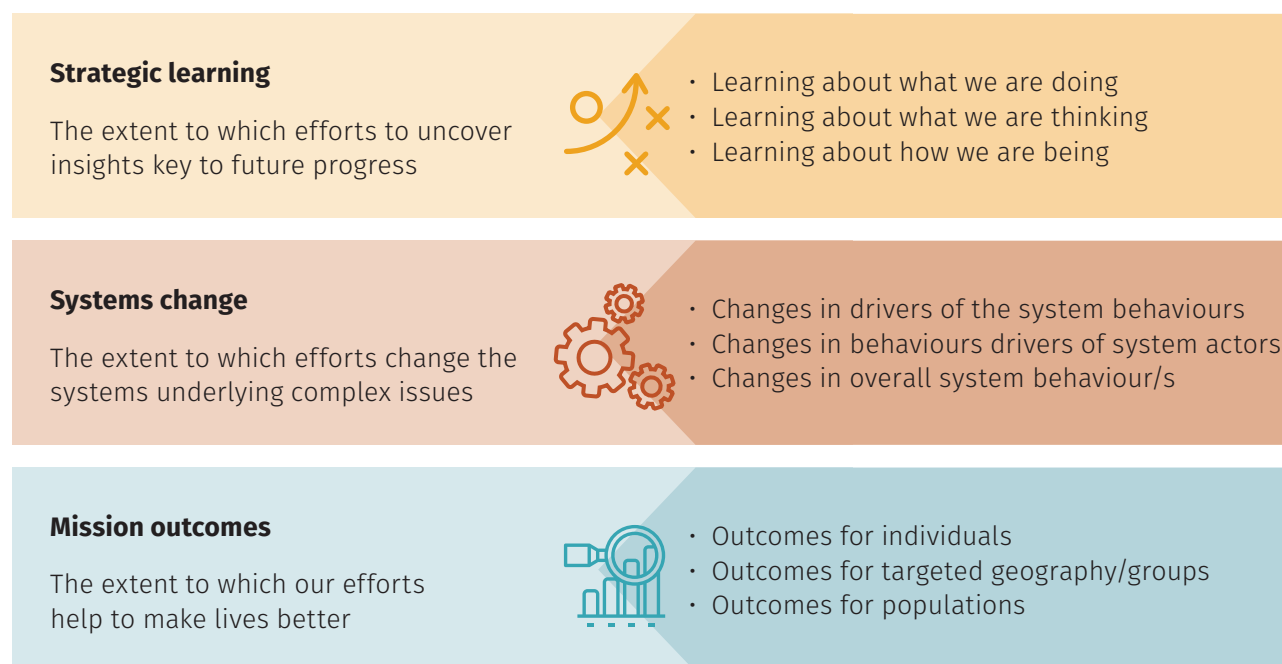


The SCfC Approach to Measuring Impact

As a place-based community development program, SCfC aims to generate deep and durable systemic changes that will empower local people to give children the best possible start in life. The SCfC approach to impact assessment revolves around supporting people in participating communities to measure local changes resulting from the program. This approach enables local people to determine what a successful SCfC program looks like in their community,

and directly addresses Closing the Gap Priority Reform Area 4 by building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise in collecting, using and interpreting data in a meaningful way.¹

The difficulty involved with measuring the results of systems change initiatives like SCfC has been noted by experts such as Mark Cabaj, who puts forward an Inquiry Framework to identify three broad types of results:



Source: Cabaj, M. (2019) 'Evaluating systems change results: an Inquiry Framework', The Tamarack Institute.

SCfC has achieved all three types of results, to varying degrees, across its ten participating communities. Subsequent chapters of this Storybook will present evidence of these results in each specific community. This Introduction considers examples of strategic learning, systems change, and mission outcomes that have been achieved by the program as a whole.

¹ National Agreement on Closing the Gap (2020) Priority Reform Area 4: Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level, Data and information sharing elements, <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/priority-reforms>

Strategic Learning

The creation of this Storybook, as well as the information it contains, are prime examples of strategic learning at the program level. The Storybook idea and contents were developed collaboratively between SCfC Communities and Ninti One. Many important steps in this collaborative process took place at SCfC Knowledge Sharing Seminars, another key mechanism for strategic learning built into the program.

Knowledge Sharing Seminars are held at least once a year to bring together a range of SCfC stakeholders so they can discuss and learn from experiences implementing the program in different communities. The seminars are coordinated by Ninti One and participants are a mix of local community board members, facilitating partners, and government representatives. Key insights from each seminar are compiled into a report that is shared across all program sites.

At the March 2019 Knowledge Sharing Seminar, Ninti One presented a suite of draft program measures it developed for participants to consider as a framework for SCfC sites to collect evidence and assess impact. These measures were developed to capture changes resulting from the program according to its target outcomes, namely:

1. Safer families and communities;
2. Support the nurturing of young children;
3. Provide children, young people and families opportunities for participation in cultural events;
4. Support children to be school ready;
5. Support young people to attend school and gain an education;
6. Build community capacity to lead, plan and prioritise services that children and families need; and
7. Build the capacity of Indigenous organisations to deliver these services.

SCfC Community Perspectives: Knowledge Sharing Seminars

I come to this program from listening to my Elders, there were only a few people then. We didn't know much about the program; but we were learning. It's very important, our children are the future, we must educate them, talk to them about being a good role model. You never know in the future they might be in the office as a CEO. Its good the ten (10) communities come together, talk about the future, specifically our children, talk to them, encourage them to understand the two worlds we live in, teach them to be leaders.



Valda Bokmakarray,
Maningrida

I have been on SCfC from the beginning. Being on SCfC has made me the stronger person I am today... I am honoured to be sitting with these Elders up here. They talk to me, educate me, tell me stories. They make me stronger.

As Leaders Group are seen as a group for children, if there's any issues, they know to come to this group. We have learnt many things from Knowledge Sharing Seminars now to make kids strong, us coming together to strengthen our kids back home.

Thanks to SCfC Ninti One for holding these conferences, giving us opportunity to engage and talk to each other, learn from Elders, their lives, their struggle.

Taren Williams, Ntaria

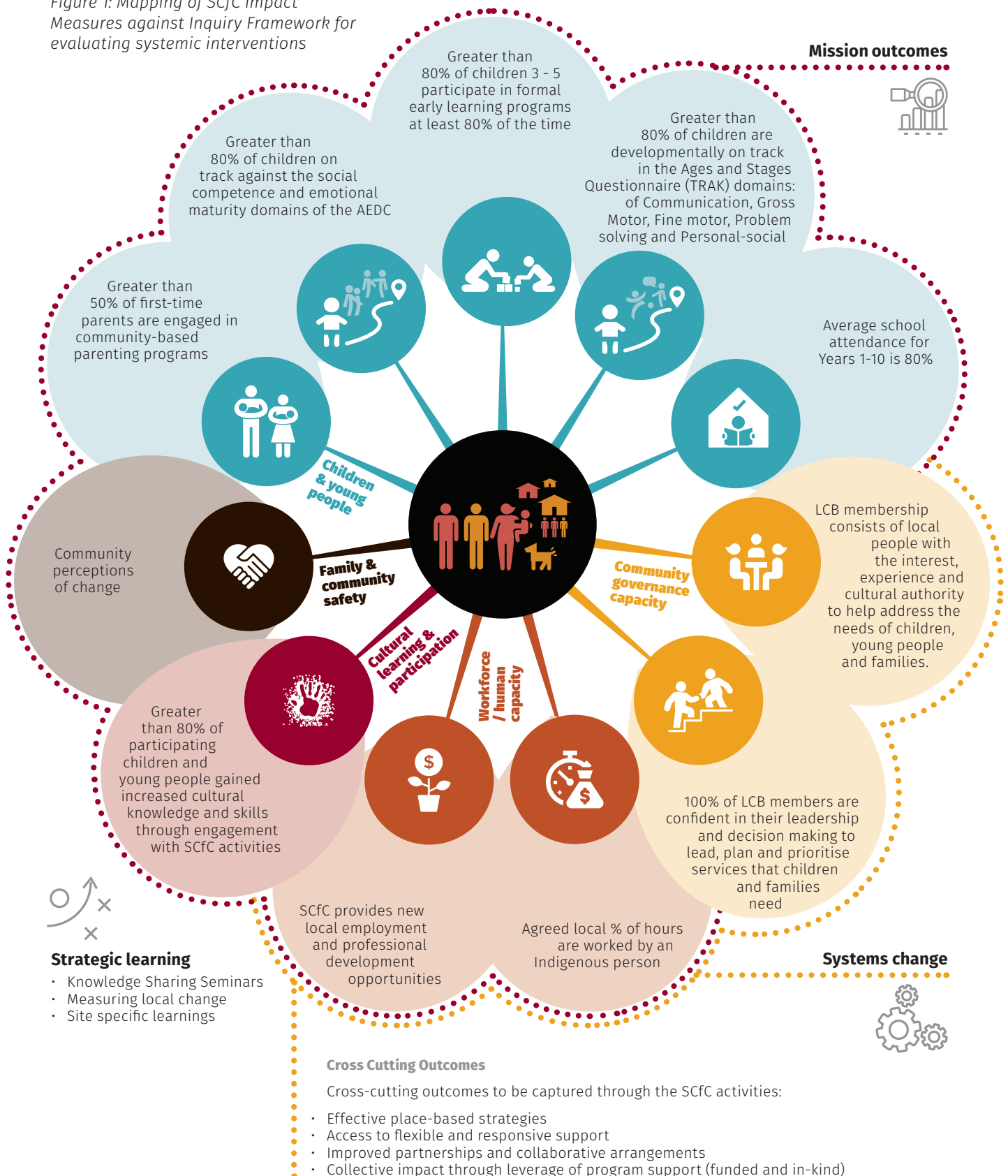


Discussion and feedback from across the SCfC communities contributed to refining the draft and determining the final set of program measures.

These final measures align with the Inquiry Framework for evaluating systems change initiatives, as illustrated below.

SCfC measures 1, 4, and 5 are examples of mission outcomes, while measures 2 and 6 are examples of systems change. Measure 3, which focuses on workforce and human capacity, can be seen as both a mission outcome and an element of systems change.

Figure 1: Mapping of SCfC Impact Measures against Inquiry Framework for evaluating systemic interventions





The SCfC Program Measures form a common reference point for strategic learning across all participating communities. This is important for a multi-site, place-based initiative like SCfC because each community has its own unique set of strengths, needs, and priorities that determine a wide range of different services and activities at different sites. Having an overarching set of program measures provides solid ground for people from different communities to compare notes about what has worked well, what they can do better, and what success looks like in practice.

The SCfC Program Measures also align strongly with the Closing the Gap Targets set forward in the 2020 National Agreement. Information collected and compiled to assess the impact of SCfC contributes to strategic learning about how to achieve at least eleven of the sixteen targets.

This Storybook weaves together this information using the SCfC Program Measures as a common thread. Each chapter provides a rich contextual narrative to describe how communities have chosen to use SCfC funds, and what local researchers have learned about the impact of those choices in terms of the program measures. The final section of the Storybook provides analysis of the measures across sites to assess the program’s overall impact and produce valuable insights to inform work towards Closing the Gap Targets.

Table 1: Learning from SCfC Program Measures to inform strategies for Closing the Gap

	 Children & young people	 Workforce / human capacity
Closing the Gap Targets	<p>Target 3: By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95%.</p> <p>Target 4: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55%.</p> <p>Target 5: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%.</p>	<p>Target 6: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%.</p> <p>Target 7: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%.</p> <p>Target 8: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62%.</p>
Examples of strategic learning	<p>Multiple SCfC sites are addressing childhood trauma through a range of services from the early years to after-school ‘kids clubs’ and parenting programs.</p> <p>Measuring the outcomes of these interventions will improve understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What works when it comes to providing trauma-informed education and family services • Who needs to work together and how • What resources and capacities are needed • What difference trauma-informed care makes to children’s school readiness and completion. 	<p>SCfC relies on Local Community Boards (LCBs) to make decisions about how Commonwealth funds are spent to support children, young people, and families. Many LCBs have chosen to invest in training and hiring local people to carry out this work.</p> <p>Measuring workforce and human capacity outcomes will teach us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What difference it makes to training and employment in remote communities when local people determine funding priorities • What happens when young people are supported to take on decision making roles in their community • What works when it comes to engaging young people in education, training, and employment.

Closing the Gap Targets



Cultural learning & participation

Target 16: By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.

• Examples of strategic learning

SCfC sites are bringing local languages into many aspects of their work, from early years reading and school literacy programs to conducting LCB meetings in language.

Measuring cultural learning and participation outcomes will improve understanding of:

- How child and family support systems can integrate local languages
- What role non-Indigenous professionals (such as teachers) can play in strengthening local languages
- What resources created by SCfC are now available for strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.



Family & community safety

Target 10: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15 per cent.

Target 11: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by at least 30 per cent.

Target 12: By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent.

Target 13: A significant and sustained reduction in violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children towards zero.

SCfC brings people working across multiple government sectors together to support children, young people, and families.

Measuring safety outcomes will help governments and communities learn about:

- Who needs to work together to make communities safer
- How they need to work together
- What skills and capacities are needed
- What innovations have been developed through cross-sector involvement.

Systems Change

The most important example of systems change achieved by SCfC at the program level has been a shift in leadership that has put decision making about early childhood interventions firmly in the hands of local people. This shift is described as follows by the 2020 Productivity Commission report on Expenditure on Children in the NT:

In a single year, [local SCfC] boards have often chosen to support activities in education, employment, community development, early childhood development, health, nutrition and other service areas. These decisions have been framed by a local community plan that sets priorities. The point we make is that there is evidence in SCfC work in each community of a healthy breaching of the boundaries between services that are often so impenetrable at a macro or departmental level, enabling a more responsive approach to meeting local needs. (sub. DR41, pp. 1–2)²

Each of the communities you will read about in this Storybook exists within its own unique and distinct set of social, cultural, and geographic circumstances. Putting decisions into the hands of people who are deeply familiar with those circumstances has equipped childhood support systems to better handle the complexity of implementation in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Productivity Commission also noted that further shifts in this direction are warranted:

An evaluation of the SCfC program found that it demonstrated how government can do business differently with remote communities, but there is room for improvement. For example, in Ngukurr, many decisions around SCfC-funded activities were not made through the community and board decision-making processes (Winangali Ipsos Consortium 2017, p. 62).³

The chapter on Ngukurr describes actions taken by the Local Community Board to address these issues, and presents evidence of improved community engagement and governance since that evaluation.

Locally driven decision making processes established by SCfC in participating NT communities has laid important groundwork for improving collaboration between Government, service providers and the communities themselves. This advances both Reform Areas 1 & 2 of the Productivity Commission report and, more broadly, the Priority Reforms put forward by the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.⁴

² Australian Government Productivity Commission (2020) Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory, p. 145

³ Australian Government Productivity Commission (2020) Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory, p. 145
⁴ National Agreement on Closing the Gap (2020) <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/national-agreement-ctg.pdf>

Mission Outcomes

Mission outcomes refer to the population-wide changes that collective impact programs like SCfC ultimately seek to achieve. When it comes to addressing the types of complex systemic challenges that prevent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from thriving, a well-established evidence base has shown place-based, community-wide interventions to be more durable and effective than fragmented projects or services.⁵

Evidence also shows that a long-term view is needed when gauging their results. A recent study of twenty-five collective impact initiatives examined how long they worked towards mission outcomes before seeing results and concluded that:

Many of the study sites achieving population-level change have been around for more than a decade, and none for fewer than three years.⁶

With five SCfC sites beginning their work in 2013 and another five in 2015, a very early picture of its mission outcomes is only just beginning to emerge. The majority of these results have been achieved at the local level, and will be discussed in the chapters that follow.

At the program level, SCfC has generated mission outcome results by creating new professional development activities for young people living in the ten participating communities. For example, young people are increasingly taking up positions on LCBs and participating in Knowledge Sharing Seminars. Ninti One has also provided hands-on training and ongoing support for young people working on SCfC activities to develop their community research skills. As a result, young people working with SCfC have gained valuable knowledge and skills that have improved their prospects for meaningful employment serving their communities.

5 See, for example: Moore, T. G., McHugh-Dillon, H., Bull, K., Fry, R., Laidlaw, B., & West, S. (2014). "The evidence: What we know about place-based approaches to support children's well-being". Collaborate for Children Scoping Project. Melbourne: Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and The Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health.

6 Sparks Policy Institute & ORS Impact (2018) 'When Collective Impact Has an Impact', Executive Summary, p. 22.

Early evidence of mission outcomes at the local level include:

Galiwin'ku

Yalu Marngithinyaraw Indigenous Corporation (Yalu) partnered with the Red Cross in 2013 to build its capacity to become the sole Facilitating Partner for SCfC in Galiwin'ku beginning in 2019. Between 2018 and 2020 Yalu's Yolŋu staff grew from 7 to 32. Staff are involved at all levels of the organisation, designing, delivering and guiding the programs and services for the community.



This outcome relates to SCfC Program Measure 3, CTG Targets 7 & 8, and CTG Priority Reform 2 (Building the Community-Controlled Sector).

Ngukurr

SCfC has designed and managed the Youth Well-being and Culture Program, in which 120 young people in the community have participated this year. The program gives young people, especially those at risk of falling into anti-social patterns of behaviour, opportunities to learn through a range of activities. According to police statistics, incidents involving young people have reduced by 87% in the twelve months that the program has been operating.



This outcome relates to SCfC Program Measure 5 and CTG Target 11.

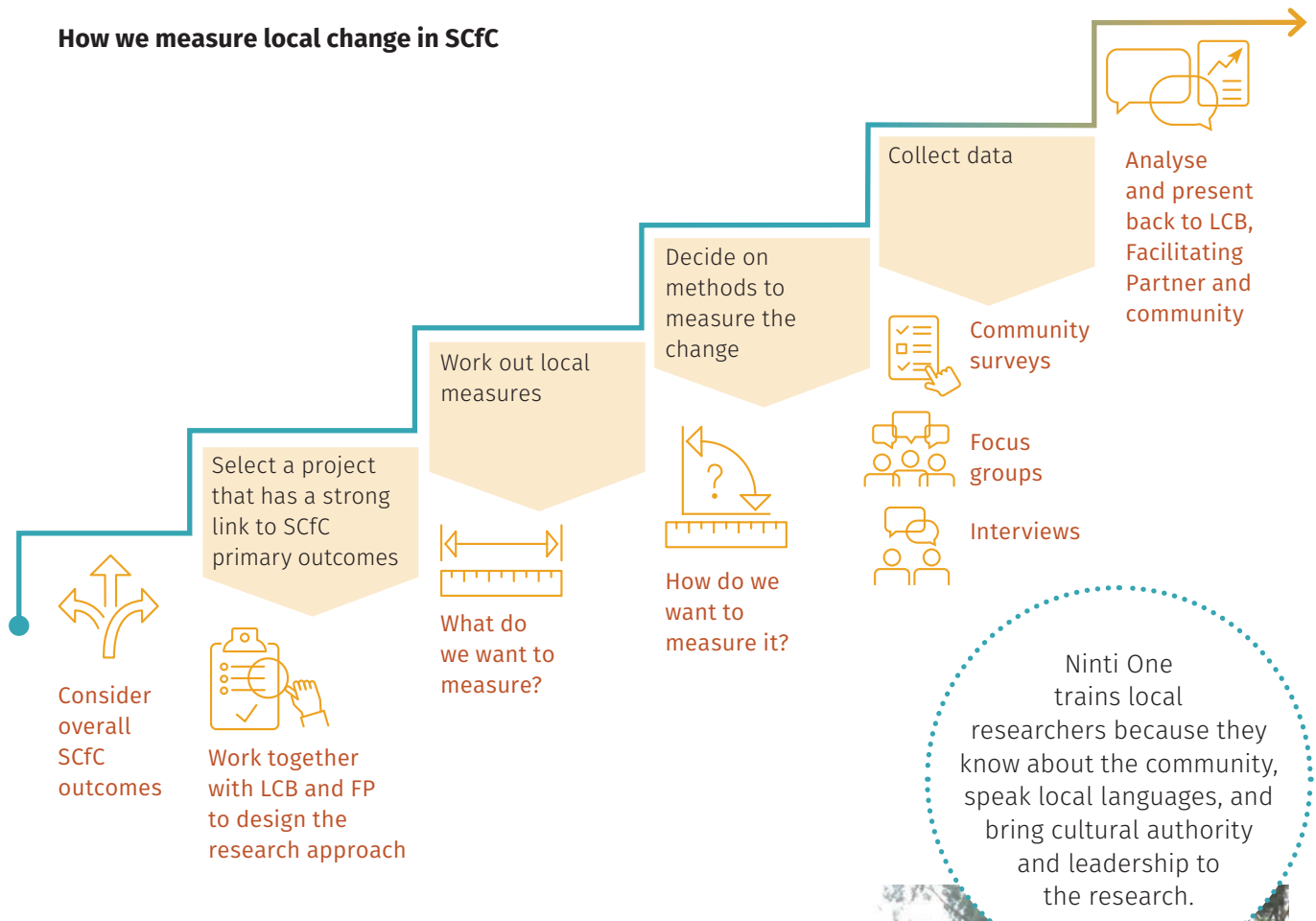
Ntaria

The Ntaria Kids Club helps children manage behaviours related to developmental trauma. Staff and children speak Western Aranda language together, and the club provides playful opportunities for kids to be well in spirit, culture, mind and body. Reports from project staff, teachers and family members indicate positive behavioural changes in children who attend Kids Club regularly.



This outcome relates to SCfC Program Measure 1 and CTG Target 4.

How we measure local change in SCfC



The community research skills gained by people working with SCfC are also an important achievement in terms of systems change. Both the Productivity Commission report on Expenditure on Children in the NT and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap highlight better, more transparent data and information as a priority area for reform. No one is better placed to collect high quality data and reflect key information back to remote communities than local people. Research training provided as part of the SCfC program has contributed to developing a skilled workforce to deliver that reform.



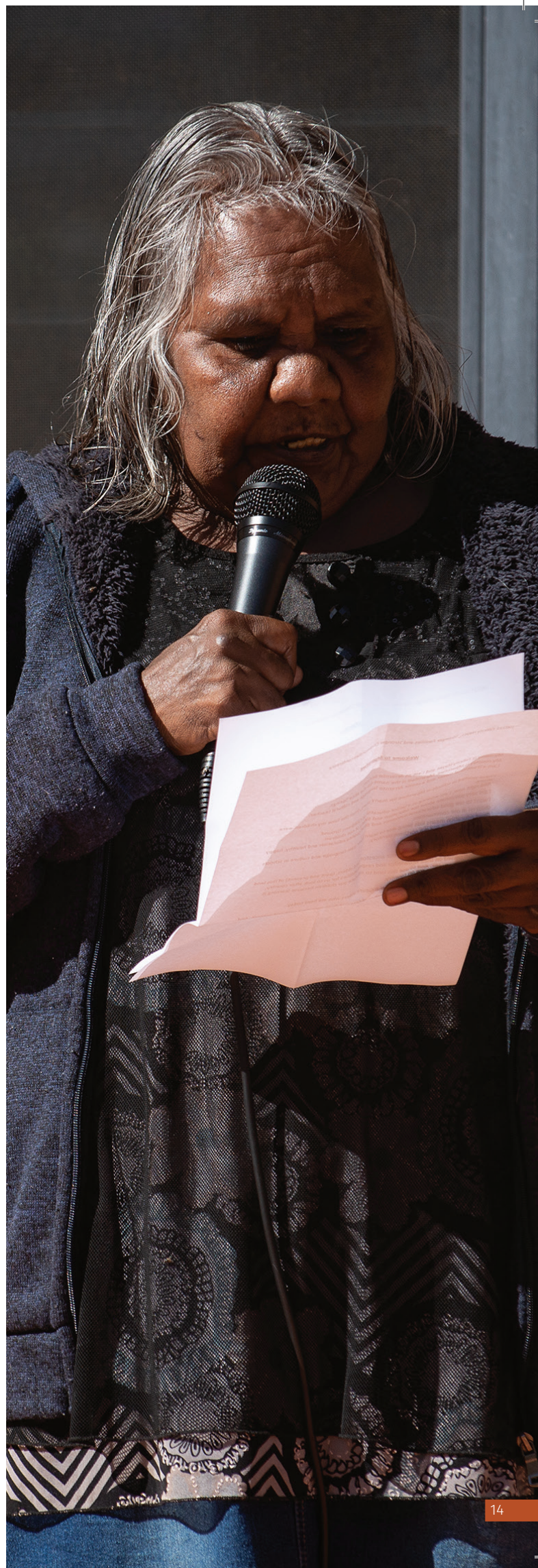
Telling the SCfC Story

The Stronger Communities for Children Program is changing the way that early childhood support systems work so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are empowered to give emerging generations the best possible start in life. This is the story of how ten remote Northern Territory communities are doing it, what they have achieved and what they are learning along the way.

The communities you will read about in this Storybook are making important strides toward Closing the Gap. The chapters that follow will tell you how local people are leading high-quality, culturally located interventions to improve child health, education, and development. They will describe new jobs and professional development programs that engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to teach and preserve the world's oldest living cultures and languages. They will offer examples of activities that have successfully engaged children in school and made communities safer by connecting them to country and culture. They will explain how putting decisions in the hands of communities can make remote townships happier, healthier places to grow up.

The full story of SCfC impact, however, is still emerging. A long-term outlook will be needed to assess the ambitious population-wide changes the program seeks to achieve. It takes time to set up effective governance structures and community driven decision making processes for a multi-sectoral collaboration like SCfC. Once decisions are made, it takes more time to implement them, and longer still to measure their outcomes. The information and evidence that make up this Storybook are only just beginning to form a clear narrative of what difference the program is making for children and families.

It is important to understand this Storybook as a living document, in the sense that it will continue to grow and change along with our understanding of the program's impact. As new data emerges, Ninti One will continue working with communities to share what they are learning, use those lessons to improve program delivery, and tell their stories to help make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities stronger for their children.





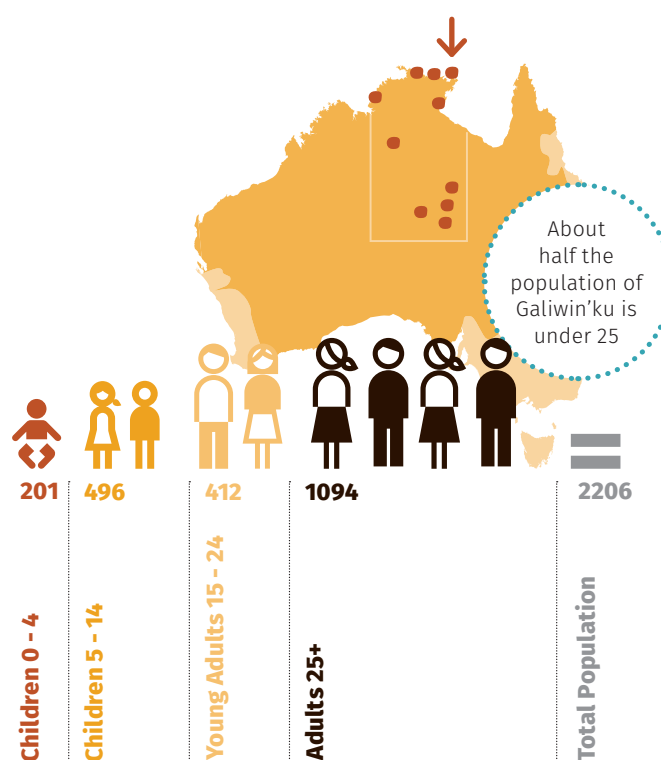
Galiwin'ku

Getting to know Galiwin'ku

Galiwin'ku is an island off the coast of Arnhem Land. It is sometimes called Elcho Island. According to the 2016 Census, there were 2,206 people in Galiwin'ku. Of this number, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 94.0% of the population. Regarding the age profile, 42.2% of the population is under 20 years of age, with 14% over 50.

This region has been inhabited by Aboriginal people for over 40,000 years. The township of Galiwin'ku was established in 1942 as a refuge from possible bombing of the Milingimbi Royal Australian Air Force Base during World War II. In 1947, the Methodist church started a mission in Galiwin'ku. The decades that followed saw the development of a fishing industry, a large market garden and a cypress pine logging industry and sawmill. Aboriginal people were encouraged by the mission to stay on their traditional homelands and use the township as a service centre.¹

Galiwin'ku is now the largest Aboriginal community in north East Arnhem Land. It is home to eighteen connected clan groups who have close cultural ties with mainland Arnhem Land clans and language groups. The communal language is Yolŋu Matha, however numerous dialects are used daily in Galiwin'ku between families. Many Yolŋu people speak six or more of these dialects.²



Galiwin'ku is one of the most remote communities in Australia³ and travel to the community is almost exclusively by plane. Many services, like medical specialists, veterinarians and lawyers fly in and out of the community. The island has a church, a school (preschool to year 12), two supermarkets, two takeaway stores, a clinic (and another for the homelands), a mechanic, an aged and disability care centre, a football oval and a sport and recreation hall. In 2017, the community had 529 jobs.¹

1 East Arnhem Regional Council (2020) Galiwin'ku, <https://www.eastarnhem.nt.gov.au/Galiwin'ku-detailed>

2 Yolŋu Wanganhamirr Mitj, Yalu and Australian Red Cross Society (2018) Dhatum, https://Yoljuwanganhamirrimitj.com.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/dhatam_final2018.pdf

3 Department of Health (2015), National Priority Locations, <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ruralhealth-vos-locations-2012#nt>



Governance for SCfC in Galiwin'ku

When SCfC was initially set up in Galiwin'ku the Yolŋu Wanganhirr Mitj (YWM) acted as the Local Community Board alongside Yalu Marngithinyaraw Indigenous Corporation (Yalu). Their role was to discuss and understand all the different needs Galiwin'ku families have and identify ways to embed cultural values in service provision.

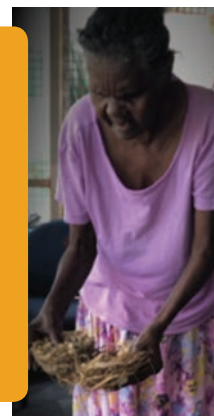
In 2013 YWM learnt of the SCfC Program and put forward a model that joined Yalu and the Australian Red Cross as Facilitating Partners. Yalu was respected for their heavy involvement in community led research, cultural expertise, and their well established role in guiding programs and services to nurture Yolŋu (Aboriginal) children and families. This partnering to facilitate SCfC offered great potential for Galiwinku to have direct impact to programs within the community. Yalu and Red Cross worked together to manage the contract and report on the progress of SCfC funded programs and activities, along side the YWM up until 2018.

In 2019 Yalu underwent a transformation to build its own capacity and instil strong governance to take on being Facilitating Partner independently. They did this by having their own CEO, two Independent Directors, continual governance training and a transparent model to ensure work was done ethically and with probity. Today Yalu is proud of its new logo and structure which allows it to be a local, Yolŋu Community-Controlled organisation managing the SCfC funding and provides services to Galiwinku. They are going from strength to strength having expanded into complementary services including Family, Children and Kinship Carer Services, Indigenous Parenting Services and Family Support Services to ensure a wrap around model for Yolŋu people. They know that this approach is the most effective means to address the Closing the Gap targets, and are pleased that it is now recognised in the Closing the Gap Priority reforms. The Yalu Board, Yalu members, a member of the Regional Youth Model and some younger community members now make up the LCB in Galiwin'ku. This has been a period of transition, but the Board now feel confident in their understanding of good governance, policy, constitutions and how to make good decisions for the community working toward stronger communities for children.

The Yalu logo describes the approach that Yalu takes to their work within the community and their role as SCfC Facilitating Partner. Founding member Mavis Danganbarr describes this best.



This is a nest. In this the bird lays their eggs. And that is what Yalu is like. They lay their eggs. Yalala [later] it'll hatch, and it'll grow. Yalu is a nurturing centre for bukma djamarrkuli [for all children], for old people, for young people to use... for young ones to grow...



Yalu is committed to working together with the Government, other service providers in the community, and most importantly with the community itself. This Board walks strongly in both worlds. By having a board of diverse membership including many different clan groups, men, women, young and old, who are the right people to speak on particular issues and have cultural authority, the Local Community Board alongside the Yalu Board, are in a very strong position to make decisions about the funding for their community.

We are not just a nest any more. We are a little bird hatching on top.

Yunggirrnga Bukulatjpi, 2020

Working gurrutu [kinship system] is the healthiest way to work with the community

Ross Mandi, 2020

Here take this, this is for children. But don't do it on your own. Go back to the community and to the families and listen to them! Because this is our community, and this is our children. We will tell you how to do it in a way that we want... If you do that in a way that we want you will see changes.

Mavis Danganbarr describing the SCfC funding model and Yalu's relationship with SCfC

Team Work

Djalkiri ga dälkum (Our Roots are strong)

- We have met every month since 2012
- We bring strength from each of our different workplaces and our clans
- Our hearts lead us to find a road for djamarrkuḷi (children); to help services and Yolḷu to care for our children
- We speak in our own languages, work within our gurruṯu (kinship) system and Rom (law)
- We changed the world upside down from Balanda to Yolḷu governance
- We are Yolḷu people and this is a Yolḷu owned goal and process
- We committed to two way learning between Yolḷu and Balanda
 - We built confidence and courage through good communication and teamwork
 - we are following the pathway to teach our young generation and give them a clear guidance.

Funded Activities:

- Six monthly application rounds give Yolḷu programs a chance to grow and learn
- We encourage our community to develop activity ideas for our children
- We empower Yolḷu to deliver and teach their own programs
- We fund activities that develop and teach knowledge and confidence in culture, law and discipline
- SCfC activities value Yolḷu knowledge systems, engage youth and families, promote physical, emotional, spiritual healing and wellbeing, support safe environments and better pathways for children's futures.

Honesty

Our yaḡara (stem) is the dhukarr (path way)

- We look wisely at two worlds
- We straighten our process looking at both sides clearly
- We created a Galiwin'ku model for SCfC in 2013 as a team: YWM, Yalu and Red Cross
- We listen to the community and have seven priorities for SCfC
- We support programs that work for Yolḷu
- Our process involves: transparency, regular meetings, setting the agenda in Galiwin'ku, discussion in language and taking the right time to talk
- We use consensus to come together and make decisions
- We have good communication and resolve conflict.

Children and community benefit:

- SCfC is working towards better school attendance, youth engaged in community life making decisions and positive steps for their futures, individuals feeling strong in their Yolngu culture and identity. A community that is healthy, strong and safe
- Parents and children are engaging and finding a better path way through SCfC Activities
- Children know who to go to when they need help
- YWM can see people working together across services, supporting each other with shared resources and joint activities
- Activities are creating opportunities for Yolḷu to learn in two ways.

Yolḷu decision making

Happy children

Healthy children

Well educated children

Yolŋu Staff are lifted up:

- Yolŋu are employed in real jobs
- Yolŋu are showing a pathway for children
- Yolŋu are teaching Yolŋu
- Yolŋu are contributing to their community
- Yolŋu skills are developing in program development and delivery
- Yolŋu are monitoring and reporting on their own work
- Yolŋu have purpose and pride for their work
- Our model gives Yolŋu to Yolŋu accountability and responsibility.

Partnership:

- We encourage working together - Yolŋu and Yolŋu, Yolŋu and Balanda
- Yalu and Red Cross walk hand in hand and support each other to co-facilitate the SCfC Program
- Partnership is working together in friendship, honesty and open communication
- Sharing information between the two worlds finds a dhukarr (pathway) forward
- Partnership is overcoming challenges together
- Partnership is active and open
- Partnership is shared effort and shared responsibility
- Partnership is driven by the community.

Yuŋa Dhatam (New Dhatam)

- The seeds are what we plant for others so new Dhatam can grow
 - Children knowing their lands, laws, languages, histories and relationships to one another. Young people learning to stand on their own and make good decisions
 - Balanda can see us and recognise us. Yolŋu can make decisions about what works and what is needed in our community and can do the work
 - Learning how to go through hardship and overcoming in two worlds.

Burwu (Flowers)

- Our flowers are the achievements we see
- YWM is strong. We are focused on the vision
- We have one voice, one mind, one heart for children
- We create opportunity through collective effort, learning together and action
- We support and encourage ourselves and others with the right attitude
- We give Yolŋu a chance. This is the freedom to drive ourselves
- We see better education for Yolŋu kids and better opportunities for work and running our own programs
- We see Yolŋu lifting up through jobs that contribute back to their community.

Seeing wisely together

Respect

The right people in the jobs

Yolŋu and Balanda seeing two worlds and how they come together clearly

Figure 1: YWM Dhatam

Local employment

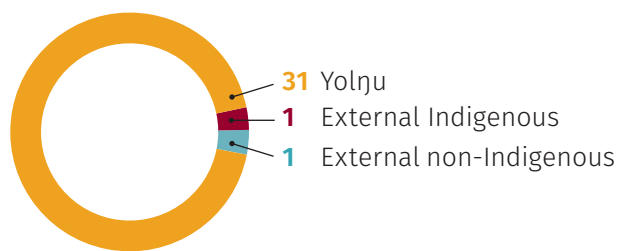


Figure 2 : Chart of Yalu Staff representing ratio of local employment of Yolŋu people in 2021

Yalu has a strong vision and an established succession plan to be a 100% Yolŋu organisation.

The Yalu vision for the future also includes:

- Growing our organisation: Expanding in footprint communities with Yolŋu team members
- Establishing partnerships: with peak Indigenous bodies, local Indigenous groups in other Yolŋu communities, Government and local partnerships.

Confidence and pride in local engagement processes

It is clear that Yalu is building its work as an organisation and strengthening its capacity as it takes on and implements more programs and services. A focus group conducted with Yalu staff in March 2020 reflected their excitement and interest in developing strategies for working effectively in the community.

Two insights became apparent from the way that Yalu staff expressed themselves during the focus group when talking about the work they do:

- **Pride in the capacity of Yalu** to work with and for the community, to demonstrate their knowledge as local people and to present themselves as part of the organisation
- **Value placed on processes** for working with the community, including individual methods of engaging with young people, ways to make staff and community people comfortable with the work and the two-way listening and speaking processes that are important to Yalu's philosophy. Focus group participants talked more about processes than outcomes.

Insights from a group exercise at the 2019 Knowledge Sharing Seminar

What makes your board work well?

Strong governance and decision making partnership between Facilitating Partner and Local Community Board.

Please tell us how your board brings good leadership to SCfC?

Yalu (FP) brings strong leadership through the Guligathanhamirr Committee to Local Community Board and the Galiwin'ku community.

How do you see your board becoming stronger in the future?

We want more outcomes that reflect the grass roots community and are refreshing our Local Community Board with new membership that has more young representatives.



SCfC Activities Making a Difference

Over the years, many important initiatives have been funded by SCfC in Galiwin'ku. In March 2020, Yalu Indigenous Corporation invited Ninti One to work with their staff to measure the changes that have resulted from these investments. Yalu chose two activities to be assessed; the Djalkiri Program and the Yalu Employment Strategy.

Community surveys were conducted by a team of twelve Yalu staff who received training from Ninti One to explain the theory and structure of the survey, discuss how to make survey questions easy for local people to understand, and practice asking the questions. The training used role plays to reflect about different ways of asking questions, following-up points of interest, and encouraging people who were uncertain or shy about responding.



A strong majority of those surveyed reported that the activities are working well or very well (85-95% depending on the activity). Many people appreciate and value the work of Yalu and the role it plays in Galiwin'ku. The focus of the organisation on children and young people learning about lore and culture are especially important to people.

When describing the changes they have seen as a result of the activities, people most commonly referred to:

- Children learning about Yolŋu language, lore and culture
- Positive impacts on the behaviour of children
- Future employment opportunities for children and young people
- Visibility and presence of Yalu and its staff in the community.

Creation of the Galiwin'ku Women's Space (GWS) is another important example of work that began with seed funding from SCfC. GWS has grown into a thriving independent organisation with secure funding in its own right, developed with local decision making at its heart.

Along with the two activities described above, we therefore included Galiwin'ku Woman's Space to be assessed as described in the following pages.

Galiwin'ku Women's Space

Djalkiri Program

Yalu Employment Strategy





Galiwin'ku Women's Space

Galiwin'ku Women's Space Inc. (GWS) has established a local and culturally safe approach to providing education and support to women and families experiencing domestic violence.

GWS is driven by a passionate group of Yolŋu women who began by asking, 'How do we tap into the strengths that women bring, and give that power back to the community?' This group of women would become the GWS Association, which is made up of 14 women from every local tribe.

A community-created pathway to family safety

In 2015, they learned about SCfC and approached Yolŋu Wanganhamirr Mitj for support to develop their ideas. Operations Manager, Lucy Edmonds, reflects that no other funding would have backed the project at the time because it was so grassroots, and describes the process as:

'Community coming to community and creating a pathway together. The application and reporting was all Yolŋu to Yolŋu... it made a lot of sense. It wasn't complicated and there was a nice flow...'

GWS was integrated in the SCfC Community Plan and a modest amount of funding was provided so the group could buy some basic office equipment, pay for 10 hours a week of casual work, and provide snacks for people participating in community conversations to develop the idea.

This formed a springboard for GWS to build the relationships, skills, and confidence to deliver change that was truly owned by community. The model they created together combines local knowledge—especially women's knowledge—with best practice resources to prevent and overcome domestic and family violence.



Seed funding that grew strong

It took about 2-3 years for the women of Galiwin'ku to lay the foundation needed to secure substantial government support for the GWS model. By 2019, the Northern Territory Government recognised the growing impact of the organisation's work and the need to expand and solidify these gains. They awarded GWS establishment funding, which included an ongoing \$300,000 annual operational contract for delivery of GWS's domestic and family violence prevention services and crisis response.

At the moment if you walk into GWS they're in a little donga, but they are quickly growing out of it. Soon they will open their doors to a new building, which will be multipurpose crisis accommodation and a women's support space in Galiwin'ku. From this new facility, GWS will be delivering a 'two worlds' service that interweaves Yolŋu and Balanda (non Yolŋu) laws and processes to support women and families.

As the GWS service becomes established, data will become available on the levels of usage and the impact it is having.

Valuing women's work

In the early days of GWS, many women generously volunteered their time. Now the important work they do for the community is being acknowledged through paid employment that enables them to apply their expertise more widely. GWS employs a growing number of local people, including a new operations manager, a team leader, casual support staff and project-based workers. Only three GWS employees are Balanda and the rest are Yolŋu. These employees receive training and professional development opportunities that previously didn't exist in Galiwin'ku.

Thanks to the support and vision of Yolŋu Wanganhamirr Mitj, GWS have been able to lay strong foundations for this high quality work to build a stronger and safer community.





Djalkiri Program

The Djalkiri Program is an education program for children at the school. It provides teaching on Yolŋu language, culture and lore sharing deeply valued knowledge about medicine, the seasons and environment and how each person and living thing fits within the kinship system. The program also supports students to learn about customary concepts of discipline and respect which is also underpinned by the Yolŋu system of relationships, encouraging people to show respect through the way they behave towards others.

A study of community experiences with the Djalkiri Program, conducted in March 2020, found that nearly all people surveyed (95%) see the program as working well (21%) or very well (74%).

When asked to describe changes resulting from the program and the difference it is making in the community, the points raised most often by survey participants related to:

Key changes	Examples of responses
Learning (37% of responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children learning about culture and especially relationships • Children using knowledge • Teach to be a future leader • When children join ceremony, it is very good • Children sharing skills and knowledge
Behaviour (23% of responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children listening more • Children taking responsibility • Changes of attitudes • Children showing respect for Elders



Part of the survey analysis process was for the local community researchers to identify comments or insights of special significance. These included precise descriptions of the difference the program has made, personal experiences or examples. For the Djalkiri Program, they were:

Family connections strengthen children to be proud and feeling confident to always make a difference

More health message are being delivered to the community in Yolŋu language

(Yalu) staff have come regularly and been well prepared

Yalu is a centre that creates Yolŋu knowledge and shows culture, lore and building knowledge where children feel good

Djalkiri Program is regular education that brings Yolŋu knowledge from knowledgeable local people

People are delivering the program to those who need support

Students are now looking at each other as a family

People are coming together in ceremony and more communication is happening in families and between adults and children



Yalu is for kids
in the future



Yalu Employment Strategy

The Yalu Employment Strategy creates opportunities for Yolŋu people to be employed in the design and delivery of programs and services for the community.

A study of community experiences with the Yalu Employment Strategy, conducted in March 2020, found that most people surveyed (85%) see the program as working well (20%) or very well (65%).

When asked to describe changes resulting from the strategy and the difference it is making in the community, the points raised most often by survey participants related to:

Key changes	Examples of responses
Employment opportunities for young people (40% of responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yalu is for kids in the future • Because Yolŋu delivers the program • More staff working at Yalu • Yalu has done a lot. Yolŋu are getting a chance to work there • We see lots of young people working alongside Elders
Visibility and presence of Yalu and its staff in the community (30% of responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know the staff, they wear uniforms and Yalu is known in the community • Greater presence of visible Yalu staff • New uniform represents Yalu and its programs. Also new car • More people working and expanding new services
Working and learning 'both ways' (20% of responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More focus is needed on youth, to keep people on the right track and teach Yolŋu and Balanda laws • Communication and work together is important, a balance between Yolŋu and Balanda

A significant number of responses to the Yalu Employment Strategy survey (around 15-20%) referred to the work of Yalu with children, in the school and to address behavioural issues among young people. This indicates that Yalu is mostly associated with the Djalkiri Program and so questions about other programs tend to lead people to refer to what they mostly know the organisation for, which is its cultural education program.

Yalu is like a mainstream employer for Yolŋu to work in a Yolŋu workplace

Yalu is partnering with different organisations and is also delivering different programs

Every time I engage with Yalu, they are always keen and interested

Yalu is strong and the people care

Kids are going to school every day. Parents are giving healthy food. Routine is changing for the child.

Yalu is the Yolŋu body in the community

Young people can be role models for the next generation

It is run by Yolŋu

My child tells me important things that he learned at school about culture.

Empowerment of youth and positive leadership from NGO is making a difference in young people's lives and gives them hope. I have never seen this before in Galiwin'ku

I have seen Yalu staff working very well, like IPS (Indigenous Parenting Services) are doing fantastic work

More young people are involved and working. Employment is empowering and gives positive future pathways





Closing the Gap Targets

11. Young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

Men's and youth programs funded by SCfC work to divert people away from the criminal justice system, and towards cultural supports such as Sunset School and senior members of their family or community.

13. Families and households are safe.

Galiwin'ku Women's Space has grown from SCfC seeding grant into a successful local Yolŋu organisation.

2. Children are born healthy and strong.

Ngurruninygu Dhukkarr workshops support young people to make healthy decisions about their future before they become parents. Thirty young people participated in 8 day-long workshops across the year.

3. Children are engaged in high quality culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years.

Yolŋu Seasons supports parents and children to be strong in their culture by integrating cultural learning into existing early learning settings such as playgroup and preschool.

Image source Shepherdson College



4. Children thrive in their early years.
A cultural educator supports 140 children and their families each term at playgroup. Having a local Yolŋu man in this role is valuable for accurately measuring children's progress using the Abecedarian Approach Australia.



15. People maintain a distinctive cultural spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters.
Engaging and learning about culture is central to all SCfC activities in Galiwin'ku, creating opportunities in school, in community and on country.



7. Youth are engaged in employment or education.
Employing young people is key to Yalu's strategy. Yalu sees young people as leaders of the future, and supports their pursuit of training and certifications as part of employment.

8. Strong economic participation and development.
Meaningful employment for over 30 Yolŋu people has been generated. Local capacity-building and opportunities for microbusiness development are also key to Yalu's employment strategy.

16. Cultures and languages are strong supported and flourishing.
All SCfC activities support Yolŋu members of the community to participate and learn in their own languages.



14. People enjoy high levels of social and emotional well-being.
Women's programs support social practices that improve well-being, such collection of bush medicine and cooperative creation of opportunities for women to profit from crafts that strengthen connection to culture.



Impacts of SCfC in Galiwin'ku

Mission Outcomes



Children and young people

Children and young people are supported to engage with school

SCfC currently supports many programs in Galiwin'ku that engage children and their families in education. For example, SCfC supports the playgroup to work with around 140 children along with their families each term, tracking their development and supporting their learning. Children are engaged in cultural activities at school 4 days a week, learning about important elements of their culture and themselves, through the Yolŋu Seasons and Traditional Healing and Well-being programs. SCfC also supports a program known as "Sunset School" which aims to re-engage children who are not attending school and presenting new ways for children to engage in learning.



Cultural learning and participation

Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills

SCfC has engaged children and young people in learning Yolŋu language, culture and lore in a way that recognises the importance of this learning and embeds it into mainstream educational pathways. For example, the Djalkiri Programs have provided local school children with a better understanding of where they fit within the Yolŋu system of relationships and how to show respect through the way they behave towards others.

SCfC provides over 23 opportunities for children to learn about and participate in their culture per week.



Workforce and human capacity

Increased hours worked by Yolŋu people from Galiwin'ku

SCfC has provided paid and meaningful employment for local people. For example, between 2018 and 2020 Yalu's Yolŋu staff grew from 7 to 32. Staff are involved at all levels of the organisation, designing, delivering and guiding the programs and services for the community.

New work and professional development opportunities

Yalu and other SCfC funded activities have demonstrated commitment to supporting staff to develop. Training opportunities provided to staff include:

- Shadowing of roles within the organisation
- Ongoing governance training
- Support to access locally delivered Certificate 3 in Community Services
- Media training
- Training from the NAAJA Education staff and Territory Families staff around the Child Protection ACT, mainstream child development measures and mandatory reporting.
- First aid training

New roles have been created at the playgroup as a result of SCfC funding, and these have specifically focussed on encouraging men into the workforce, and recognising cultural expertise. Seed funding from SCfC also enabled Galwin'ku Women's Space to grow a robust family safety service that has created new jobs and training opportunities for local women.

Cultural learning opportunities for children during a typical week

1
Bush medicine collection trip

3
Learning on country trips

1
Craft material collection trip

4
Days of playgroup in the community

4
Days of playgroup at school

4
Healing well-being lessons

1
Evening sunset school

1
Culture session for children and families

4
Yolŋu Seasons lessons

Impacts of SCfC in Galiwin'ku

Systems Change



Community governance capacity

LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority

The LCB for SCfC in Galiwin'ku represents different clans and family groups. Its members include senior Yolŋu Elders and workers in the child and family health, safety and well-being areas. The group is composed of a mixture of young and old community members, men and women and all who have the best interests of the next generation in mind. Many of them are leaders within their clans and families, and part of the permanent workforce. They have decades of experience in implementing services, are linked with the research that occurs in the community, and they have good knowledge of what is available and relevant to community.

LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making, and planning

The YWM maintained that the success of the SCfC program relies on it having a strong Yolŋu voice, as well as being able to work closely and collaboratively in the Balanda world. This is an approach shared by Facilitating Partner Yalu, who undertook extensive training workshops to strengthen organisational governance, and bring together Balanda and Yolŋu systems and processes. Yalu and the current LCB share this knowledge, building both skills and confidence to lead, make decisions, and plan in 'two worlds'.

Cross Cutting Outcomes

Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements

As the Facilitating Partner for SCfC in Galiwin'ku, Yalu has worked hard to develop and build on the established relationships within the community. This has allowed efficient use of resources, strengthened the outcomes for participants of programs, and helped to avoid the duplication of services.

There are currently many partnerships underpinning the successful delivery of SCfC in Galiwin'ku.



Figure 3: SCfC partnerships within Galiwin'ku – around the LCB and FP Yalu.

Leverage of program support

The Galiwin'ku Women's Space Association used a modest amount of seed funding provided by SCfC to engage the community in building a culturally located model for addressing domestic and family violence. They have transformed this seed funding into an ongoing \$300,000 annual operational contract with the Northern Territory Government to deliver violence prevention and crisis response services.



Strategic learning from Galiwin'ku

- SCfC activities that focus on children and young people learning about lore and culture are especially important to people in Galiwin'ku.
- Ongoing funding has enabled programs to establish and refine their content and delivery, and has allowed the sustainability of the programs to develop.
- Language and culture are deeply valued in the community and there is a commitment to work towards keeping this strong.
- SCfC funding allowed the governance of local Yolŋu led organisations to develop, which in turn has allowed them to seek ongoing funding from other sources. This has resulted in more support for the community overall.
- SCfC has strengthened partnerships between Yolŋu led organisations and Government, other service providers, and the community itself. This has laid important groundwork for advancing the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.



Ngukurr

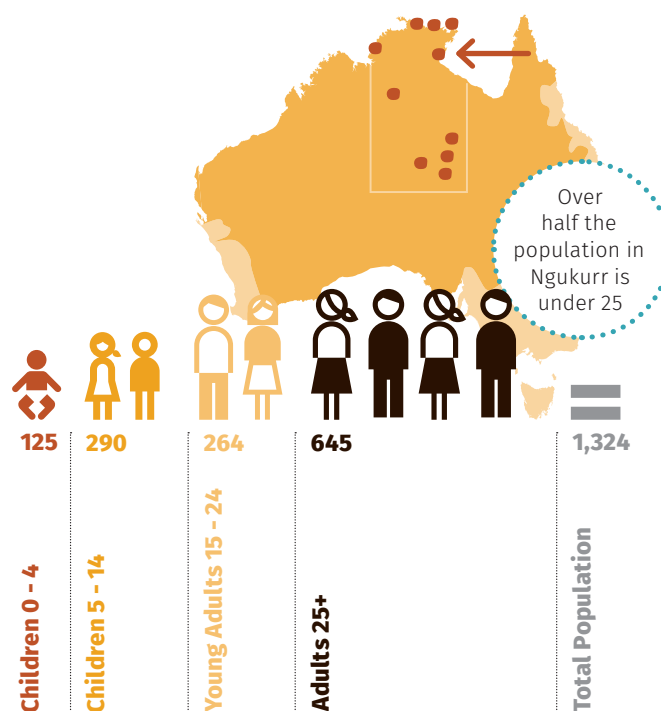
Getting to know Ngukurr

Ngukurr is located on the Roper River in south East Arnhem Land about 330km south east of Katherine. Ngukurr is home to around 1,324 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.¹

The main language spoken is Kriol. English is used as a second/foreign language and is the main language of government and service providers.

The Yugul Mangi people come from seven traditional language groups. These languages are Alawa, Marra, Ngalakgan, Ngandi, Wandarrang, Nunggubuyu and Ritharrangu but these languages are now endangered due to the forces of colonisation. Their four semi-moieties (totems) of Mambali, Murrungurn, Guyal, and Burdal show their deep connection to the animals, seasons, weather and land.

According to residents, Yugul Mangi people have inhabited the region since time began. During the period of first contact there were conflicts and massacres of the local people. In 1908, the Roper River Mission or Old Mission was established. After the flood of 1940 the mission was moved to the present site of Ngukurr. The Australian Government took over the mission in 1968 and Ngukurr became a government settlement directly controlled by the Northern Territory Welfare Branch in Darwin. In the mid 1970s the Ngukurr Township Association was formed, bringing some self-management. In 1988 the Yugul Mangi Community Government Council was formed to provide local government, however, whilst funded as local government it provided broader community governance.



In 2007, the Northern Territory Emergency Response (the Intervention) brought in federal government control through a package of legislation that created rules specific to Indigenous communities. In 2008, the Roper Gulf Shire (now called Roper Gulf Regional Council) was established and narrowed governance to a local government focus leaving no broad community governance structure across the seven clans. In response to the Intervention and local government reform, clan leaders developed the Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation (YMDAC) in 2008 to hold on to local decision making throughout the multiple changes to legislation, policy and programs invoked by ever-changing politicians. The YMDAC continues to represent the seven clans economically, politically, social and culturally across the region and as a progression of the Governance in Ngukurr:

- YMDAC board adopted a Cultural Governance Model based on the age-old cultural governance structure
- YMDAC was established as the Local Decision Making Board on the 5th of August 2020.
- YMDAC adopted a new Logo combining SPWBK into the YMDAC logo.
- A Cultural Governance Team was developed and led by Ian Gumbula to deliver on the communities priorities and deeply align programs to cultural and social well-being.

¹ Remote Towns Job Profile (2017) https://nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/570950/ngukurr-remote-towns-jobs-profile.pdf



Our land is important because it carries histories, stories and songlines. It is associated with the Yugul Mangi region on a map but it is more than lines on a map, it is inside our hearts and minds with knowledge that we value and pass down through the generations.

Local leader

Totems give us an identity, a root that's connected to land, sea, rivers, creek channels, mountains, rocks, billabongs and flood plains.

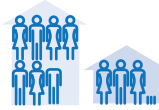
Local leader

Yugul Mangi People

Median age **21**

33.9% of population under 15 years old

Average number of people per household was **6.9** persons or more (2016).²



All Australians

Median age **38**

18.7% of population under 15 years old

National average of number of people per household is **3.2**.

\$240 a week. The median individual income for Aboriginal people in Ngukurr (2016).³



\$662 a week. The median individual income for Australians (2016).

18.8% of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over in Ngukurr employed – 140 Aboriginal people (2016).



56% of all Australians aged 15 years and over employed. 10,683,841 people (2016).



2 Of the 123 dwellings included 57 were reported at the highest available ranking as eight or more people per household. Further clarity of the number of people per household above eight is not recorded.

3 There were also 150 people who did not state their income, 27 people on Nil income, 11 with a Negative income.

Governance for SCfC in Ngukurr

YMDAC's Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti (SPWBK)



Cultural Governance Board

Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation (YMDAC) has developed a strong Cultural Governance Board that represents the leaders of the seven clans. Underneath this sits the Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti (SPWBK). This committee identify the community's social needs, priorities, opportunities and solutions including those that support programs such the SCfC (referred to in Ngukurr as the Stronger Communities Program). The SPWBK then make recommendations to the YMDAC Board for approval. Representation on the SPWBK is a cross-section of the community from Elders to young people of the four semi-moities and seven clans.

The YMDAC and SPWBK shared vision

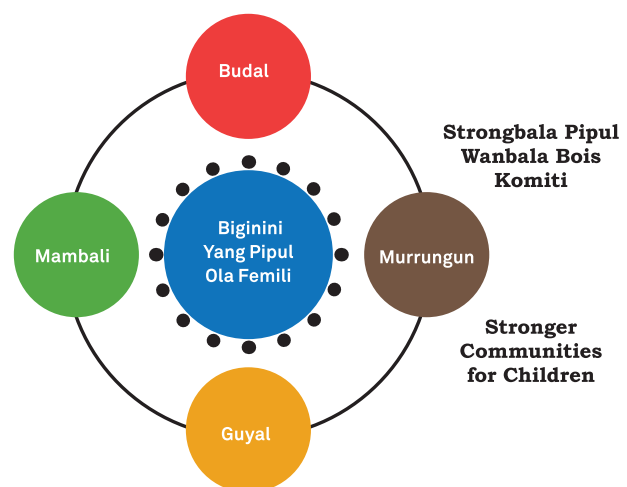
The vision statement for SPWBK is:

Respecting our past and present, one mob working together, leading both ways to create a safe, strong, vibrant and sustainable community for future generations.



Logo

The YMDAC logo encompasses the entire community, the different positions in lore, as well as the different perspectives of men, women and children. The logo also brings everyone together through the circle of connection and semi-moities. It honours the role of the Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti that seeks to support the YMDAC Board (see below).



Social and economic inequality

Yugul Mangi people face social and economic inequities that impact health, well-being and success. The SPWBK believes the gap between Yugul Mangi people and all Australians will continue until the Yugul Mangi People have decision making control over the services, programs and providers in Ngukurr. This includes service providers reporting back to the community as the funding body rather than reporting to agencies outside the community. This allows for better informed decision making, greater community ownership and accountability, higher levels of engagement within the community and better outcomes.

A voice for Yugul Mangi people

In 2018, YMDAC, under the guidance of the SPWBK, conducted a Community Engagement Study for the YMDAC Stronger Communities.



Over a six-month period, more than 100 Yugul Mangi people contributed their views on needs and priorities to strengthen the community, particularly for children, youth and families. The research was entirely community driven and community controlled throughout the process - from the proposal at the concept stage, to governing the study, planning, determining the objectives and questions, employing and training local researchers, transcribing interviews and interpreting data.

The results of the study were presented back to the people of Ngukurr in the form of a comprehensive Community Engagement Study & Plan, a unique document that provides the community, service providers, and agencies with a detailed description of the priorities of residents of Ngukurr.

It's very important [to read and write in Kriol] because by the time they get older and don't know how to spell you will struggle because I know I struggle doing that [reading and writing in my own language].

Survey participant

The Chair of the SPWBK, Daphne Daniels, explains that:



We wanted to listen to our people, hear their voices and their views. To do this we developed the Community Engagement Study and [shared the results with the community]...

We want to stop service providers from continuing to create division and disempower community through the creation of many boards or committees that do not have proper representation from all clans and semi-moieties and aren't working together with other Boards. We want to work with governments so that control and decisions remain with the community...

We want to achieve this through the development of a governance model based on the traditional Yugul Mangi way. We want to see more and more services handed to the community so that they are guided by strong local decision making and where local people are employed and [supported] to become the program managers and service providers.

Things that taught at school inim [aren't] interesting. They're not talking about themselves. They're talking about something else [i.e. The content isn't relevant]. First you got to build up your knowledge of yourself then familywise. That's why...instead of explaining the white man way we should have two way education...[kids runaway from school] because, maybe they feel out of place. Nothing there interesting. You gotta make sure they learning about themselves.

Survey participant

Culture is important because if don't have culture in your life you're nobody...If you don't have culture you don't know who you are.

Survey participant

Informed and transparent planning

Through the Community Engagement Study, the SPWBK identified important questions facing the community and talked about them face to face with local residents. This empowered local residents to identify social gaps in Ngukurr that need to be addressed. The SPWBK listened and applied this information to put together a Community Plan that was distributed back to the community along with the results of the study.

Through a series of workshops, the SPWBK determined seven key themes that emerged from the study.

Seven key themes from the Community Engagement Study

1. Strengthening community governance and local decision making.
2. Strengthening culture.
3. Improving communication.
4. Education.
5. Well-being support.
6. Community administrative support.
7. Cultural awareness training.

For each key theme they developed a list of objectives as well as activities to achieve them. This formed the Community Plan, which has given rise to the activities described in the pages that follow.

I am really proud of that SCfC gave that opportunity, especially for the young emerging leaders, and also gives us the voice about of what's really happening at the grassroots level. It's giving us a start to actually go forward... now we got skills and everything to go with how we want to see our community... It was a disappointment from the government with closing the gap, and they didn't see much, these events that our people was facing, affecting children... we didn't have the tools to actually deliver... I've seen back in my community and others by sharing knowledge and there is a positive change in communities... and we need to have the younger ones, to have the journey towards keeping up, making that safe environment, a place for our community, and understand that we are committed to do this... nobody was listening... we have understanding of those lack of services... SCfC has given us an opportunity and we're making a good start, and we got to continue to do this one, so thank you.

Daphne Daniels,
Chair of the SPWBK



Insights from a group exercise at the 2019 Knowledge Sharing Seminar

What makes SPWBK work well?

We represent the 7 clans and 4 moieties (culturally appropriate).

Please tell us how SPWBK brings good leadership to SCfC?

Thinking about others before self and thinking of community as a whole, rather than just one clan.

How do you see SPWBK becoming stronger in the future?

Focus more on culture.

Messages for Government from the SPWBK, 2020 Knowledge Sharing Seminar

We know what will work and what will fail – we know our community, we know our mob.

We have already done the hard work to listen to our community. We now know what action to take.

We are making a difference (e.g. 100% reduction in crime during school holidays. Local police applaud us.)

We have the trust and the relationship with the community to make change

We have cultural authority.
We have community respect.

SCfC Activities Making a Difference

Through the Community Engagement Study, the Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti (SPWBK) listened to the voices of the Yugul Mangi people and created one voice which came together to develop a Community Plan. The Study and Plan laid important groundwork for improving cooperation between community, governments and service providers to deliver SPWBK’s vision of respecting past and present, one mob working together, leading both ways to create a safe, strong, vibrant and sustainable community for future generations.

The activities described in the pages that follow have grown from that groundwork, and from the aspirations articulated by the SPWBK, and backed by the YMDAC Board, in their message that introduced the YMDAC Stronger Communities Program plan to the people of Ngukurr:

Our ancestors built the cultural foundation of Yugul Mangi people where the four semi-moieties and seven clans come together to voice their needs and wants and make decisions. Our desire is to honour our ancestors, to use their traditional ways to manage the new challenges of Yugul Mangi people now to stand strong for the future.



1. Governance
Without healthy strong roots a tree can fall over in the wind. Much like the roots of a tree are needed to sustain and hold its branches, strong community governance is needed as the foundation to sustain and hold together all other activities. Like strong roots, strong governance needs nourishing. In this case building the capacity of cultural authority will strengthen the community for generations to come.

Governance Mapping Project

School Holiday Cultural Program

Meigim Kriol Strongbala (Making Kriol Strong)



Governance Mapping Project

The Governance Mapping Project stemmed from the journey of the SPWBK. They discovered that information was flowing from service providers to funding bodies but generally skipped informing the community. As a result, the SPWBK lacked the information necessary to make informed decisions. So they began to investigate how to go about shifting the flow of information, accountability, community governance and decision making back into the hands of the community.

The SPWBK commissioned a consultant to help them map out Ngukurr's governance structure. Together they uncovered over 20 formal boards or committees that meet on a regular basis, plus seven State and Commonwealth forums and many additional formal and informal meetings and demands for community engagement by service providers and agencies. Some leaders are expected to attend each of these. They are mostly unpaid for their knowledge, guidance and advice. Not paying leaders for their consultation but expecting them to do so can restrict their ability to hold full-time employment, attend meetings after hours and participate in community discussions.

The Community Engagement Study indicated that the community was also not happy with the governance structure in Ngukurr.

Residents expressed aspirations for change, including:

- Representation from cultural and clan authority
- Decision making centred on local people
- Opportunity for residents to voice their concerns and opinions
- Feedback to the community so they know what decisions are made
- Ensuring that service providers operating in Ngukurr are accountable to the community
- Greater involvement by young people

The Governance Mapping Project has produced a roadmap for better decision making processes in Ngukurr. The pages that follow describe key insights gained from the project and how they are being applied to develop governance that places local families, children and young people front and centre.

Cultural representation, participation and decision making authority

The Mapping Project confirmed that over 50% of existing governance arrangements do not require representation from all seven clans. Therefore, they do not ensure appropriate representation and cultural authority for consultation or decision making. In addition, there is often confusion or misunderstanding by service providers around the terminology of community leaders, Traditional Owners and Language/Clan Groups. These findings demonstrate the poor understanding by service providers of the community and cultural context, which hinders their ability to improve outcomes for families and children in Ngukurr.

The first language in Ngukurr is Kriol, not English. Literacy is also low. Relying on residents to access information or to engage online in English is inadequate. The low level of participation by young people in community governance forums is also a concern, as over half the local population is under the age of 25.

The Governance Mapping Project has determined that focus should be placed on existing community capacity and cultural leadership as strengths. This means respecting existing positions of authority, experience and knowledge. At the same time, governance in Ngukurr must avoid placing unrealistic demands on leaders, as discussed further below.



Defining roles and responsibilities

The Mapping Project found that there is a high level of reliance on a small number of community leaders to attend meetings, and that the demand on these individuals is increasing. Community leader roles and responsibilities across the many forums have become confusing, at times agendas overlap.

There is a feeling amongst community leaders that the time and commitment required to participate in the large number of forums and committees is not valued or recognised. There is the assumption that community representatives can give up their jobs and wages to attend these meetings without sitting fees. Having to represent the community in many different forums can also result in potential conflicts of interest due to the number of different 'hats they may wear' in community.

These findings indicate that improving governance arrangements in Ngukurr will require careful consideration of the demands placed on community leaders. Expectations placed on these leaders by service providers must be matched with appropriate support. For example, increased demands for Committee members to report back to the broader community may require a formal structure or additional human resources for doing so.

Community impact and positive lasting outcomes

Community leaders express frustration as they perceive few positive outcomes for the community after many years of the existing governance arrangements. Collaboration and engagement between the community-controlled organisations in Ngukurr has been limited, with each focused on their own activities and priorities. This has resulted in missed opportunities for partnerships and working together. Improved community-led governance processes will enable service providers in Ngukurr to achieve more effective place-based strategies.

Local decision making to address the needs of children, young people, and families

Community leaders expressed that they do not feel they have genuine ownership and control over key decisions that impact children, families and young people. Some felt that meeting agendas set by government focus on government priorities not community-led priorities. Furthermore, decisions are often seen to be made about the community rather than with them. Existing governance structures are utilised for sharing information rather than genuine engagement and collaborative decision making. The recent establishment of the Local Decision Making Multi-Agency Partnership (LDM MAP) is seen as a positive step forward for community working with government on identified priorities.

Local decision making, according to community leaders, requires all clans to agree. If one disagrees more work and negotiations are required. This approach is not reflected across community governance processes. Each language group requires time to discuss issues with family groups, so decisions should not be rushed. Decisions informed and backed by community consensus lead to better and more sustainable outcomes. Whilst new LDM processes are a step forward, this approach requires further refinement to embed the agreed guiding principles. There are existing community-led governance processes that have successfully implemented local decision making principles and these examples, such as the SPWBK, should be considered for potential learnings and replication more broadly in the community.

Ngukurr's Governance Map, August 2019

This visual map demonstrates the significant demand and drain on community leaders to participate in frequent meetings. The map shows the existing Boards and forums that Ngukurr representatives and leaders are expected to regularly attend, often pulled in many different directions as meetings are coordinated by different organisations often working in isolation.



- Community members & community-controlled organisations
- Boards / committees / forums established by government/service providers with community representation
- Government & service providers
- Elected Board Member
- ⋯ Invited Meeting Participant
- ⋯ MOU / Partnership / Agreement

Ngukurr's Future Governance Map

This map demonstrates community governance that:

- Ensures the community is placed at the centre of local governance and decision making
- Ensures community engagement and decision making with appropriate representation of cultural knowledge, experience and authority from across all language and clan groups
- Reduces the number of separate service provider engagement and consultation forums and requests for the establishment of new structures
- Formalise the role of community representatives through the establishment of a Community Board to provide advice and input into decision making processes on Government and service provider funding, community investment and service delivery models
- Ensure any changes to existing community governance arrangements continues to support roles, responsibilities and core functions of existing community-controlled organisations whilst supporting their participation in local decision making processes and sharing information as appropriate
- Explore opportunities to promote greater collaboration and engagement between organisations
- Where there are requests for community and stakeholder engagement where possible this should be facilitated through a central community-led governance body that is established with appropriate community representation





Update on Community Cultural Governance – Ian Gumbula, Cultural Governance Manager, YMDAC

I have been involved in the governance journey through the Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti as a member. In this position I was able to listen to the community and understand cultural authority and community governance as the important driving force of community ownership and responsibility. The Community Engagement Study, and Governance Mapping Project were the first steps in listening and responding to governance needs.

I have since been promoted into a new position as a senior manager within Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation as the Cultural Governance Manager. In this position I am developing the new community cultural governance structure. I am very proud to have the opportunity to lift community voices, strengthen local decision making, and fulfil my passion to empower people to govern our way.

Youth Cultural and Well-being Activities

The Youth Cultural and Well-being Program together with the YMDAC Youth Diversion Program have been successfully improving the lives of young people in Ngukurr.

The Youth Culture and Well-being Activities Program has four objectives:

1. To prevent or reduce anti-social behaviour
2. To build the self-esteem, independence and confidence of young people
3. To strengthen cultural identity and knowledge of young people
4. To reconnect young people with family, culture and community

A study of the program conducted by local community researchers in 2020 looked at changes from the program across these four objectives. Almost all community stakeholders who participated in the study were overwhelmingly positive about the program. For example, all four Youth and Family Workers interviewed scored the program a four out of five when asked “how well does the program work”, where one is not well and five, very well.

Feedback gathered by the study overwhelmingly indicates that the program has reduced anti-social behaviour. When asked “how did the program help you?”, 43% of young people surveyed, responded, unprompted, with comments about staying out of trouble. Words like “strong”, “proud” and “happy” were used by over half of the participants to describe how the program has helped or changed them, indicating its effect on the self-esteem, independence and confidence of young people. A number of participants reported thinking about the future and wanting to do something different with their lives.

Youth and Family Workers echoed this, pointing specifically to the examples of three “troubled” boys that have benefitted from the program. All three have found jobs, are helping out with youth activities and are now role models for others. One in particular, through the one-on-one support and mentorship provided, has changed his life around from Youth Diversion, to working for the YMDAC in the School Holiday Cultural Program. He has gone on to attend Wuyagiba Study Hub and has now been accepted to Macquarie University. This individual has advised that after university he wants to return to Ngukurr and be the YMDAC’s Program Manager for Youth. He wants to help young people struggling to find their way just as the YMDAC’s programs have done for him.

Reconnecting with family, culture and community emerged as a strong theme from the study. A quarter of program participants surveyed explicitly mentioned being in the bush or engaging in cultural activities as a positive part of the program. Just under half explicitly used the word “community” in their responses. They talked about enjoying helping their family members and others in the community. Youth and Family Workers noted that the program has helped kids fit in and feel a sense of belonging. Parents have given them a “thumbs up” for their work. The Police Sergeant feels that the community is a completely different place now to when he first arrived, two and a half years ago. However, the manager of a local service provider offered a contrasting perspective, expressing the view that little has changed and young people are still not listening to their Elders.

My mum is a Traditional Owner of this country, she wants to take boys to country [to] teach everything. I did not understand what she wanted to [do], but now I can understand

Participant in the Youth and Cultural program

[The program] keeps me away from fighting and stealing

Participant in the Youth and Cultural program

Doing cultural thing made me feel proud of myself

Participant in the Youth and Cultural program

Kids have changed a lot, people stopped fighting

Youth and Family Worker in Ngukurr

Families connecting to culture over school holidays

The YMDAC Stronger Communities Program runs a School Holiday Cultural Program for children, young people and families. In July 2019, the program delivered activities that engaged participation by 230 students and 60 adults across ten days. By 2021, the program had expanded to provide activities over 28 days and 12 evenings of the summer holidays (beginning December 2020). On average, these activities engaged 54 children aged 5-17 each day over the six-week period. Over 500 adults supported the program as participants or spectators, making it the most successful school holiday program to date.

The School Holiday Cultural Program engages children in active physical activities such as venturing to nearby swimming holes, boat races, bushwalking, running and basketball. It also teaches them valuable life skills and cultural knowledge, such as how they fit in their Family Clans and their connection to land, how to identify bush plants and collect bush foods, and how to respect each other and behave respectfully in school and around Community.

The following account written by SPWBK Member, Ian Gumbula, describes one of the early holiday programs and offers an inside look at what it is like to participate:

The activity we started with was traditional dancing, bunggul, near the oval. There were a couple of traditional Songmen and dancing group, with a few adults and mainly children. In this activity the young people were shown cultural bunggul methods of dancing, the styles, and meaning of each song.

Some of the children were watching the Songmen singing and the beats of the clap stick. They learnt not just the meaning of the song, but where it is from, which land. The kids enjoyed this and have learnt much by having Elders explaining to them as well as showing them how it is done properly. When the bunggul was finished everyone joined in with the BBQ together.

Day trips were organised by taking families out to Old Mission. When the family and young people got there the Elders got everyone together in one place, the kids carried their food and other equipment to the camping area where the Elders shared stories about the place and its history, about the different clan groups, and the missionaries. They spoke about the big flood of 1940 and the experience of families having to move to higher ground. There was silence as the young people listened with interest to the stories of their families and clan groups. The Elders led the young people to a memorial site and they were again told stories that related to the site.

Camps were run at Yalawurra where family groups went for either a day trip or overnight stays. There, Elders told historical stories about the people from that country who camped, fished and hunted.

We ran day trips to Roper Bar Crossing which included fishing, BBQ Lunch, swimming, bush walking for bush food, and music. Families worked together to set up fishing lines for the kids. The older youth collected firewood and built a fire area to cook the food. Once everything else was completed we started the music up on the Crossing and everyone started dancing and enjoying themselves. When it was time to go the kids were having so much fun they didn't want to leave.

All of these activities helped to strengthen culture and family ties in a safe, healthy and good environment. Afterwards, everyone who had participated, and the community said good things about this program.





The School Holiday Cultural Programs continue to go from strength to strength.

Making Ngukurr safer

The YMDAC Stronger Communities Program combined activities led by our local workers and, where possible, worked collaboratively with other organisations to create a greater impact on community. For example, the Youth Cultural and Well-being Program, Youth Diversion, Sporting Activities, and School Holiday Cultural Programs have all combined forces to create what Ngukurr Police describes as a significant reduction in crime.

The Police Sergeant from Ngukurr Police Station has reported seeing a “positive and broad impact already” from the program. This view is strongly backed up by crime statistics from Ngukurr Police for the period December 2019 to January 2020, which indicate:

- Approximately 45% reduction in offences against a person when compared to the same period last year including fewer serious assaults
- 33% drop in property crime when compared to the same period last year.
- Property crime offences are less serious
- Across the Northern Territory, domestic violence makes up 40% of total police workload, whereas in Ngukurr it is only 18%.

More recent statistics have shown an 87% decrease in property crimes over the twelve months leading up to December 2020, with zero targeted break-ins. In July 2020, the police reported a 100% drop in property offences compared to the same school holiday period the year before.

As far as Ngukurr Police are aware, no other community has reported such a drop in crime over the same period, suggesting that all the hard work by the Stronger Communities for Children Program and partner organisations has made Ngukurr a safer place, especially over the school holidays.

Learning and improvement

The 2020 study of the Youth Cultural and Well-being Program gathered feedback from community members on how to make it even better and reach more young people.

Key findings include calls to:

- **Increase engagement of parents, young adults and leaders** – Youth and Family Workers are aware of the limits of the support they can provide, with one saying, “parents need to wake up too”. Suggestions include increased support for young parents and more support from community leaders and role models for the kids. A number of young people participating in the program expressed a desire for others in the community to support them and make the community better for them in general.
- **Extend the reach of the program** – There were suggestions in particular for more outreach to recruit young kids. Some participants emphasised the importance of reaching boys, in particular, while others expressed a need to reach more girls and couples. It was noted that due to cultural barriers and the current make-up of the youth group, girls might be deterred from joining. Youth and Family Workers suggested more female support workers and training to overcome these challenges.
- **Extend the depth of the program** – There were also suggestions for more activities over longer periods of time such as hiking, swimming, sugar bag hunting, bush tucker, bush medicine, hunting, fishing and finding food and water. Youth and Family Workers expressed a desire to upskill and for more resources. They also put forward suggestions for more clinical and mental health support that was permanent in the community, housing support for young people and mentioned the difficulties of securing a Working With Children Clearance.



Meigim Kriol Strongbala (Making Kriol Strong)

Kriol is spoken by over 20,000 people across Northern Australia. It is the main language of all generations in Ngukurr. The 2016 Census reports that Kriol is spoken at home by 88.8% of the Ngukurr population. The Community Engagement Study found that 91.5% of participants think that Ngukurr School should be bilingual and 86% said Kriol literacy for adults is important/very important.

In response, the SPWBK identified Kriol literacy and resourcing as an objective in the Community Plan. Dr. Greg Dickson, an accredited Kriol-English interpreter with 15 years' experience working in Ngukurr, commenced as program manager in May 2019. Local Kriol-English translator, Carol Robertson, was hired soon after and gave the program its name, 'Meigim Kriol Strongbala' which means 'Make Kriol Strong'.

Delivering Kriol language education at Ngukurr School

Since 2019, Meigim Kriol Strongbala has delivered language education programs at Ngukurr School. Weekly lessons are delivered to almost all students in Ngukurr, with around 100 students participating each week.

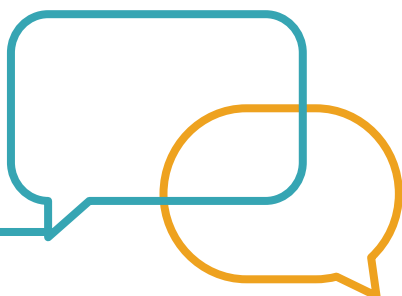
Kriol programs at Ngukurr School are aligned with the Northern Territory Education Department's Indigenous Languages and Culture (ILC) Curriculum. Specifically, Kriol programs fall within the First Languages Maintenance (L1M) component of the ILC Curriculum.

Lessons cover multiple aspects of language education, including:

- Students translating their own writing from English to Kriol
- Kriol reading, writing and spelling activities
- Reading and writing Kriol stories
- Oral expression
- Kriol songs (early years only)

Surveys and focus groups conducted by local community researchers in October 2020 found that over three-quarters of families (82%) have seen a change in the children due to the program. Changes described by family members, teachers, and students are:

- **Kriol is part of learning at school** – While Kriol is the children's first language, English has been the language used at school. Now children are expanding the way they use Kriol so that it is part of formal learning. There is an increase of its use to talk, sing and otherwise engage in education.
- **Increased Kriol literacy** – The children read and write in Kriol. They translate books and songs and use Kriol to communicate on social media.
- **Higher levels of student engagement in education** – Assistant teachers note that the program has encouraged children to come to school and resulted in better engagement in classes. One teacher noticed that as students gained confidence in their Kriol skills, their confidence in English language writing also increased.
- **Greater self-esteem, pride and ownership amongst students** – All teachers who participated in the study discussed improvements for children in these three areas. They are even seeing some of the higher-level students helping others to learn, including the teachers themselves.
- **Stronger connections to community and culture** – Both teachers and assistant teachers see the link of the program's importance to students' identities. Assistant teachers emphasised this and the role of the language in helping children connect to their culture. Mirroring this, students across all year groups specifically noted their joy in hearing and writing their own names in Kriol.
- **Emotional and behavioural gains** – The biggest change assistant teachers noticed was the ability of the children to talk about their feelings. The Kriol lessons have helped "kids express what they feel", without becoming aggressive. As the children are taught Kriol "feeling words", they are able to express their emotions more clearly than in English. The assistant teachers reflected on a particular student with a condition that inhibits her ability to communicate. Following Kriol lessons, she was able to express herself more easily and as a result, the assistant teachers now understand her much better. Additionally, a handful of families mentioned noticing their child feeling more confident and happier. Two families reported that learning to read and write in Kriol has helped their children stay out of trouble.



The study also identified benefits that the program is producing for families, Ngukurr School and the community as a whole, such as:

- **Families** – A number of families remarked on the pride and happiness they feel in the progress they have seen in their children.
- **Schools** – Kriol skills and resources in the school have increased. Teachers commented on the “fantastic”, engaging and fun materials, texts and charts used to teach Kriol. Teachers also noticed that the program has helped assistant teachers gain more confidence. The teachers themselves are also improving their skills, taking lessons from Greg Dickson, the program manager.
- **Community** – Connections between the school and the community have improved. A couple of families cited the program as a good way to learn history and culture, with one noting “Kriol makes [the] community strong”.

Below are examples of other comments made by participants in the surveys and focus groups:

My children, they want more time and lessons!
 Family member of a student in the Meigim Kriol Strongbala language education program at Ngukurr School

I love to hear our names in Kriol when the roll is called
 Student of Ngukurr School

Kids express what they feel, seeing them speak about their feelings was impressive
 Assistant Teacher at Ngukurr School (translated from Kriol)

My son is getting out of problems, learning how to read and write, getting stronger at school
 Parent of Ngukurr School student



Focus groups with teachers, assistant teachers, students and families identified the following suggestions for improving Meigim Kriol Strongbala moving forward:

Teachers

- Explore different ways of working with the boys to encourage better engagement during Kriol classes
- Decrease dependence on the program manager, as this might pose risks to sustainability in future
- More local inputs and local human resources
- One teacher acknowledged that reading levels are still relatively low, signalling an area for improvement



Assistant Teachers

- Extend Kriol lessons to the community as a whole



Students and families

- Students put forward ideas for Kriol lessons such as making their own stories on the computer, translating cartoons, performing plays for the school, making a short film for Ngukurr Festival and involving Elders in the classes
- Roughly a quarter of families talked about integrating the program with other cultural activities such as going out to the bush and lessons about foods, animals and medicines
- Some families also called for more Kriol lessons and more publicity about the program across the community



Mums and bubs reading Kriol together

Meigim Kriol Strongbala also visits Ngukurr Families as First Teachers (FaFT) once a week. Program employees work together with local mothers and their babies to:

- Translate popular children's books and songs into Kriol
- Improve Kriol reading skills for mums to read to their children
- Develop Kriol role plays and sing in Kriol

A highlight of this work with Ngukurr FaFT has been supporting local mums to present a role play of 'Det Brabili Jigibala Beya' (The Very Cranky Bear) to NT Education Minister Selena Uibo.



Valued new resource for Kriol literacy

A key collaboration and resource produced by Meigim Kriol Strongbala was a Kriol Alphabet Poster, developed in partnership with Batchelor Press. The poster features 21 one-letter sounds and 14 two-letter sounds with a bright and engaging design that is perfect for classrooms.

The poster is a valuable tool for supporting the development of Kriol literacy practices in Kriol-speaking communities. It has been purchased by a number of schools and individuals since its launch in December 2019 and is now available for online purchase from all around Australia and beyond.

Bigismob Jigiwan Dog: a first for Kriol literature

Another valued resource has been the publication of a translation of the popular 2013 picture book *Too Many Cheeky Dogs*. Now also known by its Kriol title, *Bigismob Jigiwan Dog*, the book created history, as it was the first time a major Australian publisher (Allen & Unwin) had released an Indigenous language translation of an existing English title. *Bigismob Jigiwan Dog* is a collaboration between the authors and publishers of the original English book and Meigim Kriol Strongbala.

Since the release of *Bigismob Jigiwan Dog* in June 2020, the book has exceeded sales expectation, with Allen & Unwin undertaking a second print run. The book is being read in schools across the Katherine region and the translation team from Meigim Kriol Strongbala were invited guests of the 2020 NT Writers Festival, discussing their work at their sold-out session in Darwin.





Bilingual website and Kriol social media

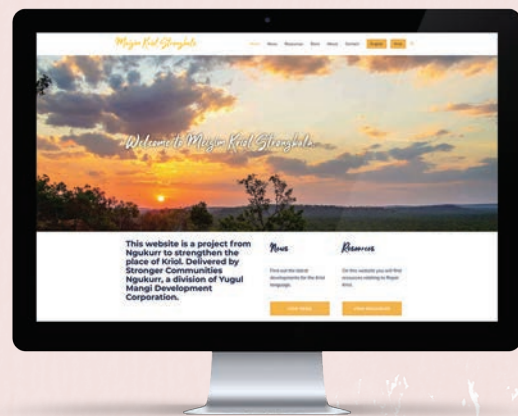
YMDAC Stronger Communities Program in Ngukurr has produced a fully bilingual website for the Meigim Kriol Strongbala program. It includes a wealth of resources for people to learn more about Kriol, to get latest updates and visit the online store. Visitors can toggle between the Kriol and English versions of the website, creating an innovative and ground-breaking piece of cyberspace.

Shania Miller, a Kriol language worker employed by the project, writes:

“It is very encouraging to see that students and teachers are working together in a learning environment to better understand one another... hopefully by incorporating Kriol in the community, the workplace and public environment it will only strengthen the relationship between the non-Indigenous residents and locals.”

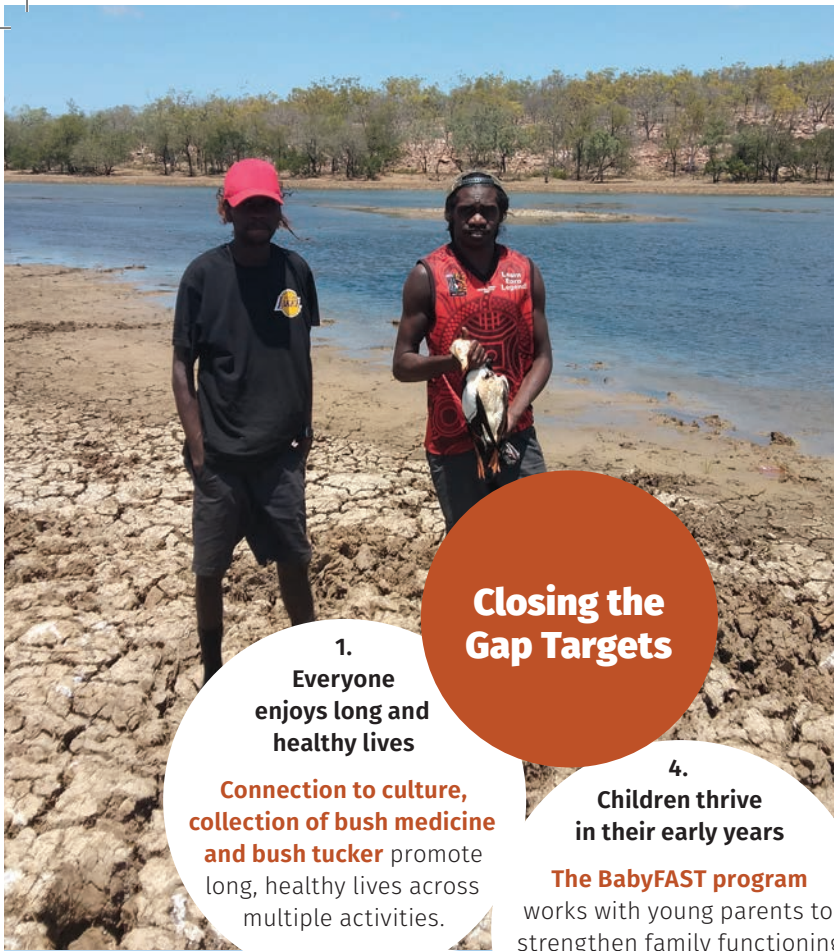
You can learn more about Kriol by visiting the website:

https://meigimkriolstrongbala.org.au/en_au/



Quick Numbers:

Website Visitors	3354	
Facebook page followers	305	
Twitter followers	155	
Instagram followers (as of December 2020)	164	



Closing the Gap Targets

1. Everyone enjoys long and healthy lives

Connection to culture, collection of bush medicine and bush tucker promote long, healthy lives across multiple activities.

4. Children thrive in their early years

The BabyFAST program works with young parents to strengthen family functioning and build protective factors with the aim of helping children aged 0-3 thrive.

5. Students achieve their full learning potential

Meigim Kriol Strongbala creates a more comfortable learning environment for students. In addition to raising Kriol literacy rates, the program is increasing students' confidence and self-expression, improving student engagement and strengthening connections between school and the community.

3. Children are engaged in high quality culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years.

Advice, guidance and Kriol language support provided by SPWBK, the Community Engagement Study and Plan, and Meigim Kriol Strongbala are strengthening early years education services such as the Guluman Child and Family Centre and Families as First Teachers Program.

8. Strong economic participation and development of people and their communities

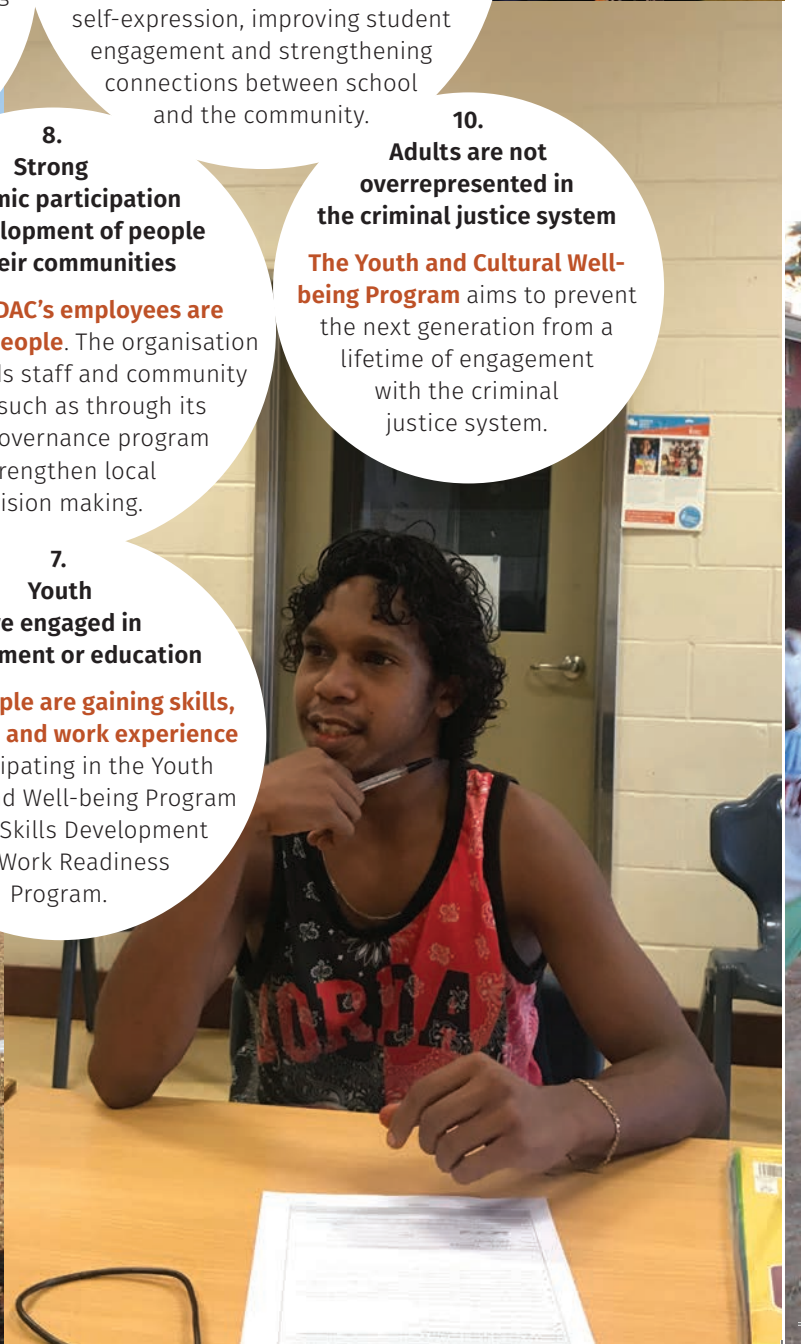
89% of YMDAC's employees are Yugul Mangi people. The organisation actively builds staff and community capacity, such as through its cultural governance program to strengthen local decision making.

10. Adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

The Youth and Cultural Well-being Program aims to prevent the next generation from a lifetime of engagement with the criminal justice system.

7. Youth are engaged in employment or education

Young people are gaining skills, confidence and work experience by participating in the Youth Cultural and Well-being Program and the Skills Development and Work Readiness Program.





11. Young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

Property crimes decreased 87% over the first twelve months of the Youth Cultural and Well-being Program, which together with YMDAC's Youth Diversion Program have had significant success with a dramatic drop in antisocial behaviour.

12. Children are not overrepresented in the child protection system

The Intensive Family Support Service and child protection system benefit from vital advice and support provided by SPWBK and YMDAC. For example, the SPWBK have volunteered to be the Local Decision Making (LDM) body for the child protection system in Ngukurr.

13. Families and households are safe

Reducing crime, violence, and suicide are key objectives of multiple activities led and supported by Stronger Communities, such as the School Holiday Cultural Program, Football and Basketball Program and Community-led Family Violence Prevention Program.

14. People enjoy high levels of social and emotional well-being

The Local Community Plan developed by SPWBK focuses on the social and emotional well-being of children, youth, and families. With their support, additional grant funding has been received by YMDAC to run a Child and Family Counselling Program.

15. People maintain a distinctive cultural spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters

Connections to culture are a fundamental component of all YMDAC programs, which create numerous opportunities for people to engage with culture on country.

16. Cultures and languages are strong supported and flourishing.

Strengthening language and cultural continuity are central to the work of Stronger Communities in Ngukurr, from Kriol literacy programs to Warndarrang and Alawa Language Camps on county and School Holiday Cultural Programs, to name a few.



Impacts of SCfC in Ngukurr

Mission Outcomes



Children and young people

Increased school attendance and engagement

Kriol language education, as well as programs that connect young people with culture, country and identity have led to important impacts relevant to the lives of children and young people in Ngukurr. These offer young people an opportunity to thrive and be proud of who they are.

The Meigim Kriol Strongbala program allows young people to move through the formal education system with their first language. It provides a more comfortable and engaging learning environment that sets up young people for success. The program has already witnessed a number of students improve their capacity to read and write in Kriol and demonstrate enjoyment and confidence of reading not always evident in reading English. An unexpected outcome of the program that was identified by focus groups with Assistant Teachers at Ngukurr School is that students are better able to express their emotions and manage aggression since the introduction of Kriol lessons. The program has also strengthened connections between the community, families and young people to education.

Children and young people are developing social and emotional maturity

The Youth Cultural and Well-being Program, School Holiday Cultural Program and Sporting Activities provide, in different ways, opportunities to build self-esteem and confidence through cultural knowledge and mentorship, as well as connections to country, Elders and family. In Ngukurr, the Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti (SPWBK) recognised that the experiences of trauma and failure have led young people down pathways of apathy, helplessness, hopelessness, rebellion and anti-social behaviour. Connecting young people to culture and strengthening identity has provided them with the experiences of resilience, strength and success.



Cultural learning and participation

Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills

The projects, programs, and resources produced by the YMDAC Stronger Communities Program have strengthened cultural knowledge, skills, and connections for children, families and young people in Ngukurr. The Meigim Kriol Strongbala Project, School Holiday Cultural Programs, and Youth Cultural and Well-being Programs are especially notable for their strengthening of Kriol literacy skills and development of language and cultural knowledge among children and young people.



Family and community safety

Community perceptions of change

The YMDAC Stronger Communities Program has engaged young people in Ngukurr to direct their energy into positive cultural activities and to develop closer connections with their Elders. Local residents have begun to observe how this is making the community safer. For example, Ngukurr Police have noted significant reductions in crime since the program began, especially during school holiday periods, when the YMDAC Stronger Communities Program worked closely with other local organisations to provide fun and engaging holiday programs.



Workforce and human capacity

Increased hours worked by local people

Since the YMDAC took over the SCfC program it has employed over 215 local people across 23 activities. For example, the Community Engagement Study trained and employed 9 local community researchers to conduct extensive interviews and interpret the data gathered. The School Holidays Cultural Program was delivered entirely by Yugul Mangi people, eight of whom were trained and employed by the program for a total of 1440 hours between December 2020 and the end of January 2021.

New work and professional development opportunities

The YMDAC Stronger Communities Program has created opportunities for Yugul Mangi people to apply their specialised cultural knowledge and skills in the course of paid employment. For example, the Youth Cultural and Well-being Program employs five casual Youth and Family Workers to support, mentor and guide young people. This includes engaging youth in cultural learning activities often supported by Elders where employees can continue their own cultural learning. In addition, they receive training in First Aid, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Conflict and Mediation, as well as Grief, Loss and Trauma and numerous other trauma and strength-based training. This professional development offers them the opportunity to develop skills that strengthen them as individuals, the youth they mentor, as well as community strengthening approaches.

Impacts of SCfC in Ngukurr

Systems Change



Community governance capacity

LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority

The SPWBK provides appropriate representation of all seven local clans and four semi-moieties. This is an important achievement, because fewer than half of committees and forums that make decisions about services in Ngukurr have provided such representation. The Governance Mapping Project found that lack of appropriate representation restricts effective decision making and responded by producing a roadmap for better governance in Ngukurr.

LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making and planning

The Community Engagement Study and Plan demonstrates the high-quality leadership, decision making, and planning in Ngukurr by the YMDAC that is supported by the SPWBK. By distributing the plan and the study findings, the SPWBK shows a high degree of confidence in its recommendations to the YMDAC Board of Directors, as well as thorough transparency and commitment to being accountable to community.

Cross Cutting Outcomes

Effective place-based strategies

The YMDAC Stronger Communities Program Governance Mapping Project has forged a pathway for better cultural authority, flow of information, defining clear roles and responsibilities and collaborative place-based strategies in Ngukurr. Decisions informed and backed by community cultural governance consensus will lead to better and more sustainable outcomes.

Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements

The Community Engagement Study and Plan laid solid groundwork for high-quality partnerships and collaborations, which have been central to the work of the YMDAC Stronger Communities Program in Ngukurr. One example is the Program's successful application to take on Youth Diversion, confirmed by the NT Government in October 2019. The YMDAC Stronger Communities Program received valuable support from their partner Anglicare Northern Territory, which had been running Youth Diversion programs for many years and provided knowledge and forms required to run and report on the program. The Department of Chief Minister, Territory Families, Ngukurr Police and the Youth Diversion Unit (YDU) in Darwin have also collaborated with the team to develop a Youth Diversion program for Ngukurr.

Another example is the Auskick Program, a collaboration between the YMDAC Stronger Communities Program and WANTA, which has become a regular and successful collaboration. The activity has seen between 40 to 60 young participants turning up Wednesday evenings. The weekly event has now grown to include many more stakeholders all working together. This includes: The YMDAC Stronger Communities Program's Intensive Family Support Services, Sunrise's Dietitians and Health Promotion team, School Teachers and the School Principal, Remote School Attendance Scheme and AFLNT, along with the older Ngukurr Bulldogs team and broader community support.

Leveraging project support

The SPWBK have been successful in leveraging project support to attract additional funding for a range of activities, such as the Youth Diversion Program and Intensive Family Support Service mentioned above. External funding has also been secured to run Grief, Loss and Trauma Training, Conflict Mediation Training and a three-year grant to work in partnership with Anglicare NT on a Community-Led Family Violence Prevention Strategy in Ngukurr. There have been smaller grants to support programs such as the Ngukurr Intensive Youth Engagement Program and Camp, Diversion Bush Tucker Project, Youth Cooking and Nutrition and more. All these programs are approved by the YMDAC Board of Directors and guided by the SPWBK.



Strategic learning from Ngukurr

- Strengthening cultural authority that is representative of the Yugul Mangi people, reflects traditional clan systems, respects the Elders of the past and the present, strengthens the foundations for community governance for the generations to come.
- Conducting successful consultations such as the Community Engagement Study provides a way for the SPWBK to listen to residents across the different clans, genders, age groups and different roles and perspectives to make informed decisions. It gives residents a chance to raise their voice confidentially. It brings confidence to the decision making process by the SPWBK in their recommendations to YMDAC Board of Directors. It provides the SPWBK, YMDAC Board of Directors, community, service providers and governments the solid evidence they require to support the plans developed out of the process. The consultations are viewed as a win for everyone, so long as the leaders have oversight and control, the consultations are conducted by local people and the participants are paid for their contribution of knowledge and time.
- Cultural Programs for young people are vital to their social and emotional well-being and their sense of identity and belonging. Youth in Ngukurr are dealing with a complex range of emotional, social, health and economic problems. Guided by the SPWBK, the Stronger Communities' Youth Cultural and Well-being Programs, School Holiday Cultural Programs, Youth Diversion and others have provided the support, mentorship and connection to culture that youth need. In collaboration with a diverse range of organisations and community leaders, the YMDAC Stronger Communities Program has made Ngukurr a safer and happier place for young people and their families.
- Developing community-based and driven education, training and resourcing programs for the Kriol language (the first language of Ngukurr and neighbouring communities) is fostering pride and an increased capacity in Kriol literacy. This works to increase community engagement in the school and workplace; improve communication between community and service providers; and increase student attendance and engagement at school by developing localised and culturally appropriate curricula.

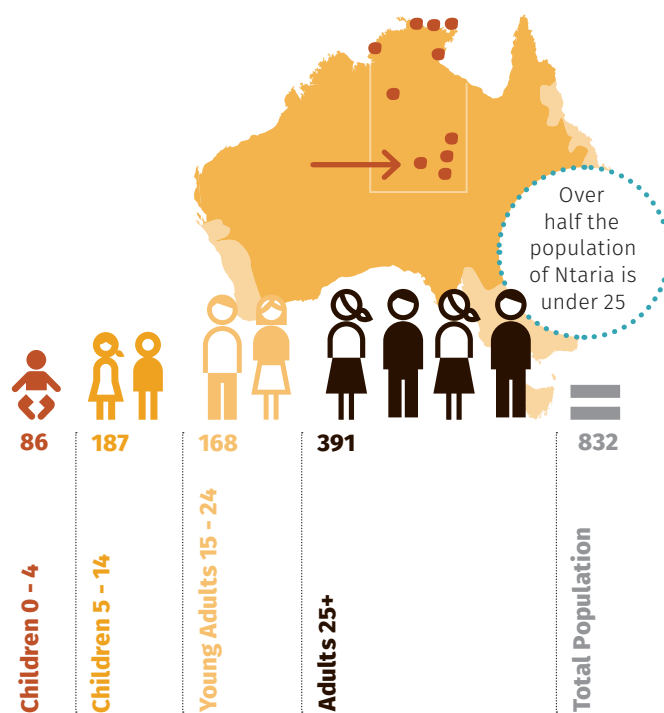


Ntaria and Tjuwanpa Outstations

Getting to know Ntaria

Ntaria sits at the foothills of Tjoritja (the West MacDonnell Ranges), on the banks of Lhere Pinte (Finke River), and within the traditional land of the Western Aranda people. The township, located 130km west of Alice Springs, is home to around 832 people.¹ It is also the hub for 37 regional outstations, which spread across 4,500km of the Central Desert and are home to around 300 Western Aranda people.²

The current settlement at Ntaria began in 1877 when Lutheran missionaries travelled from South Australia to establish a mission, which they named Hermannsburg after the German town where they had trained. At that time, European sheep and cattle stations increasingly occupied the land, prompting rapid social and economic changes across the region. The decade that followed was marked by trauma and violence. The Hermannsburg Mission offered protection to Aranda and Luritja people who were being pushed off their lands during these turbulent times.³ When Carl Strehlow was posted there in 1894, his deep interest in local languages and culture led to three decades of ethnographic research that documented connections between specific individuals and their traditional lands and, together with Moses Tjalkabota, Nathaniel Rauwirarka and Jacobus, produced an Aranda translation of the New Testament.⁴



Arts were encouraged at the mission, and the people of Ntaria have developed distinctive styles of art that feature strongly in community life. Their internationally renowned pottery, for example, translates Western Aranda cultural heritage using terracotta clay and vibrant glazes to hand-create distinctive ceramic pots.⁵ Ntaria was also home to Albert Namitjira, the world famous painter whose unique style has been passed down for generations to create a living legacy known as the Hermannsburg School of Artists, who continue to bring the Central Desert to life in stunning watercolours.⁶

In addition to the former mission precinct and galleries, which host around 10,000 visitors each year, the township of Ntaria has two stores, a school, a clinic and a sports and recreation centre.⁷

1 Hermannsburg Potters Aboriginal Corporation (2020) 'History of Hermannsburg', <https://hermannsburgpotters.com.au/about/history-of-hermannsburg/>
 2 National Indigenous Australians Agency (2012) Tjuwanpa outstations welcome ten-year Government funding for essential service deliveries, <https://www.indigenous.gov.au/tjuwanpa-outstations-welcome-ten-year-government-funding-for-essential-service-deliveries>
 3 Indigenous Governance and Leadership Development (n.d.) 'History, Ntaria' <http://igld.cdu.edu.au/history-location/>
 4 Kenny, A. (n.d.) German Missionaries in Europe, <http://missionaries.griffith.edu.au/biography/strehlow-rev-carl-1871-1922>

5 Hermannsburg Potters Aboriginal Corporation (2020) 'The Hermannsburg Potters', <https://hermannsburgpotters.com.au/about/the-hermannsburg-potters/>
 6 Langton, M. (2018) Welcome to Country. Melbourne: Hardie Grant Travel.
 7 MacDonnell Regional Council (n.d.) Hermannsburg, video clip, <https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/communities/hermannsburg>

Governance for SCfC in Ntaria

In Ntaria the SCfC Local Community Board is known as the Western Aranda Leaders Group, or simply the Leaders Group. Its first meeting was in April 2014, and in the three years that followed the group met twenty-four times, established criteria for membership and governance, set priorities and criteria to guide decisions and approved fourteen projects.

In those first three years, the Leaders Group evolved in a way that was significant. At first it was a struggle to get a quorum, but by 2017 it happened without any problem because people responded. As of November 2016 the Leaders Group had 15 members. Representation on the Leaders Group accords with the norms governing Western Aranda sociality, where representation is a function of kinship ties but also considers knowledge and ability appropriate to a particular context.

Despite the difficulties inherent in bringing family groups together, the family-based membership structure facilitates ongoing informal communications between Leaders Group members and their family networks.

- Investment shaped by local insight**
- Planning strengthened by community participation**
- Western Aranda people leading in two worlds**
- Leveraging program support**
- Accountable and transparent decision making**

Western Aranda Leaders Group membership criteria

Members should:

- Have support from their families to represent their family on the Leaders Group
- Represent the five Land Trust Groups and main family groups
- Be a mix of strong women and strong men
- Use right and lawful behaviour with women, children and their family
- Be able to listen, put up ideas and issues from their family group, not just their own
- Be able to feed back and talk about SCfC ideas/plans with their family
- Be a mix of Elders and younger people who might be next leaders. Elders who can direct the younger ones
- Have the time to participate – are not busy with lot of other meetings; can get time away from family responsibilities; can get time away from work
- Be able to work with others on the Leaders Group



Once somebody throws something out there the ball just gets rolling

Children's services worker





Investment shaped by local insight

The Leaders Group takes all of the SCfC priority outcomes into account when considering the best projects to support under SCfC. Most projects meet several of their outcomes. For example, the Leaders Group's significant investment in the Healing Kids Our Way project, which commenced early in 2017, is indicative of the Ntaria community's commitment to work with Western Aranda families to help them recognise the impact of violence, abuse and neglect on children. The Leaders Group is also talking about mediation programs. A study tour to Mt Theo is being discussed, using funding under the Study Tours project, as a means of learning more about the successful mediation program operating in Yuendumu.

In providing a forum for discussion about children's needs, the Leaders Group has become a mechanism for community action and advocacy. This is clear from Leaders Group minutes, which reflect people increasingly bringing issues around community safety and children's well-being to the Leaders Group for discussion and also bringing that discussion into other community forums. With decision making located locally, SCfC can respond quickly when needs or circumstances require. For example, when the school lost funding for swimming classes the Leaders Group was able to quickly respond with approval for the Learn to Swim project, which is discussed in more detail below.



Planning strengthened by community participation

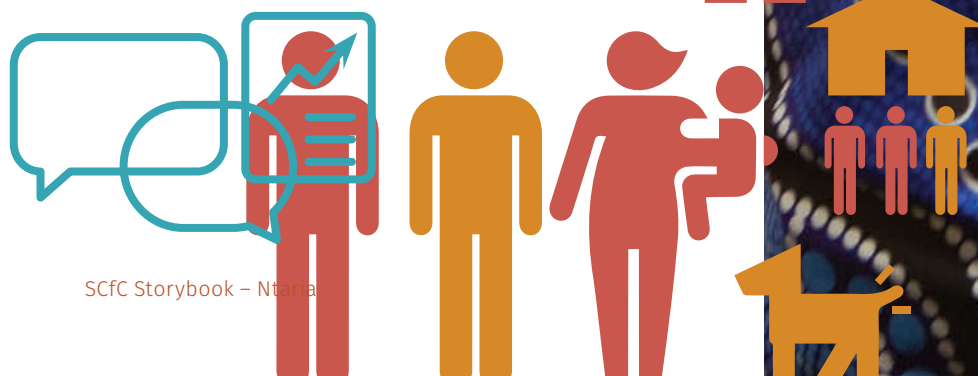
Participatory approaches to planning are central to decision making for the Leaders Group. An initiative called the Participatory Action Planning Project has provided support for the Leaders Group and community services to participate in a number of action planning processes. This has ensured that new projects are designed around local needs, strengths, knowledge, cultural values and cultural practices as well as lessons learned from implementation. Along similar lines, two Family Get Togethers have been held to date. The focus of the 2014 Get Together was to contribute to the Community Plan. In 2016 the Leaders Group decided to use the funds to support more strategic engagement with families and target discussions on child safety. The family-based structure of SCfC decision making, paired with the seriousness with which Leaders Group members take their role as a link between the Group and their family, means that families are involved in a continuous loop of SCfC planning.

One Leaders Group member explains that:

We [talk] about problems, and how to fix them... This is very important for young children and young people. We talk in small family groups, and we decide what is the best thing. We really want to see our young ones growing strong, safe and, happy in community.

An Aboriginal children's services worker describes how community members can see their ideas being considered, discussed and incorporated into SCfC projects:

They are really valuable for getting ideas happening. Once somebody throws something out there the ball just gets rolling. [SCfC staff] will take anything we put forward and talk to the Leaders Group about it. ... You talk about things it goes to the Leaders Group, they discuss it and it comes back to you to discuss it further.





Western Aranda people leading in two worlds

Ntaria SCfC has made a substantial contribution to expanding leadership opportunities for Western Aranda people. Monthly meetings provide a forum for the Leaders Group to think critically about issues; learn about project planning and budgeting through discussion and approval of project proposals; and learn about the impact and effectiveness of their investments through project monitoring. Involvement in SCfC meetings has increased members' knowledge of government systems and processes and developed their confidence to assess project costings in relation to the expected benefits to children resulting from projects. Increasingly members are playing an advocacy role on behalf of Ntaria's children and young people.

As one Leaders Group member commented:

This program put kids in the middle and now it is getting stronger and stronger. Before, everything was dropping down because kids were having children young. They just need a bit of help to know how to look after children.

Another member describes how far the group has come:

I've now seen a lot of changes. At the start we were all a bit shy, getting to know one another and all that. But now that we all know each other and all part of family and you know that's one of things that I'd like to see more throughout our community – stepping up, and having a say, being heard... Coming all together and just sharing each others' ideas to make it happen for our kids today, and giving them the opportunity as well.

Leveraging program support

Most Leaders Group members also work in an Ntaria service. Some members also sit on other community boards including the School Council, the Western Aranda Health Board and the MacDonnell Local Authority. This means they are linked to workplace networks and other decision making forums, which provide opportunities for sharing information about SCfC. They also advocate and influence decisions in other forums that are resulting in more investments in support of children. For example, the Leaders Group advocated with Regional Council to install lights in children's playgrounds after members saw children playing unsafely in the dark. They were also able to mobilise \$30,000 from the Central Land Council's Working Group in support of child-safe education inputs. In this way, Leaders Group members add value to existing government programs and services.

One Leaders Group member commented:

I am really proud of it because we are really working with government to make a stronger community for stronger families.

Another has said:

The thing I enjoy being on this group is coming together with such wonderful people and being able to share our ideas about how to make this community a better place to make our children safe. It has also grown me as a person. ... At the start we were all shy with each other, but since we have continued this program I can see that we have all grown into it and are doing our best to get things out there for our children through funding so that they can feel good about themselves and enjoy going to school and enjoy participating in activities that we have funded for them.



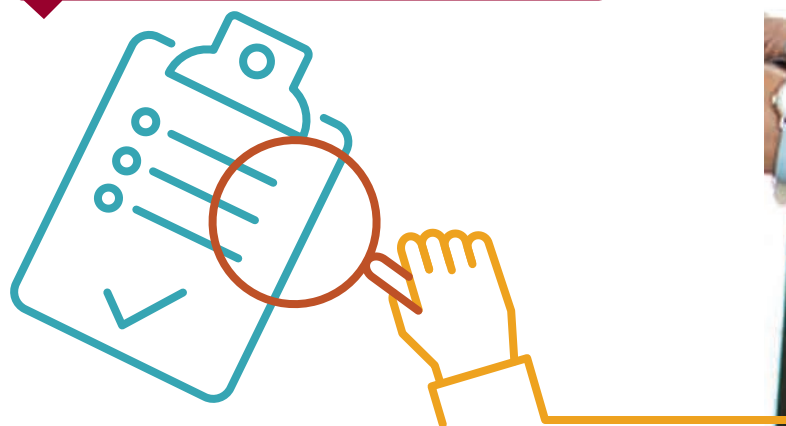
Accountable and transparent decision making

Leaders Group members are always on the lookout for how the projects are working. Consciousness has been raised about what to look for in a good program including administrative and governance issues. A two-step process of project approval enhances opportunities for discussions with families. Complex or larger investments are usually approved in principle before community planning discussions are held. Once these are completed and there is agreement about design, a full proposal comes to the Group for approval.

Contributing to the strength of the governance system is the character of the members. In 2014, community consultations leading to the establishment of the Group revealed the qualities that people in the community wanted in their family representative. These included a strong commitment to children, an ability to speak up for and communicate with their family group, and a mix of Elders and younger members and men and women. There is a high level of accountability within the SCfC. A newsletter sets out all the details of the program and the budget.

Leaders Group members are confident to report funding decisions to community members. One comments, for example, that:

Kids are the future of the community and they need to learn both ways. It's a changing world, and education is the key. I let the community and the Department know what the Leaders Group is doing. They discuss things that we can fund. For example, [they] funded kids in the school to go on the Anzac Ride and it made more kids go to school... It is helping the community. The Leaders Group discussed the problem and they are trying to resolve things, so I am hoping in the future it will get stronger.





Challenges

Despite the overall progress made, SCfC governance at Ntaria is not without its challenges. The Leaders Group has representatives from most Western Aranda family groups, but not all. Members and SCfC staff continue to encourage families not represented to become involved in the program. There are, however, a number of barriers to new people coming on to the Group. These include skin relationships, fear of shame in not understanding the program, lack of confidence about their ability to communicate in English and the discomfort of coming into an already established group.

With only four men participating, members would like more men to join the group. Considerable energy has been directed to bringing men on to the Group, but strongly gendered roles, in which children are seen as women's business, result in men not coming forward. Not all Leaders Group members engage in discussions to the same extent. For some there is likely to be fear of shame in not being proficient in English although increasingly discussions are conducted in Western Aranda. Most Leaders Group members are employed in full or part-time positions, and their work commitments can sometimes limit their availability for training and meetings. This creates implementation challenges, especially when a quorum is not present. Work demands also mean it can be difficult to take up opportunities provided by the SCfC Quality Service Support Panel. Further, while SCfC staff have negotiated with service managers to allow their Western Aranda staff to participate in meetings, these permissions must be renegotiated every time agency managers and supervisors change.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the level of representation and commitment by the existing Leaders Group members is significant. The strength of the Ntaria program appears to emerge from features in its implementation including ongoing and transparent communication and the way it builds on Western Aranda values, governance systems and social structures. Overall, SCfC governance at Ntaria puts decision making power in the hands of local people, who are seen as credible representatives from the perspective of their families.

Insights from a group exercise at the 2019 Knowledge Sharing Seminar

What makes your board work well?

Get more done → talking one language, you understand each other. Aranda first, then translated into English so everyone in Australia can hear about it.

Please tell us how your board brings good leadership to SCfC?

Women and men can talk on their own and then share.

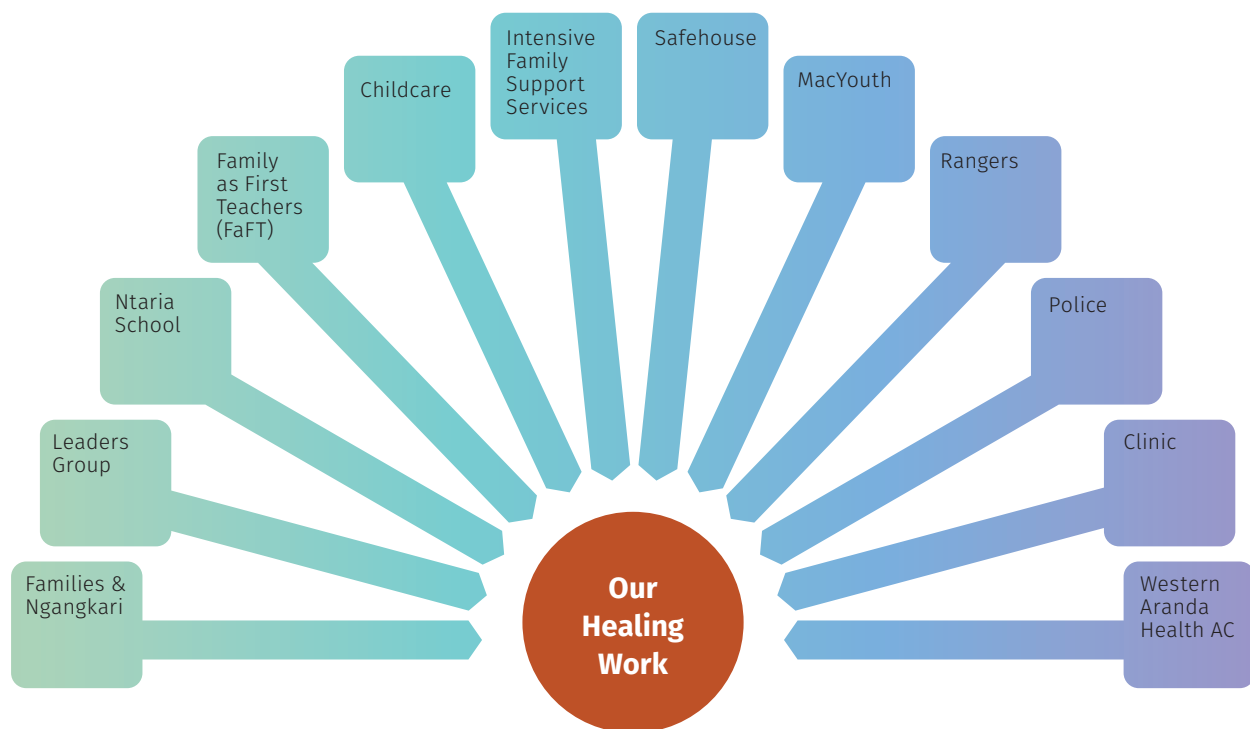
How do you see your board becoming stronger in the future?

More members – young people.



SCfC Activities Making a Difference

Child trauma responses need to involve everyone in the child’s environment acting together in a consistent way, family and community combined. The Our Healing Work visual provides a snapshot of those who are involved, along with family, when working to support a child. The Western Aranda Leaders Group contributes through mentoring, planning, developing activities, engaging with families and working together to help young people to be safe.



Kids Club

The Ntaria Kids Club has evolved into a popular therapeutic program for children in the community who may be experiencing developmental trauma.

The story of the Kids Club began in the early days of the SCfC Leaders Group in 2014, when members talked about their worries for a group of children who were always at risk of getting into trouble once they left school in the afternoons. Although there was an after school program, these children rarely attended. This same group were also regularly in trouble at school.

Understanding and applying brain science

In the years that followed, the community grew a better understanding of why this was happening. SCfC supported a series of Brain Story workshops for Ntaria services staff working with children under the age of twelve. They learned about how children's brains and behaviours were affected by violence, neglect and abuse. SCfC staff and Aboriginal teachers reported that the training equipped them to better identify and manage behaviours resulting from trauma and its effect on children's brain growth.

As community members and service providers began to understand why some children showed difficult behaviours, they formed the Healing Kids Our Way project. The project employed a professional Child Therapist and local Child and Family worker in 2017 to work alongside local Ngangkara (traditional healers). Together, this team developed concepts of trauma in the Western Aranda language through stories and images that resonate with Western Aranda culture and designed a therapeutic play program for children and youth exposed to violence, neglect and abuse.

Delivering a trauma-informed service

Kids Club was held three afternoons per week for children aged 8–12 with referrals from teachers. It created a fun place to be after school, designed through a trauma lens. There was no obligation to attend but it was so popular that often children without referrals complained that they want to come along to Kids Club too. Play was used to help develop five critical skills that children who have experienced trauma typically struggle with – listening, following directions, teamwork, expressing feelings and being able to calm down.

Activities like art, sand play, breathing exercises and relaxation help children self-soothe and calm down. Lining up for a funky haircut is a way children learn to deal with frustration and taking turns. Sports encourage teamwork. At the start of each Kids Club day, children used drawings and images to reflect on how they are feeling, with their art used to encourage them to express their emotions.

The Ntaria Kids Club has helped children to manage behaviours related to developmental trauma and provided playful opportunities for kids to be well in spirit, culture, mind and body. Project staff, teachers and family members report seeing positive changes in the behaviour of children who have regularly attended Kids Club.

The principal of Ntaria School has observed several children, in particular, who now find it easier to calm down and manage their emotions at school. She remarks that 'Kids Club definitely helped with this'. Moreover, she reports that the program has achieved broader impact across the school by creating a more supportive learning environment for children who exhibit challenging behaviours. Teachers from the school have told the Leader's Group that learning about the brain story through the Kids Club project has helped them better understand why children behave in certain ways.





Sand Play helps children to settle, and the game they are playing teaches turn taking, something that is difficult for children with developmental trauma

Ntaria SCfC Coordinator

A fun and relaxing place for kids

Children respond to the question “How do you feel about Kids Club?”

Fun, very happy, calm, relaxed, only doing fun stuff, feeling good there... My favourite thing to do at Kids Club is to go in the calming tent to lie down and sleep.

My favourite thing to do is draw pretty trees... We keep coming back, we can play there, having fun is important to us.

In 2021, Ninti One staff and a community researcher from Ntaria conducted an interview with two children who have attended Kids Club. When asked to rate the program, both children gave it 5 out of 5.

A parent of these children reported that they come home from Kids Club feeling happy, calm and settled. She explained that the program also helps free up parents by giving them extra time to look after their younger children and also engage in self-care.

When asked what Kids Club could do better, the children responded ‘soft, cozy blankets’ and ‘coming everyday’. The parent who was interviewed recommended going out to country more and learning about bush tucker.

Highly trained staff with cultural authority

A critical part of this project has been to develop the skills and capacities of six Western Aranda staff who run Kids Club. These include:

- Learning about the brain story and how to recognise behaviours associated with trauma
- What activities are best to address different behaviours
- How to pace activities during Kids Club
- How to monitor and record what is happening for each child and the group
- Specific approaches to supporting child and adolescent well-being, such as the Rock and Water program

Kungha, a Western Aranda woman and member of the SCfC Leaders Group, has brought important knowledge to running Kids Club and training the team. Kungha initially worked alongside the Australian Childhood Foundation to deliver the Brain Story workshops and provide therapeutic support for children.

The Principal of Ntaria School reports that Kids Club empowered local people to do this meaningful work without the level of formal education required by school hiring policies. She also remarks on the value of professional development opportunities that have been provided by Kids Club, such as Suicide Awareness Training. Every non-local specialist brought in for the program was paired with a Western Aranda person to create a balanced perspective and share knowledge. The Principal sees these gains in employment and training as important outcomes of the Kids Club program in Ntaria, especially considering how well placed local people are to help children within the community context.

Having a Western Aranda team brought particular strengths to Kids Club. Each staff member has a recognised skin or kin relationship that facilitates respectful communication patterns. Use of the Western Aranda language enables children and staff to understand each other. A teacher from Ntaria School comments that these kinship and language connections have been powerful in creating an environment where children feel calm and free to express themselves, yet obliged to follow rules like they would with family. Kids Club staff are in high demand by other services who recognise the skills and knowledge they have gained. By employing a project leader who is Western Aranda, SCfC has developed a way of speaking about and approaching child trauma that comes from Western Aranda ways of looking at the world.



Young Women's Place Ntaria

The Ntaria Young Women's Place (YWP) is a safe and private space on school campus which is open every day for young women over the age of 12. The idea of the YWP was put forward to the SCfC Leader's Group to improve school attendance as well as physical, mental and social well-being for local young women. YWP focuses on hygiene and well-being, young women can access showers and washing facilities so that they can feel confident at school and after school. Two local Indigenous people gained employment at the YWP, as well as learning and training opportunities to strengthen the skill range of local people.

The Young Women's Place facilitates a number of activities including health programs such as Congress Health and Well-being Sessions, Drinkwise Sessions and COVID-19 Health Sessions, Cyber Safety Sessions, cooking classes, movie screenings, arts and crafts and hairdresser and aesthetician visits and training. The YWP provides many opportunities for young women to feel comfortable and confident while engaging with peers and staff.

In terms 1 and 2 during 2020, which covers a six-month period, the total number of times the Young Women's Place was accessed by an individual was 421. As part of this usage, the total number of uses of washing, shower and mentor/crisis help was 50.

Direct outcomes from YWP showed that there was an increase in school attendance from young women, greater awareness and improvements around personal hygiene, health and well-being. Staff have also noted that several young women have come to YWP to discuss problems they are having in the community and their personal lives, which helps staff to better understand what is going on in the community. Staff can also assist young women in connecting them with appropriate support and if necessary, communicate ongoing issues with the school. Young Women's Place has been successful in creating a safe and nurturing environment for the young women of Ntaria to develop their confidence and connection with the community.



Swimming and Water Safety Program

When the rains come to Ntaria, the rivers flow. With no swimming pool in town, though, there are few opportunities for children to learn about water safety. In 2018, the Leaders Group responded to community concerns about this by supporting the Swimming and Water Safety Program.

The program brings children aged 4-16 to Alice Springs Aquatic and Leisure Centre where they participate in fortnightly learn-to-swim lessons and a water fun day over the course of a school term. Local people are employed to supervise travel and lessons. Children are provided with bathers, towels and a backpack, which they wear to school with pride and excitement when turning up early on swim days. In Term 1 of 2020, the program engaged 130 children.

Key outcomes of the Swimming and Water Safety Program have included:

- **Children are safer in and around water** – increased confidence in the water and greater knowledge about water safety
- **Children participating are healthier** – regular opportunities to develop fitness in the water during the warmer months of the year
- **Attendance at school increased** – classes are held on Fridays and provide incentive to come to school regularly

Swim lessons have become a big part of the health and well-being curriculum at Ntaria School. Moreover, it has provided shared experiences that teachers can draw from for other school work. For example, teachers might ask students to write about their experiences at swimming lessons. The swim sessions have also provided a unique environment for teachers from Ntaria School to build positive relationships with students and their families, who are encouraged to come along when there are seats available on the bus. Participation by teachers and families contributes to strong all-round support that gives the community peace of mind that children are safe when the rivers flood.







The program makes me
want to keep coming
to school all the time

Student

Ride for Pride

The Ride for Pride is an event in which senior students from Ntaria School set out for the Anzac Ride, travelling 127 kilometres from Ntaria to Alice Springs on horseback over eight days, culminating in the Anzac Day parade and ceremonies in Alice Springs.

The Anzac Ride is part of the SCfC Ride for Pride project, developed with Ntaria School, which supports students to gain recognised educational outcomes in animal husbandry. For many, horses are part of growing up in Ntaria and its outstations, and vital to their way of life. As one student described it, “my grandfather used to ride rodeo, at Harts Range and other places. I’ve been riding since I was little.”

The Journey

The ride highlights the role of Indigenous people in the Australian defence forces and the desert brumbies used by the Light Horse Infantry during the First World War.

The fifth annual Anzac Ride in 2019 began with blessings by Pastors Rodney Malbunka and Neville Doecke and songs by Ntaria Choir at the old Hermannsburg Historic Precinct. Students then headed out for their first night at Labrapuntja Outstation, about 25 kilometres north of community. For the next five days, they travelled east towards Alice Springs stopping at East Dam, Old Trap Yard, Hugh River and Twin Tanks before arriving in town via Honeymoon Gap on the evening of 23 April.

In a surprise new part of the event, the students were met by the entire Ntaria School – students and teachers from the primary and middle years – at the Ilparpa Clay Pans. Tired but happy riders shared a BBQ with the School mob before the horses were finally stabled at Blatherskite Park south of Alice Springs and everyone set up camp at the Telegraph Station. In the evenings rangers spent time with students, the men explored the river and surrounding hills and the women made bush medicine by the fire, demonstrating the process with a variety of plants, grinding, cooking and mixing to make medicinal ointments and balms.



The finale came on Anzac Day, when the six lucky students chosen to ride in the official march headed down Todd Mall, around and up Anzac Hill for the ceremony. Two female and four male senior students proudly donned the Anzac uniforms, complete with feathers, braces and jackets. Horses were brushed and hoofs painted. The support crew were a little nervous to make sure the horses got through with all the excitement on the sidelines, especially with spectators very excited to see the horses and students, take photos and say hello. In the end it all came off beautifully.

Learning and accreditation

Ride For Pride is a powerful motivator for school attendance by senior students, a group that can be hard to attract into the school environment. Ntaria School staff report increased attendance levels, with one student remarking that “the program makes me want to keep coming to school all the time”.⁸

In Ntaria, students over the age of 14 go into a vocational education and training stream, which is based on competencies in horse care and the pastoral industry. The Anzac Ride is an opportunity for students to practice what they have learned in a fun way.

It also provides an opportunity for students, many of whom already have skills with horses, to get formal recognition through VET. One big leap in 2019 was the achievement of certified educational outcomes for students who participated in the Anzac Ride. While in Alice Springs, the students visited the Arid Zone Research Institute to complete the theory component of their VET Certificate II in Horse Care. This is a big step, and one that demonstrates the determination of the Western Aranda Leaders Group, which pushed strongly to secure this opportunity.

8 NITV News (2017) “ANZAC : Riding to remember Indigenous soldiers.” Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9kN6AHX37E>.

The project is about more than horses, though, with some students choosing to participate in different ways, such as assisting with media to capture the event as well as camp life, pack-up and pack-down and helping with the catering. There is plenty of fun in the camps at night, with memorable moments such as when a student found and caught a goanna for dinner. It also generates a multitude of other learning outcomes, including managing self and others, connecting with fellow students, teachers, rangers and other key people in their community. It is a chance to get out and spend significant time on country, journeying through key outstations that are part of Western Aranda land and heritage.

The journey provides an invaluable opportunity for students to connect with and learn about country from Western Aranda professionals and leaders. Tjuwanpa Women Rangers and Central Land Council Men Rangers accompanied the students along the way, imparting knowledge about the country they were moving through, the animals, plants and unique environments and stories there.

Collaborations

The Ride for Pride project is a multi-layered partnership that brings together the NT Department of Education and Training, the Ntaria School community, Western Aranda families, and local ranger groups along with SCfC staff and leadership. Extensive collaboration takes place over months leading up to, during and after the event itself.

The project draws strength from the central role horses have played in the lives of people in Ntaria and the surrounding region. The local community's pride in this history forms strong ground for bringing people together. The Anzac Ride is a big undertaking and one that requires strong partnerships, good communication and focus on the shared goal.

Pride in self and community

The pride and sense of achievement the ride generates and its positive social outcomes cannot be overstated.

Pride in self and community was a strong theme in interviews conducted by news reporters covering the Anzac Ride in 2017.⁹ Comments included:

[I] think the community is going to feel really proud of me.
Student 1

I am feeling tall and proud, and it is really good for the families to see what kind of man I am.
Student 3

I feel proud and it makes me remember the Aboriginal people who fought in the War.
Student 2

I felt very proud for marching... for everything really, for a lot of reasons.
Student 4

I felt so grateful and proud for the kids... they've come so far from Hermannsburg and I feel really proud of them.
Tjuwanpa ranger

In 2019, the Ride for Pride project introduced its new Anzac Ride Celebration. The celebration is organised by Ntaria School in the weeks following the ride. All of community, students and their families, ride participants and other key stakeholders were invited to an evening at the Rec Hall where footage from the Ride was played and students were honoured for their achievement.

⁹ NITV News (2017) "ANZAC : Riding to remember Indigenous soldiers." Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9kN6AHX37E>.







Closing the Gap Targets

1. Everyone enjoys long and healthy lives

Swim and Water Safety Program taught students from the Ntaria school about being safe in and around water and contributed to improving child health and school attendance.

3. Children are engaged in high quality culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years.

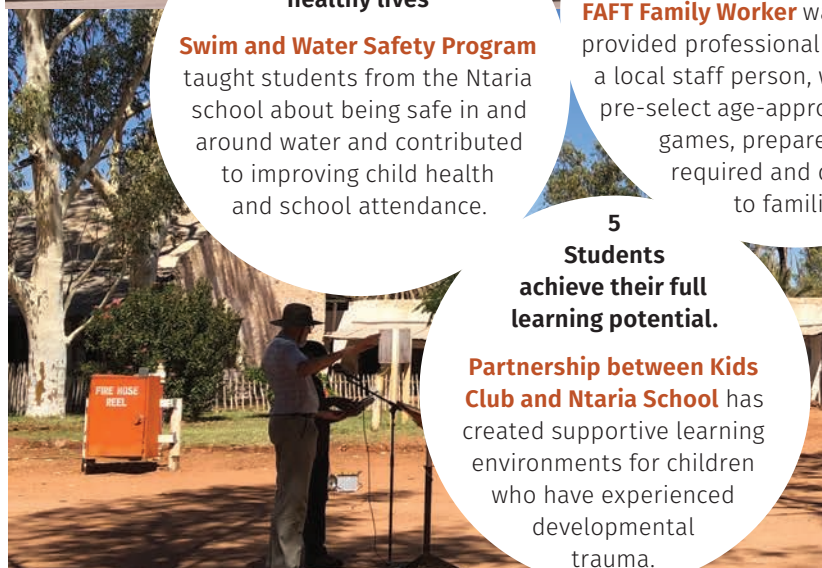
FAFT Family Worker was employed and provided professional development for a local staff person, who was able to pre-select age-appropriate learning games, prepare resource required and delivered to families.


6. Students reach their full potential through further education pathways

The Ride for Pride students from Ntaria school set out for the annual Anzac ride to Alice Springs and achieved certified educational outcomes in VET certificates.

5. Students achieve their full learning potential.

Partnership between Kids Club and Ntaria School has created supportive learning environments for children who have experienced developmental trauma.





**7
Youth
are engaged in
employment or education.**

Young Women's Place is supporting students aged 12 and older to feel confident engaging with peers and school staff, and is boosting attendance.

The Michael Long Leadership Project has opened doors for students to secure apprenticeships and engage in further education.

**14.
People enjoy
high levels of social
and emotional well-being**

Kids Club Program provided afterschool base learning in behavioural management.

Men's Shed held a brain story workshop with the men in community which included respectful behavioural, exploring flight fight and freeze descriptions.

**13.
Families and
households are safe**

Kids Club Program created kids packs to give to kids at home and on outstations during the COVID lockdown.

**15
People
maintain a distinctive
cultural, spiritual, physical,
and economic relationship
with their land and waters.**

Ride for Pride brings children and young people out on country, where they gain traditional knowledge about plants, animals and the land.

**16
Cultures and
languages are strong,
supported and flourishing.**

Western Aranda language and culture is embedded in Kids Club as well as the governance system of SCfC in Ntaria.

Impacts of SCfC in Ntaria

Mission Outcomes



Children and young people

School attendance

Reports by students and staff at Ntaria School suggest that the Young Women's Space and Ride for Pride have boosted school attendance, especially among senior students who can be hard to engage. For example, although there is not a baseline figure available, reports during 2019-20 indicate that there was an increase of attendance of girls and young women aged 11 and over in school, with female students attending more than 65% of the time. The Principal of Ntaria School reports that the more significant change has been higher quality engagement, and that she has observed gradual improvements by several students in particular. For example, one student who participated in a SCfC funded leadership program in 2019 gained motivation to persist with school. She is on track to be the first student to graduate Year 12 from Ntaria School after completion of her teacher's assistant apprenticeship at Charles Darwin University.

Personal and social development

SCfC activities have sparked action across sectors and organisations to address the impacts of intergenerational trauma and respond to the personal and social development needs of children and young people in Ntaria. The Kids Club and Healing Kids Our Way Project, for example, have provided children with access to trauma-informed care. Teachers and family members are observing positive behaviour changes in children who attend Kids Club regularly. Another example is the Ride for Pride, which engages young people in a challenging cooperative endeavour that fosters resilience, pride and a sense of achievement.



Cultural learning and participation

Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills

The Healing Kids Our Way Project and Kids Club have provided children with learning and play activities that draw from, model, teach, and practice Western Aranda language and culture. Children who attend Kids Club are highly engaged and enthusiastic to participate, while teachers report that this opportunity for children to speak their own language is especially powerful. Older children and young adults gain additional cultural knowledge and skills from The Ride for Pride project, which provides unique opportunities to connect with country, learn from local rangers, and express pride in their heritage.



Workforce and human capacity

Increased hours worked by Western Aranda people

During an eighteen-month period up to December 2020, SCfC has created 34 work opportunities for Western Aranda. High quality employment generated by SCfC in Ntaria includes a two-person child response team, a social worker to help at the Men's Shed and a six-person team of Western Aranda staff to run Kids Club.

New work and professional development opportunities

In addition to creating new jobs for local people, SCfC has invested in training and other professional development opportunities to ensure that people who work with children in Ntaria continue to learn and expand their skillset. Nine out of ten SCfC activities in Ntaria provided new training opportunities for Western Aranda people. The program has also increased work and professional development opportunities for young people. For example, the Ride for Pride project has enabled young people to gain VET Cert II qualifications in animal husbandry and facilitated interaction with local pastoral stations. This has provided these young people with valuable skills that expand their employability in local industries such as land management and tourism.



Family and community safety

Children are safer when the rivers flood

The Swimming and Water Safety Program has engaged over 100 children aged 4-16 each year since it began in 2018. Community members and Ntaria school staff report that children and participating family members have gained valuable skills that improve their ability to stay safe when the rivers are full.

Impacts of SCfC in Ntaria

Systems Change



Community governance capacity

LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority

The Western Aranda Leaders Group has established membership criteria that ensure the cultural authority of SCfC leadership and decision making processes. Members of the Leaders Group consistently demonstrate their commitment to improving the well-being of children in their community, and have gained valuable experience in leading collaborative work to achieve this.

LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making and planning

Members of the Leaders Group have expressed significant gains in confidence since becoming involved with SCfC. Specifically, they report feeling less shy, more proud of their ability to work with government, and highly capable of communicating about SCfC funding with local families and service organisations, involving them in planning and decision making processes, and making their voices heard.

Cross Cutting Outcomes

Access to flexible and responsive support

Local decision making has enabled SCfC to respond quickly when needs or circumstances require. For example, when the school lost funding for swimming classes the Leaders Group was able to quickly respond with approval for the Learn to Swim project.

Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements

SCfC activities have strengthened collaboration between organisations and agencies in Ntaria. The Ride for Pride project, for example, has fostered strong and sustained partnerships between the Ntaria school, local ranger groups, and the NT Department of Education and Training.

In total, eleven organisations have collaborated on SCfC activities in Ntaria, including MacYouth, Lutheran Community Care, and the Western Aranda Health Aboriginal Corporation.

Collective impact through leverage of program support

Leaders Group members have successfully leveraged program support by bringing SCfC-related matters into workplace networks, community boards, and other decision making forums. For example, they mobilised \$30,000 from the Central Land Council's Working Group to support child-safe education.



Strategic Learning from Ntaria

- Communicating about healing through Western Aranda language and worldview has been a critical factor in supporting children in Ntaria.
- Providing age-appropriate spaces for children and young people to express themselves in language has supported their social and emotional development.
- Inclusion of kin relations in LCB membership criteria has increased its ability to engage the community and facilitate participatory planning and transparent decision making.
- Linkages with service agencies and organisations through Leaders Group members' employment or membership on other community boards have enabled SCfC to leverage program support, build strong partnerships, and add value to existing government services.
- Learning about 'the brain story' has helped teachers better understand and respond to challenging behaviours. This has created a more supportive learning environment at Ntaria school.
- Play and fun have been crucial in engaging children and young people in activities that support their well-being, broaden their knowledge and skills, and deepen their connection to local culture, land, and heritage.



Ltyentye Apurte

Getting to know Ltyentye Apurte

“Anetyeke”: Stay strong, live long

Ltyentye Apurte (jih-n-jah-pur-ah), “stand of beefwood trees”, is an Eastern Arrernte community, also known as Santa Teresa, located 85km south-east of Alice Springs in semi-desert country. Its population is estimated to be 555 people of which 90.5% are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.¹ The land surrounding Ltyentye Apurte is rich in rock art, artefacts and ceremonial sites.

The history of the community began in the 1920s when local Arrernte people moved in from the bush, and settled in Alice Springs near Anzac Hill. In 1937, the Catholic Marist Brothers established a school for Aboriginal children. By 1953, Ltyentye Apurte was established as a Catholic Mission. It became home to people from Alice Springs and the Catholic Mission from the former gold mining town of Arltunga. In the 1970s the community became part of Aboriginal land trust.

It was a big move but we settled in alright. Our ancestors always looked after the country around here

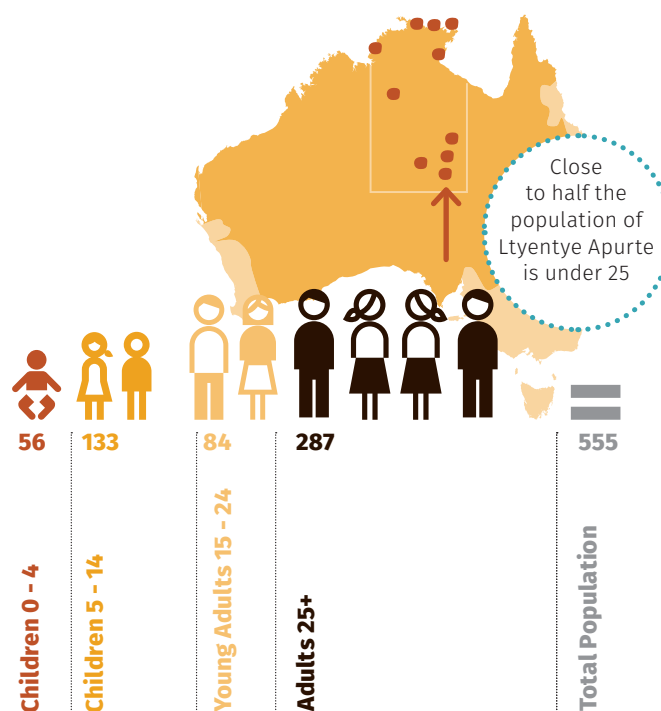
Phillip Alice (RIBS Broadcaster)²

The town has four areas: East Side, New Houses, Old Village and Across the Fence. These areas are used by different family groups in accordance with cultural practices. Essential services such as power, water and sewage are provided by the MacDonnell Regional Council. Ltyentye Apurte also has a general store, fuel station, school, church, art and craft centre, health clinic, police station, post office and community library.³

1 <https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/communities/santa-teresa>

2 <https://vimeo.com/320718843>

3 <https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/communities/santa-teresa>



There is also an indoor sports centre, swimming pool, football oval, softball oval and children playground. The community defines itself as Indigenous Catholic, and going to church on Sundays is an important activity. Eastern/Central Arrernte, Western Arrernte and English are spoken in the community.

Ltyentye Apurte is a vibrant community and people are proud of their town.

For a few years now the whole community has been working hard, making this a really good place to live in. We have a lot going on in Santa Teresa, we are all busy, building new things and keeping the place looking good. We think this is the best place to live in Central Australia

Phillip Alice (RIBS Broadcaster)⁴

In 2019, the community won the Australia Tidy Towns award recognising their sustainability achievements and Ltyentye Apurte was also named Australia’s most sustainable community.

4 <https://vimeo.com/320718843>

Governance for SCfC in Ltyentye Apurte

The Atyenhenge-Atherre Aboriginal Corporation (AAAC) is the SCfC facilitating partner in Ltyentye Apurte. AAAC is a not-for-profit established in 2010 to represent Ltyentye Apurte community members in decision making about the future of their community. Its name, Atyenhenge-Atherre reflects its mission, “from Grandfather to Grandson”.

The local community board that guides SCfC is called the Decision Making Group. They meet to suggest, discuss and make decisions on projects put forward by community members and agencies. Membership of the Decision Making Group was initially open to all who wanted to be involved. Over time, membership decreased. As members dropped off, the Decision Making Group was left with the right people for the job. Today, the membership is a mix of males and females across all ages who are focused on children’s outcomes.

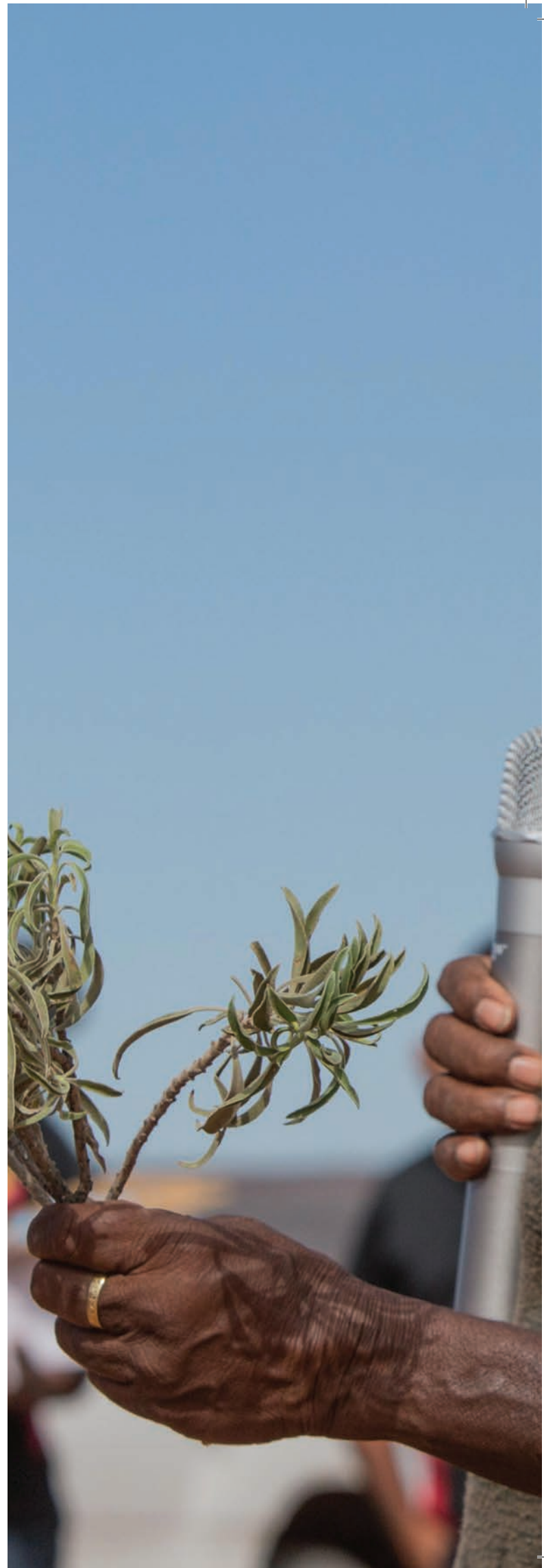
The long-term commitment of board members makes the group function well:

“If we want change, we need to be committed. Even if funding stops, we need to find other funding streams to continue what we are doing”

Decision Making Group member

The Decision Making Group prioritises local knowledge, using people that already have skills in the community, and building programs around those skills. This is why local employment has risen as a result of the programs implemented.

Since its inception, the Decision Making Group has come far in its organisation, confidence in decision making, and in their understanding why their decisions are important.



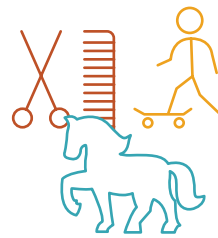
SCfC Activities in Ltyentye Apurte

There is a range of SCfC activities in Ltyentye Apurte. New businesses have been set up, including a furniture store, coffee cart, Spinifex Skateboards skate park and enterprise, a traditional craft centre and a hair salon. Alongside these businesses are children and young person focused programs such as the Music and Drumming program, Horse Program, Kids Care Coaching, Start Right/ Eat Right, babyFAST, Cyber Safety, Child Safety, Holiday Program, an eco school program and Your Voice Strong Voice. There are also on-going Indigenous Ecological Learning Camps, a Community Cultural Heritage project and a BushWok Nutrition Program.

Spinifex Skateboards

The Ltyentye Apurte Hair Salon

Horse Program





Spinifex Skateboards

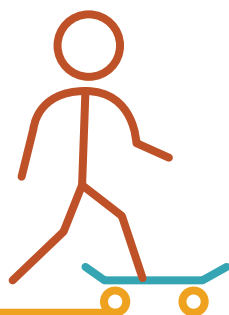
“I want to build something that supports the kids and young people who decide to take on something new. I want to achieve something that can grow and to show these young people that they too can achieve big things.”

Nick Hayes, Spinifex Skateboards founder⁶

Spinifex Skateboards is an exciting skate park and brand that aims to merge Indigenous and non Indigenous, urban and remote, and traditional and contemporary art forms. Its purpose is to teach skateboarding skills to young people. Beyond skateboarding, it is also about learning something different, self expression, perseverance, making new friends and keeping fit. The skate park is the first of its kind in central Australia.

Spinifex Skateboards was presented to the Decision Making Group in 2016. After three meetings, the Decision Making Group invested \$10,000 to build a mini ramp in an unused area of a Sport and Recreation Hall. Nick Hayes, the founder, began by running skate lessons through his job as a Youth Worker. Supported by the Australian Skateboarding Federation, Nick became the Northern Territory's first qualified Indigenous skateboard instructor.

5 <https://www.spinifexskateboards.com/our-crew>



Spinifex Skateboards has received overwhelming support from the local community, Alice Springs and across Australia through media attention in the news and local radio. The brand received board and safety gear donations and a friend painted the logo at the indoor park. Ltyentye Apurte has also gained attention in the wider skate community. This has led to the PASS-PORT skate team visiting when they were on their Northern Territory tour and pro bono graphic design and marketing from Gilimbaa.

Spinifex Skateboards serves as a youth engagement and development programme. Through bringing young people across the community together, it keeps them out of trouble. As they skate together the young people build shared experiences. Not only are they learning new skills and building their own confidence but they encourage one another. It has helped their relationships, and stopped bullying. The first ever Spinifex Skateboards First Nation Skate Tour took eight young people to Brisbane in January to meet other skaters, show their skills and provide them with new experiences to expand their world view. Through educating and exposing young people to unfamiliar territory, Spinifex Skateboards is building a positive and respectful future.

“Lots of exposure which encourages young people. Gives them opportunities”

Community member

The brand has brought outside activities into Ltyentye Apurte, reducing isolation and boredom and bringing fun and excitement. It has also brought Aboriginal culture into mainstream Australia. The brand has changed the idea of Indigenous art through skating.

“Happy with him doing it, an Indigenous local man. This makes the kids happy and comfortable”

Community member

The Ltyentye Apurte Hair Salon

The Hair Salon was an initiative seed-funded by SCfC in 2017 to provide local employment and a locally-based service to cater for community needs. Housed in an old bakery, the building has been given new life. The salon was painted, cleaned and decorated with plants from the local nursery. It was set up with cushions, a reception desk, couches, tables, plants, a water bubbler and a blackboard. The floors were beautifully painted by local ladies who each designed their own mural.

The team is made up of a Salon Manager and three women from Ltyentye Apurte. The salon has sent two of their staff members on a three-year hairdressing apprenticeship at Charles Darwin University for “proper training” that the young ladies “see a future in”.⁶

There has been an incredible community response to the Hair Salon:

What I love most about coming to work is learning, it makes me want to try cutting hair and handling scissors, it also makes me try harder

Cherelle Davis, Hair Salon

It's important for all from the community. People need the hairdresser here. It's a handy thing, when anything comes up and we need to go to hairdressers and fix ourselves

Community member

This is going to be the future ahead

Community member

People are proud to go there

Community member

Beyond providing opportunities for the young ladies working there, the Hair Salon provides a locally based service that makes people feel good.

When people do get their hair done it makes them feel really good. Feeling good is good for confidence. Feeling good helps people be strong

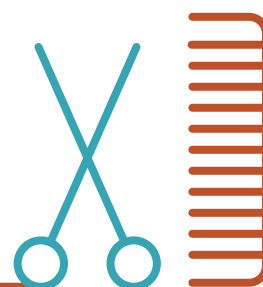
Community member

The Hair Salon also doubles as a space to host weekly youth nights, men's nights and women's nights. It is a safe space for the community, and in the past has hosted women's legal aid meetings.

I love getting together on the youth nights and helping each other, seeing the kids happy and healthy with their new haircuts and colour

Cherelle Davis, Hair Salon

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klAZrAFSSkA>



Horse Program

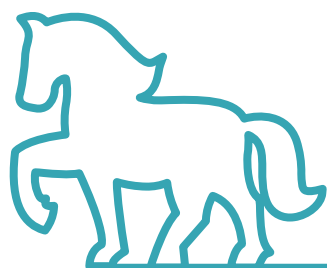
Kids that went behaved better. Kids that was going to court and stuff learnt how to better towards people and Elders

Community member

The Ltyentye Apurte Horse Program was developed in response to a series of community break-ins. Within a fortnight, needs were identified and the Horse Program was designed and ready to start.

The program design was based on research on the positive impact working with large animals can have on children experiencing trauma. With support from the local stockman, two camps for young boys to learn about horsemanship were developed. There was a rewards camp for students with high school attendance and a diversionary camp for young people engaging in high risk behaviour. Both camps involved practicing the respect and patience needed to work with a large, wild animal. However, the diversionary camp required harder work. Difficult, hands-on work gave disengaged young people the positive experience of fatigue and pride after a job well done.

Community members have seen the change in behaviour of the young boys that attended the Horse Program, particularly towards other people and the Elders. It has kept them out of trouble and some have noted that the young boys are able to move forward after the program. The program has taught young boys new skills that can be passed onto the next generation.



Impacts of SCfC in Ltyentye Apurte

Mission Outcomes



Children and young people

Children on track in communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal-social

The Horse Program and Spinifex Skateboard has resulted in the improvement of children and young people’s behaviours, including those that had gone to court previously. Community members report children learning how to “be better towards people and their Elders”, enabling them to “move forward now”. It has helped their relationships, and stopped bullying.

Children’s involvement in the Spinifex Skateboard, as an innovative activity, has enabled them to learn new skills and even teach others that do not know how to skate. In the words of a community member, this “brings kids together” and “kids who are skating are encouraging each other and others to skate”. Acquiring new skills has brought the idea of a possible “good future” since some of the children will “maybe one day become pro”.

Other activities have had a positive impact as well. The Traditional Craft Center, for example, is seen as “the best thing to see for our kids”. Other positive changes mentioned by community members in the survey were:

It makes the youth program more fun. SCfC has been related to youth development and engagement

I do think it made a lot of changes. It put smiles on peoples faces and mine as well and now we teaching the young ones from School



Family and community safety

Community perceptions of change

Well it’s great impact on young people of the community and young kids as well

The start up and growth of SCfC businesses have led many community members to feel a growing sense of pride in Ltyentye Apurte. The community feels their town is “booming” and the availability of services, run by Indigenous people, is growing. As a result, the community has felt a lot has changed for the better since SCfC started. The new businesses have led to an expectation to “keep going, and grow even more”. The “booming” feeling can be explained by several other perceptions of change.

First, SCfC has led to a two-way impact between individuals and the community. Two community members explain how this happens interchangeably:

I think it’s important for the community, they’re me

It is important to me as a community member and as a worker and I like to help other people in the community.

The logic is that if the community improves this will have a direct impact on individuals. This is due to the sense of responsibility individuals have towards 'the mob' and the importance placed on community and helping each other out.

Second, the sense of community pride has also improved. This is not only because of the growing businesses but because of the possibility of sharing knowledge and skills across generations and communities. Traditional crafts that "used to be done by old people at home years ago" is an example of the former. Now Ltyentye Apurte is leading ideas and being able to provide town services in their own community:

Other communities are using us as an example for their own communities. We're leading ideas.

People are happy and relatives from other communities come up to us and tell it's really good what you are doing, keep it up.

Third, SCfC activities have brought confidence and the possibility of "feeling good". For example, "When people do get their hair done it makes them feel really good" which then boosts confidence and "helps people be strong". This is also related to a change of attitude, since people going to activities start to participate and talk to other people more.

Overall, SCfC has been described by community members as improving the way people live.



Cultural learning and participation

Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills

Do some traditional things, teach younger generations, keep culture strong

Community member

The Traditional Craft Centre in particular has brought a lot of pride to the community. Elders passing on their knowledge and skills on wood crafting and traditional tools has kept the tradition alive, while enabling the younger generations to learn new skills and have fun. The community feel passionately about keeping their Aboriginal culture strong, and ensuring it is passed on to young people. It has also allowed people to go to exhibitions and sales in markets and galleries.

This work has brought memories of what older men used to do, including making traditional crafts such as spears, boomerangs and shields, as well as their grandmother's secrets on what to use for coolamons 'and other stuff'. Also, it has led young people to learn and be role models for others. Some of the young people say:

I like this job because it bring back memories about how the way old people used to make bush tools back then.

When I was little I seen my grandfather's making bush tools and to me to start making bush tools makes me happy.

It's enjoyable. It's goo to keep it going. Enjoy going out bush getting the wood, keep the tradition going. Learn a lot since it started.

The program has also taught the school kids about their family line/family tree. Taking school kids out to the countryside has allowed them to learn about tradition, including bush tucker. People from Ltyentye Apurte are conscious about the past and the new realities of their community and place:

Yes, this is our life, our story, our memories, how our people lived in the past. Now we have our own business in the community.

Impacts of SCfC in Ltyentye Apurte

Systems Change



Community governance capacity

LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority

Community members describe how AAAC has become strong again. This is related to a sense of ownership. Community members “can have a say”, allowing Ltyentye Apurte to stand out from other places. In the words of a community member:

“If we didn’t have AAAC or any local decision making then we wouldn’t have these businesses”. Also, the possibility of offering services in Ltyentye Apurte, instead of having to go into town, has enhanced community leadership and decision making “in what the businesses are and what they do. Keeps people in line (accountability)”.

LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making and planning

SCfC Coordinator from AAAC shares “what’s been really incredible is seeing how far the local Decision Making Group has come from a few years ago within the confidence of making decisions and understanding why their decisions are so important”. Besides the impact on the LCB, there has been a positive impact on other community members in terms of confidence and empowerment. Community members have described how the SCfC activities have given people choice, empowerment, self worth, self-esteem and connections with community members. They “bring people together to learn how to become independent” and they are the “reason to wake up in the morning”. In some cases this is related with the possibility of running their own business.



Workforce and human capacity

Increased hours worked by Ltyentye Apurte people

SCfC has resulted in several new businesses in Ltyentye Apurte, ranging from a Furniture Store and Hair Salon to a Coffee Cart and Traditional Craft Centre. All these businesses provide local employment. Community members in Ltyentye Apurte felt employment and jobs to be the biggest benefit of SCfC.

The main thing is they pay us

Community member

New local employment and professional development opportunities

Beyond providing jobs, SCfC has opened up opportunities for apprenticeships, enhancing the development of new skills. For example the Hair Salon has provided a three-year apprenticeship opportunity for young ladies at Charles Darwin University to become qualified hairdressers. The young ladies were excited about training that they “saw a future in”. In addition, the Hair Salon is a work experience activity for senior students. A community member expressed that with SCfC comes increased opportunities:

...for people to earn good money, not just government money

A sentiment shared across the community. This has allowed young people to “know that when they grow up they might have a good job in their home community”.

Cross-cutting outcomes

Effective place-based strategy

Before it was broken but now its strong again

Community member

Ltyentye Apurte is being used as an example for other communities. SCfC has provided local people with control over local development, creating big changes in the community. Community members feel pride in Ltyentye Apurte and ownership in its programs.

SCfC has also given the community more autonomy in terms of services offered. Rather than having to go to Alice Springs or to another town, they can now offer some products and services, allowing them to “keep the money in the community”, which “keeps the community going”. In some cases, this autonomy leads to a sense of comfort, for example for those people who feel more comfortable when getting their hair done in the community, since some might feel shy when getting their hair done in town. Now, they can get their hair done in a more private way. In the words of a community member:

People are more familiar and comfortable here

In the case of furniture, this has allowed people to buy things in Ltyentye Apurte, rather than having to go into town. This is comfortable for people who do not have a truck to pick up furniture from town, for example, since they have the opportunity to get it home delivered by the local store. This new situation has made some products and services more handy, making it easier for families to get their goods. Providing “new things to do or access in our community”, creating more opportunities for the Ltyentye Apurte population.

Second, SCfC has led Ltyente Apurte to turn into a better, safer and more exciting place for kids, young people and the community as a whole. The inclusive nature of the activities has helped kids to stay out of trouble, encouraged them to try new things, “help their relationships” and “stop bullying”. In terms of infrastructure, community members mention the difference made by the new lights on the oval, allowing the hall to be open all night, which is good for the kids. Other changes, such as the Traditional Craft Center, the coffee shop, and the hair salon, are referred to as making the community a better space and place. People express being happy for having their own shed, for example, for being able to see men doing what they like, for having access to healthy meals and coffee, as well as a place to have a good hair cut and colour their hair and then, “Everybody looks good”. Also, activities such as skating have brought fun and excitement, countering the boredom and isolation that people feel as a result of living in ‘remote communities’. In the case of women, they express how “Now there is a place that can be used for women’s only yarns”.

Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements

Many of the SCfC activities are implemented in partnership with other organisations. Collaborative arrangements have been made with a range of organisations from the Central Land Council Ranger for the Indigenous Ecological Learning Camps to Incite Arts for the Your Voice Strong Voice mural and music video on domestic violence. The community has also worked with the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect to run the Communities Keep Kids Safe Parenting Program and to develop a storybook, All Children Being Safe. In the case of Spinifex Skateboards, community members share how Nick Hayes, the founder, has built different networks and support, enhancing good communication with ‘outside networks’, such as the Australian Skateboarding Federation.

Leverage of program support

A survey of 21 Ltyentye Apurte community members conducted by Ninti One and community members in July 2020 demonstrates how program support has been leveraged through creation of local businesses. The graph below shows that community members perceive strong impacts on employment, skills development, keeping money in the community, as well as on enhancing community pride, community ownership and passing on knowledge and skills.

How does Ltyentye Apurte benefit from having these businesses?

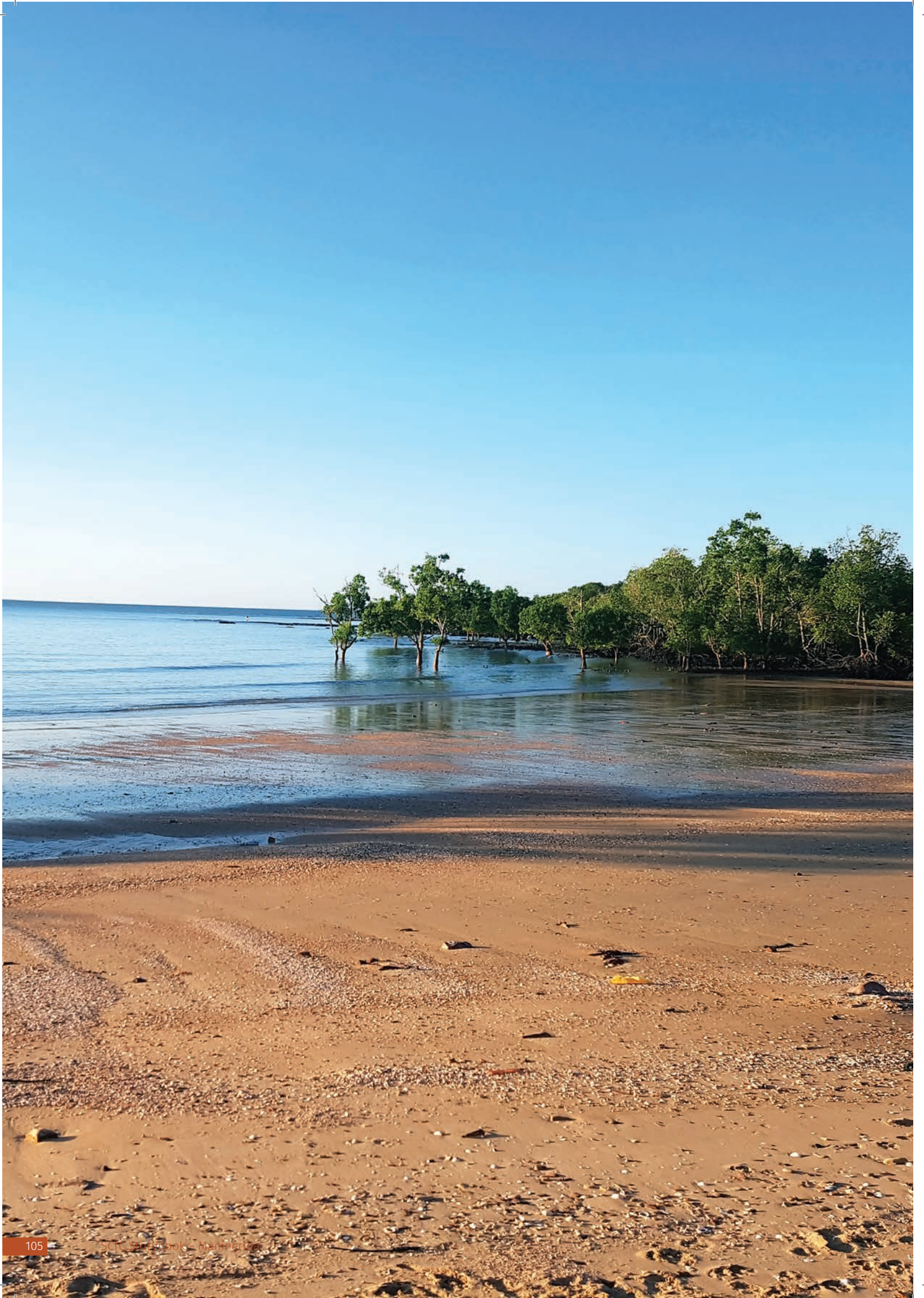






Strategic Learning from Ltyentye Apurte

- Bringing new activities – such as skating – that combine traditional aspects (such as art) with elements from mainstream Australia, turn into good opportunities for children to explore. Besides this intercultural strength, skating has also enhanced skills development, peer support and having fun! The fact that it is led by an Indigenous local man has also been a success factor.
- Enhancing the development of local businesses supports empowerment and self-determination processes in the community. It brings good opportunities both for people that offer the service, since they get the chance to have local work, as well as for people accessing the services, since they might feel more comfortable and do not have to go into town. Some community members express the need to revise prices, since some people still can't afford these services, and other people suggest revising the number and gender of staff working in the businesses.
- Having a strong Aboriginal corporation as the facilitating partner, has been a key element for business development and having control “about local development”. The impacts described here show the important role that the AAAC plays. Although people recognise ‘it was once broken’, AAAC is now strong again and say “we learnt from those days”. For people in Ltyentye Apurte, AAAC represents community, and as a local Aboriginal organisation they ‘help a lot’ and support community development.
- Analysis of local impacts from SCfC indicate that making Ltyentye Apurte a better place requires commitment from all community members. Besides having AAAC as a strong support, success depends on the participation of children, young people, adults and Elders. It is the joint work and the understanding of the relation between individual well-being and community well-being that has enabled Ltyentye Apurte to achieve their current state.



Maningrida

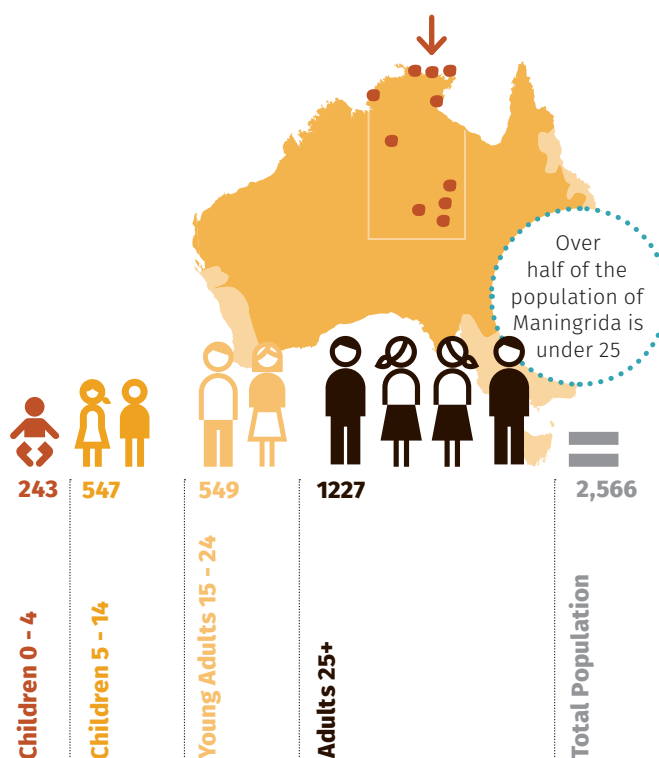
Getting to know Maningrida

Maningrida is located approximately 500km east of Darwin and 300km northeast of Jabiru in Arnhem Land at the mouth of what is now known as the Liverpool River. It was established as a permanent settlement in 1949, originally as a trading post to enable settlers and outsiders to trade with Aboriginal people living in the area.¹

The Kunibídjí people, who are the traditional owners of the area, call it Manayingkarírra, the name of a little spring near the current barge landing. According to the Northern Territory Place Names Committee, the name Maningrida is an Anglicised version of Manayingkarírra, from the phrase “Mane djang karirra”, meaning “the place where the Dreaming changed shape.” Languages spoken in Maningrida include Ndjébbana, Nakara, Gurrgone, Kunbarlang, Burarra, Kuninjku (Eastern Kunwinjku), Kune (Mayali), Rembarrnga and Djinang.¹ Most people in the community can speak three or four languages, with Burarra (46%) and Ndjébbana (12%) being the most commonly spoken.²

The original trading post at Manayingkarírra / Manawukan was converted into a permanent settlement called Maningrida by the Northern Territory’s welfare department in 1957. The Federal Government’s welfare and assimilation policies brought Aboriginal people from surrounding clan estates in to the settlement, quickly and drastically altering the demographics of the area, and straining traditional rivalries. Further tensions were sparked by the rapidly growing presence of Balanda (non-Indigenous people), who were given modern housing, jobs and other benefits.³

1 West Arnhem Regional Council (2020) ‘Our communities: Maningrida’, <https://www.westarnhem.nt.gov.au/our-communities/maningrida>
 2 Mala’la Health Services Aboriginal Corporation <https://www.malala.com.au/about>
 3 Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (2020) ‘Place names: Manayingkarírra, Manawukan and Maningrida’. <https://www.bawinanga.com/about-us/history/>



For Aboriginal people whose country was outside Maningrida, there was always the prospect of leaving the settlement, and some groups of people were already spending at least part of the year back on their own country. This shift was part of the ‘outstation movement’ that was starting to grow across Australia. After the passing of the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act in 1976, even more local people returned to their homelands.²

Maningrida is now one of the largest remote towns in the Northern Territory, with a population of approximately 3,000-3,500 people. It is the major service centre for the local population as well as more than 30 outstations or homelands, with a school, health clinic, multiple food outlets, two supermarkets, service station, arts centre, crèche and a tarmac airport with daily commercial flights to Darwin. There is a 25-metre swimming pool managed by West Arnhem Regional Council, sports ovals and basketball facilities. Small-scale tourism ventures, including cultural tours and fishing expeditions, also operate out of Maningrida.

Governance for SCfC in Maningrida

Respect is about reflecting on our people in the community and our Elders, we need to talk and show love and respect to our people for a better place.

Charlie Gunabarra
Chair
SCfC Reference Group



Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation has been the Facilitating Partner for the Stronger Communities for Children program in Maningrida since the community joined the program in 2015. The organisation is governed by eight community-elected directors who represent local tribes and language groups, plus two independent directors. Each director brings specific knowledge and experience in various subjects including community health, traditional ownership, community history and culture. Mala'la provides a range of primary health care services, youth services and residential and community care and disability services.

The local community board that guides the program in Maningrida is called the SCfC Reference Group. Bringing together the people and processes needed for an effective local board for SCfC took some coordination at the outset. Mala'la provided guidance on the key people to invite initially. The first board members then discussed who else could be invited to ensure the right mix of people to include, for example, a younger person and someone to represent the school.

Initially, members of the SCfC Reference Group wanted to meet all the time because they felt a need to know clearly the direction of SCfC, what had been progressed so far and they wished to make sure local priorities were being addressed. A strong priority stressed by the group was the need for support for young women, especially those who became pregnant and were not sure what to feed their babies and how to be good parents.

Some of the Reference Group members live out bush in the dry season, so they have sometimes been difficult to contact. Instead, the local SCfC Coordinator has talked with them in person wherever possible, to ensure that the views of group members would be taken to the meetings. The meetings themselves have followed a process of using an agenda and developing an action sheet. Meetings are held separately from Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation board meetings, although two Mala'la board members are also SCfC Reference Group members. A benefit of trying to maintain a strong group has been that different members have been able to offer different perspectives. For example, one Reference Group member is a parent of young children, one lives on the outstations, one is a parent of teenagers, while others are grandparents.

Generating ideas for activities under SCfC is clearly very important. As SCfC became established, service providers and community members began proposing activities and programs to address needs and gaps they perceived in the community. The Reference Group really appreciates and supports anything that is developing young men and women. To establish a viable new initiative, it has been necessary in some cases to negotiate co-funding with other services in the community.

I come to this program from listening to my Elders, there were only a few people then. We didn't know much about the program; but we were learning. It's very important, our children are the future, we must educate them, talk to them about being a good role model. You never know in the future they might be in the office as a CEO. Its good the ten communities come together, talk about the future, specifically our children, talk to them, encourage them to understand the two worlds we live in, teach them to be leaders.



Valda Bokmakarray,
Member
SCfC Reference Group

SCfC Activities Making a Difference



Over the years, many important initiatives have been funded by SCfC in Maningrida. In August 2020, Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal corporation invited Ninti One to work with their staff to measure the changes that have resulted from these investments. Mala'la chose three activities to be assessed:

- Australian Football League (AFL) Programs**
- Rheumatic Heart Disease Community Awareness Project**
- Preconception Health and Education Program**

Insights from a group exercise at the 2019 Knowledge Sharing Seminar

What makes your board work well?

They are well known to each other and they are well known in the community. They are respected by community members and each other and allow for each other's opinion even if it differs from their own.

Please tell us how your board brings good leadership to SCfC?

The board members represent different groups within the community (young women, adult women, adult men, children, etc.) They are also on many other boards in the community, meaning they have knowledge of all the issues within the community and can plan accordingly.

How do you see your board becoming stronger in the future?

Our board is made up of some of the most respected and knowledgeable people in the community. Unfortunately we only have 1 male representative, plus the majority of our board are of an older age. We would like to strengthen our board by adding another male, as well as younger community members.



When the activity began, there were very few AFL football or fitness programs available within Maningrida College

Australian Football League (AFL) Programs

The origins of the program

The SCfC Program in Maningrida has supported an AFL program in the community since 2018. The purpose of the program is to develop and implement football and fitness themed programs to support the well-being of the Maningrida community and to provide local employment and development opportunities.

When the SCfC AFL activity began, there were very few AFL football or fitness programs available within Maningrida College, which is the main way of reaching children and young people in the community. There was no junior football program outside of school hours and no women's football program. The men's AFL competition was largely dysfunctional, resulting in a high level of violence both on the field and between players and supporters between matches too.

Importantly, this activity saw that coordination and partnerships with other service providers relating to AFL in the community were quite limited. There were no AFL employment opportunities for local community members.

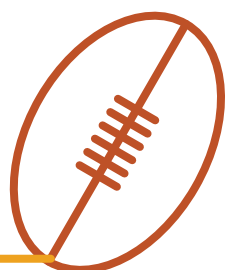
The SCfC Program supported changes by AFL Northern Territory (AFLNT) across the way that AFL runs in Maningrida.

Targeting benefits for students through AFL at Maningrida College

Maningrida College is the community school. The school program recommenced in August 2018 as a means to re-engage students with low-key AFL activities. With the assistance of local trainees, the program has since developed to provide the following activities:

- Informal kick-to-kick programs before school encouraging students to attend school early. These programs have reached 10-20 students each morning.
- Informal kick-to-kick programs at recess and lunch breaks to improve fitness and technique. These programs have reached 30-40 students each morning.
- First Class Fitness and Footy programs each Monday and Tuesday (8.30am – 9.30am) that have been directed at younger primary students with the purpose to get them active and 'awake' before moving into their first school lessons (reaching approx. 50 students every Monday and Tuesday morning).
- Friday afternoon Middle Year and Senior Sport sessions covering various sporting activities and reaching around 20-30 students every week.
- Opportunities for talented male and female students to participate in Darwin-based talent programs.
- Inter-school football games.
- Homelands Auskick programs.

As a result and depending on the time of the year, the school program reaches up to 160 students per week.



Breaking new ground through the Women's AFL Program

As mentioned previously, before the commencement of the women's program in February 2019 there were no football opportunities for the women of Maningrida.

When the new program started, around 5-10 local women attended weekly skill development sessions. Over 18 months since that time, the program has developed to provide weekly football activity to around 40-50 women with the first ever formal women's Maningrida competition to commence in late 2020, after the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

One of the things that program implementers of Mala'la noticed early on, which prevented girls from being able to play, was that they were looking after their young siblings. They then teamed up with the Youth Centre as well as Youth Sport and Recreation to run some activities next to the oval for the little ones under supervision, which allowed the older girls to play football for an hour.

The growth of the program can be attributed to word of mouth. The girls who were attending, started inviting their friends, cousins, aunties and others.

Some of the comments that participants of activity have made include:

I like that I can play footy like my brother and uncle

I like having a break from looking after my baby sisters

I enjoy spending time with my friends playing footy and laughing

Footy is not just for boys

It's nice to have something to do

Also, based on a survey conducted in 2019, women participating in this activity were asked what they liked best about this activity. Their responses included 'playing the game' and 'playing or being with friends and families'. When asked how the activity could be improved, their responses included:

- Nothing
- Proper teams (same teams)
- Night games under lights

These responses are indicative of the satisfaction and enjoyment that participation in this activity gives to the women, and that they want this to continue.

Governance arrangements have been put in place for the program, including a Maningrida Women's Sport Committee working closely with West Arnhem Regional Council's Youth Sport and Recreation Department. Sponsorship has been obtained to provide uniforms for the female players.

Barriers prior to the Women's Program

Girls mentioned initially that they felt a little uncomfortable playing in shorts, although this didn't seem to be much of a problem as the group of girls playing football grew bigger and bigger.

When discussing (at the beginning) how the number of girls attending could be increased, a young woman from the community mentioned that some girls might feel 'shame', some men may think that football is not for girls and that some women might not come due to a jealous partner.



Breaking Down Barriers

Raising awareness and promoting healthy behavior and gender equality has likely contributed to breaking down societal barriers allowing local women to feel comfortable playing football in the community. These activities include sharing the word that playing sport is healthy; promoting football lessons at school for girls as well as for boys. Girls and women seeing other girls or women play and either joining in themselves the following week or telling family and friends to go play has also helped. When adults show openly that they are proud of their family member playing, it encourages other people to be supportive or start playing.

In the end, once the program was up and running, nothing has really prevented girls from playing as the numbers grew from 5 to 50.

The success of creating a positive football environment in general has helped break barriers as everyone wants to be part of it; men, women, boys and girls.



Case Study

Recently, a talented local Maningrida woman, Leah Ankin, has been selected in the Northern Territory state squad. This is a first for Maningrida and the woman is becoming a role model for other young women in the community.

Prior to being selected to play the NAB AFLW All Stars Game in Darwin, Leah played regular girls football with the girls in Maningrida on Fridays and always encouraged others to come play.

Having a friend/family member/community member being selected to play 'big footy' in Darwin and interstate, people in community are proud of that and young people, especially the girls at football, look up to her and realise that there are opportunities out there for them and want to play football like her.

The success of the women's football program in Maningrida means the employment of a female local worker/trainee would be highly desirable in the near future.



Congrats my big girl! Keep it up! Be a footballer like your grandfather and uncle!
Family support for Leah

A Revised Men's AFL Program

While there has been men's football in Maningrida for a number of years, unfortunately it had a history of violence and very limited governance structures in place to tackle problems of this kind.

In 2016, one of the priorities the SCfC Reference Group identified was the need for more sporting opportunities for young people. There had been some AFL related activities prior to SCfC and the Reference Group wanted to see AFL strengthened in the community.

A Remote Development Manager (RDM) was appointed and a start was made on developing a good community football program, however this didn't quite eventuate as planned.

A new RDM (Damian Tuck) was appointed in August 2018 and football took off. Initially the focus was on the development of daily junior football activities within the school. In addition to this, Damian got involved in the community and took every opportunity to help out where he could, which allowed him to get to know many people, including football players and coaches from the Men's competition. He was able to talk to key people, identify where things needed improvement and eventually make a plan together.

The result of this work was a new committee and rules and regulations. The program teamed up with the No More Violence campaign and there was greater positivity among teams and players. With a good plan and structure in place, there was room for Damian to start focusing on junior football (after school) as well as a football program for girls.

The revised men's football program commenced in February 2019. A code of conduct and a tribunal system were established. The competition also signed up to a domestic violence action plan in collaboration with the No More Violence campaign.

Our 2019 season was a success with minimal violence and the season culminating in the grand final which attracted around 750 community members as spectators. There are seven local teams in the competition reaching around 175 players on a weekly basis.

A representative team, the Maningrida All Stars, competed in the NT Regional Championships in 2019 and were awarded recognition for their sportsmanship over the entirety of the carnival. This award would not have been possible without the program trainees working closely with the team to maintain behaviour protocols.

An umpires program was developed that led to around ten locally-engaged community members becoming involved in officiating at all games. Education and training programs have been established and delivered to further develop the skills of the umpires.

There is always a focus on trying to improve community capacity through training, courses and gaining experience. Prior to the AFL program, football games struggled with umpires either because they were community members and there was no respect from players when umpiring calls were made or umpires didn't feel confident enough, resulting in fights. To avoid this, often umpires had to be sourced from other communities.

Damian then organised a number of Umpire Training courses for community members who wanted to become umpires at football. He also stretched the invitation to surrounding communities. Umpires now feel confident to make calls and aren't afraid to stick to them when challenged and they feel proud to be wearing the umpire uniform and be part of the AFL in Maningrida.

The trainees have been pivotal in administering the men's competition and without their assistance the men's program would not have been a success.





Without the
traineeship
program the
overall AFL
program would
not have been
successful as
it has been

Employment for AFL Trainees

Underpinning the successful SCfC AFL program has been the development of the employment pathway program for local community members.

Two trainees, Scott Lami Lami and Juan Darwin, began working as part of the AFL program in June 2019 and have been assisting with the delivery of all the elements of the program described above. A third trainee, Davidson Maxwell, began working in March 2020. Without the traineeship program the overall AFL program would not have been successful as it has been.



The confidence and application of all trainees has increased over the journey to a point where the trainees are reliable, responsible and attending work consistently. One trainee has now reached a position where he is designing and delivering programs on his own in a school environment, has performed well in media interviews while in Darwin and has been invited to professional development programs with AFLNT. In addition, he is providing mentoring services to disengaged young people within the community through youth diversion programs.



Two teachers have commented on the work of the trainees:

Thank you so much to you and Juan for organising the Pod One Fitness sessions. My students truly looked forward to going out to sport with Damian and Juan and it was definitely an added incentive to get to school on time. Juan did a fantastic job engaging my students and his ability to communicate with the students in both English and their first language was invaluable. The students absolutely loved the Eagle in the Nest game Juan taught us and it became a heavily requested game during afternoon PE too. Juan is an absolute asset to the Maningrida School sports program and I look forward to being able to work with him (and you) again!

I was very impressed with Juan's work with the students and also with the way he has developed it over the weeks we worked with you. Juan has a very calm but enthusiastic demeanor and engages very well with the kids. He is punctual and organised with fun games that the students always enjoyed very much. As I said earlier, they really miss the sessions. Juan also impressed me with his ability to teach the kids to look after themselves, and get them to take regular drink breaks. He fosters camaraderie amongst the children and practices turn-taking and fair play.

Through their employment within the community, the trainees have become well respected and others in the community have been inquiring about the possibility of being part of the AFL program.

In August 2020, short interviews were conducted with Juan and Scott to get an idea of the difference the AFL Traineeship has made to them personally as well as to local children and the community as a whole. They both reported positive sentiments and experiences about their involvement in the program. When asked what it was like for them to be a part of the program, they mentioned the following opinions:

Enjoying working for the AFLNT

Being passionate about AFL

Learning a lot

Enjoying helping kids learn about football at school and keeps them at school

Feel part of a team with AFLNT and other trainees

Family is proud of the work I do

When asked if they could mention particular skills or knowledge that they feel they have gained, the mentioned the following:

Being able to communicate to groups of students or adults when explaining football skills

Running POD 1 fitness and footy sessions, including for other sports

Leading training sessions with Men All-stars team

Learning about how committee works through attendance of committee and tribunal meeting

Learning about game development skills at schools during training in Darwin

Knowing how to do the fixture and ladder for men's competition



When asked how they think they have changed as a person as a result of the experience of being part of the program, participants reported the following:

I feel happy that I can help the community out because they want footy to be good in Maningrida and at the school. I can now help outstations with fitness and footy – they really like it and that makes me feel good.

Feeling motivated to follow the day's routine

Feeling sense of pride as their family likes their work

Increased confidence

Contributing to one's community and feeling happy about that

Local Impacts of the AFL Program

The AFL program in Maningrida has since developed to a point where an employment pathway is in place for three locally engaged trainees to deliver programs for the community across school, out of school, junior, men's and women's programs.

The governance structures for the program ensure that it meets proper standards of quality and service to the community. The overall program is now reaching around 350 community members on a weekly basis.

Important benefits of the program are often those which are less easy to measure. For example, it is known that the overall improvement in behaviours around the men's program means that men are no longer setting a poor example for children and young people.

Similarly, the growth of the women's program is influencing attitudes in the community on the access that women should have to participate in sport and other competitive and fitness activities. The pride that has developed in both the men's and women's programs is a healthy development for Maningrida as a whole.

Finally, there are benefits that come from young people being seen to be successful. The trainees are good examples. Each one has pursued an employment pathway that they care about and have developed their skills and experience as a result. Across the community, where people have been able to contribute to the AFL programs through playing, umpiring, watching and supporting the activities, a sense of positivity and well-being has grown that is hugely important to families in Maningrida.

The revised men's competition (with its new rules and regulations and positive and strong committee) have made men in the community feel empowered. They want to be part of this positive environment. They are turning up to football meetings, expressing an interest to be on the committee, and they are encouraging players to show good sportsmanship during games and training.

Adults are serving as good examples for younger kids by showing them good sportsmanship and no violence during their games. This shows kids the right way to play sport and it's a way people are proud of.

Although the grand final is still very competitive, it is now a much more fun and friendly event without fighting or violence.



Rheumatic Heart Disease Community Awareness Project

Nurse, can you fix my sores please?!
I don't want to get the heart bug!
Student

Ninti One were invited by the Maningrida FP and LCB to visit their community from 5 - 9 November 2018.

We conducted impact assessments of the Rheumatic Heart Disease Awareness Project and the Big Sky Classroom.

The storybook focuses on the Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) awareness project.

Methods

used in Maningrida

The methods used were based on participatory action research. We trained five people from Maningrida to conduct the surveys and focus groups. We aimed for a minimum of:



20

individual community surveys



2

focus groups (1 with community members and 1 with service providers)



3

in-depth interviews with community members and/or service providers.



363 children were taught about RHD through the classroom teaching in Term 1, 2019





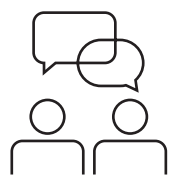
Surveys

I learnt about leaking heart and blood running the wrong way, this makes you sick. I gotta keep my house and body clean to not get sick

Maningrida resident,
survey participant

We need people coming to houses to talk to people. We need Aboriginal people talk in language. Outreach service so people can understand they need to have clean houses, healthy food and what to do when people need check ups.

Maningrida resident,
survey participant



Interviews

(A young girl) who was tested at the last Pedrino study and confirmed borderline RHD. She was out on homelands when she got a sore. She got herself back into Maningrida and came to see us.

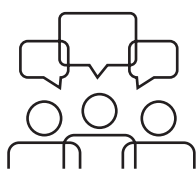
Tiffany (Treprena Taylor),
Community Health Worker,
Maningrida School Clinic

Having local community health workers on board like Tiffany (Treprena Taylor) who can speak local language and navigate outreach to families in their homes has been vital to the approach.

Roz Baartz, Nurse,
Maningrida School Clinic

The most obvious and critical impact from the Maningrida college perspective, is how local staff are known as the key messengers in the community. They are the conduits for action.

Daryll Kinnane,
Principal of Maningrida College



Focus Groups

We know to go to the clinic when we see our kids with RHD symptoms, like sores, sore limbs, jaw pain, and cough

Mother of child
participating in RHD School
Project, Maningrida



To grasp the concepts of RHD and to mount what is effectively a community response — school, clinic, community — all working together to tackle this, is our best chance of making a difference.

Mason Scholes, Linguist at Maningrida College

Results

Surveys

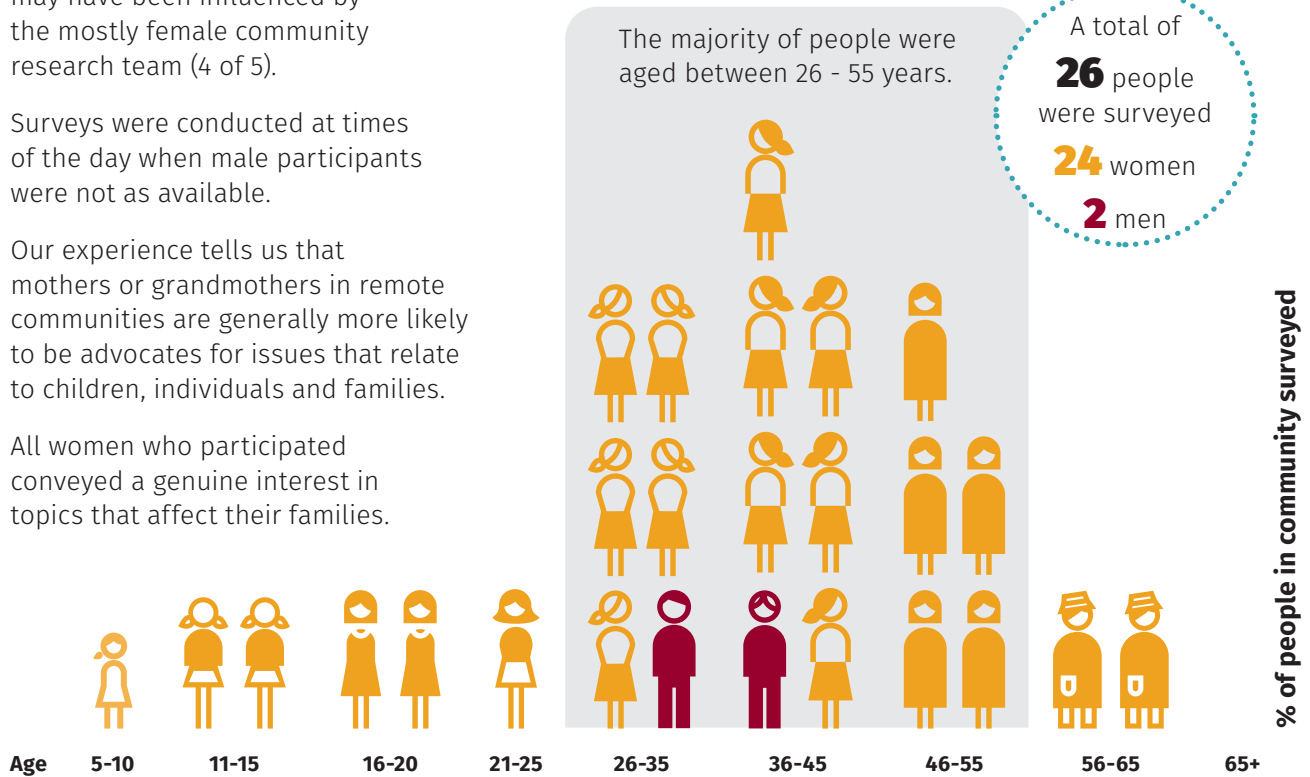
Who we spoke with

High number of female participants may have been influenced by the mostly female community research team (4 of 5).

Surveys were conducted at times of the day when male participants were not as available.

Our experience tells us that mothers or grandmothers in remote communities are generally more likely to be advocates for issues that relate to children, individuals and families.

All women who participated conveyed a genuine interest in topics that affect their families.



Key Findings

88% of people surveyed are concerned about RHD and are aware that it is a problem.



34% said that health awareness projects/programs should be in language.



30% said that outreach and direct contact with families is effective.



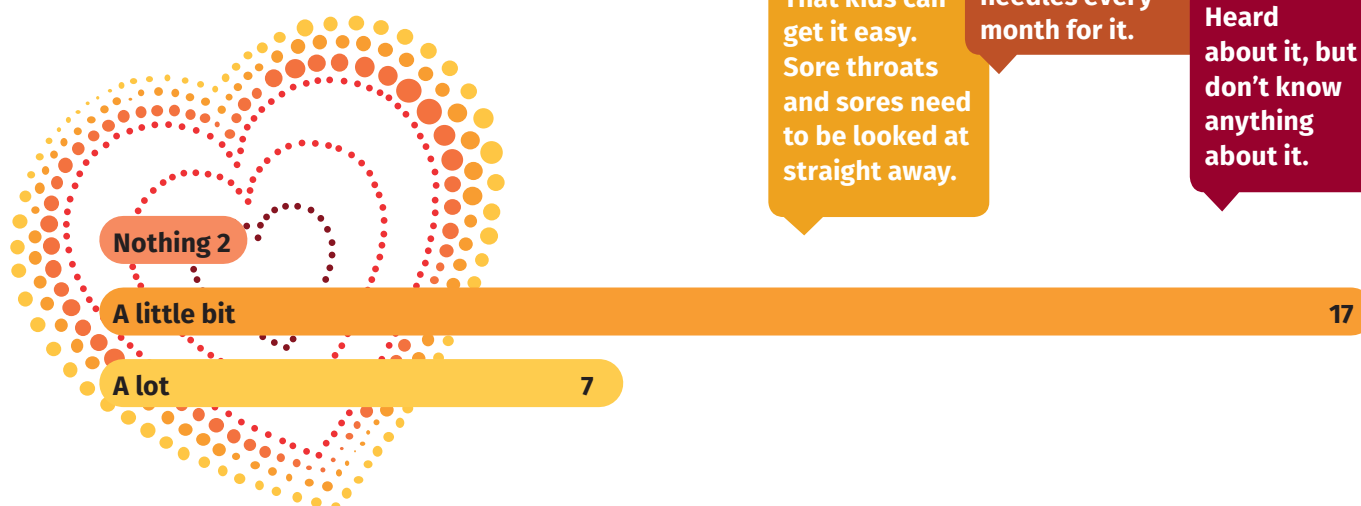
How much do people know about RHD?

Local levels of knowledge about RHD are uneven.

Information is accessible to some people only because they visit locations where it is available, such as the library, school and clinic.

It was interesting to see that the majority of people noting 'A Little Bit' actually had good knowledge and understanding of RHD.

Most people have personal experience dealing with RHD or with children in their families.



Survey participant responses when asked to explain what they know:

We need house cleaning, my young son learned about RHD from his older brother who learned at school.

I know because I had heart surgery this year.

I have it – heart going down little big. I get needles every month for it.

That kids can get it easy. Sore throats and sores need to be looked at straight away.

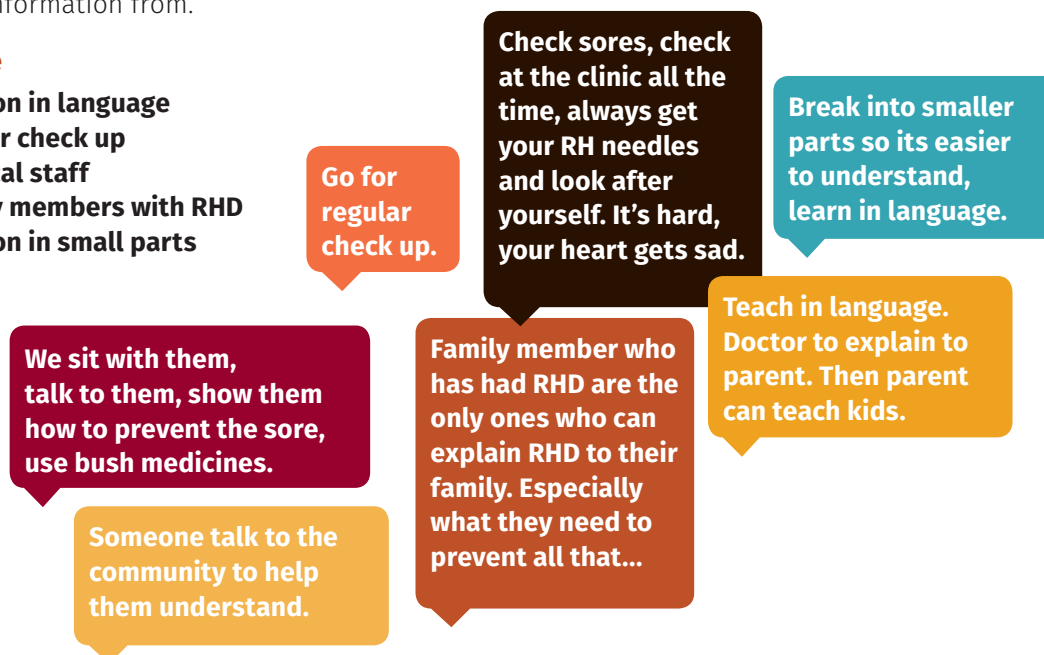
Heard about it, but don't know anything about it.

How can people understand and prevent RHD?

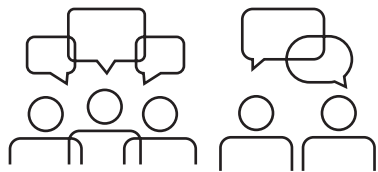
This question was trying to find out where people get health information from.

Key themes include

- Having information in language
- Go to the clinic for check up
- Learn from medical staff
- Learn from family members with RHD
- Having information in small parts



These answers are varied and highlight the differences of people's knowledge of RHD and experiences with accessing health information.



Interviews & focus groups

Key points raised during interviews and focus groups:

- Parents and kids consistently look for help with infections (a core symptom of RHD and a key message of the RHD school project)
- People understand the importance of health check-ups
- There is some level of awareness about food hygiene (for example, the risks of sharing dirty cups as a means of spreading germs)
- Families talk about RHD and there is a lot of worry about it in the community
- The school library is a good source of information on RHD



Focus Group Summary

Family Experience

Regular checkups
(More kids/families getting checked)
Awareness about hygiene from clinic – cleaning sheets
Laundromat built – used more.
\$1-cheaper and kids use themselves
\$5 Sheets/bedding
Families are better at cleaning homes
Hygiene is important



Travel to Darwin/
Adelaide (1 month stay)
Good family support
Support from church
Services staff – support/trust



Rheumatic Heart Disease

Learning

Clinic – every month
School
Teachers check on kids every month – children's checklist



Cardiologist
Dr Bowe



Symptoms

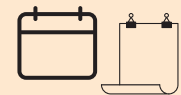
Sores
Cough
Pain in jaw, knee, elbow
Hot & cold fever



Community Awareness

Future Resources

Videos
Apps
Community Events



NOW Current info

School kids
Clinic
Services
Posters



Clinic

Healthy eating book
Kids & parents
Eating better after surgery
No junk
Turtle
No fatty food
Good hygiene




Healthy food
Parents cooking healthy food & bushtucker
People learning from posters in school & shop




Overall Analysis

People are concerned about RHD, and are aware that it is a problem
(23 people or 88%)



Health awareness should be in language
(9 people or 34%)



Checkups are important
(10 people or 37%)

People with RHD or in families with RHD know a lot about it
(71% of people)

People notice good health programs
(21 people or 78%)

People are stressed at the clinic and they forget information
Best to talk at home
More relaxed

Outreach and direct contact with families is effective
(8 people or 30%)



Many different beliefs
Local knowledge of RHD is uneven
Information is accessible to some people only

Key Messages

Trends

The connection between the Lúrra project and the rest of the community

Symbols and figures associated with RHD
No Cuz Congress
No Deadly Dan

Topics not mentioned by participants

School
(but games mentioned by 2 people)



Preconception Health and Education Program

Background

This initiative was started to encourage young women to attend the health clinic, have regular health checks and make good and informed health and life choices. It plays a key role in connecting with the young women and encouraging them to visit the clinic. The project works in partnership with the School Health Nurse and Women's Health GP.

The Preconception Program grew from concerns expressed by the SCfC Local Community Board on behalf of the community about the number of young girls, some still at school, who were having babies. They expressed concern that the girls were often leaving school early, didn't know what to feed their babies or how to look after them.

Based on these concerns, this subject was discussed with the visiting Women's Health Doctor and the School Nurse, both of whom were keen to work with the girls to provide education and advice on making good decisions in relation to behaviour, and also discuss sexual health and preconception with them. However it was felt to engage the girls that a suitable local Community Worker was essential to engage with the girls.

A group of girls aged between 12 and 18 years of age was prioritised, based on their most recent presentation at the clinic and the high number of pregnancies in this age group their level of engagement. Over a period of a year, every effort was made to engage with the girls with the support of a highly motivated local Community Worker, Treprena Taylor, who was not only very familiar with family relationships, but she had a high level of literacy and was well accepted more broadly in the community.





Impacts of the program

The program was first proposed in 2016, a year during which there were seven teenage pregnancies. The program commenced in 2017, helping to achieve a decrease to five pregnancies. It has continued through to 2020. There has not been a teenage pregnancy in Maningrida since February 2019.

The change in numbers of pregnancies to girls under eighteen years of age dating from January 2014 is shown in Figure 7 below.

Of course, one important factor that has led to the reduction in levels of pregnancies has been a corresponding increase in visits to health services by girls in the 12-18 age group.

The success of the program has largely been due to the presence of the same staff throughout this period, except when the Community Worker was on maternity leave. However, since relationships were well established between the girls and the School Nurse and Doctor, the program has continued to run very successfully during her absence.

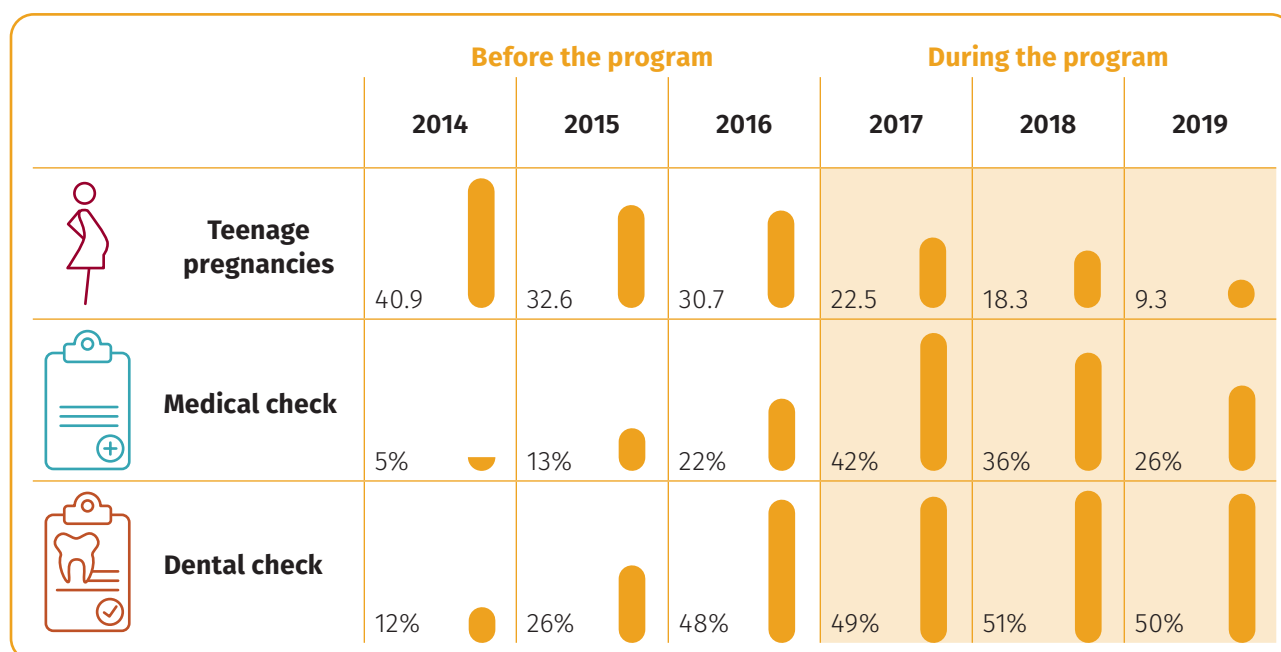


Figure 7: Data for girls in Maningrida aged 12-18 years during the period 2014 to 2019 inclusive: pregnancy rates per 1000 and attendance at health checks



Closing the Gap Targets

1. Everyone enjoys long and healthy lives

The Rheumatic Heart Disease project created greater understanding of RHD and its prevention, as well as encouraged people to actively seek diagnosis and treatment in order to live long and healthy lives.

4. Children thrive in their early years

Start Right Eat Right, Nutrition Program, Strong Kikka Mumma and BodyFit all play a part in helping children thrive in their early years with nutrition education, obtaining additional parenting skills and targeted physical therapy for 0-5 year olds.

7. Youth are engaged in employment or education

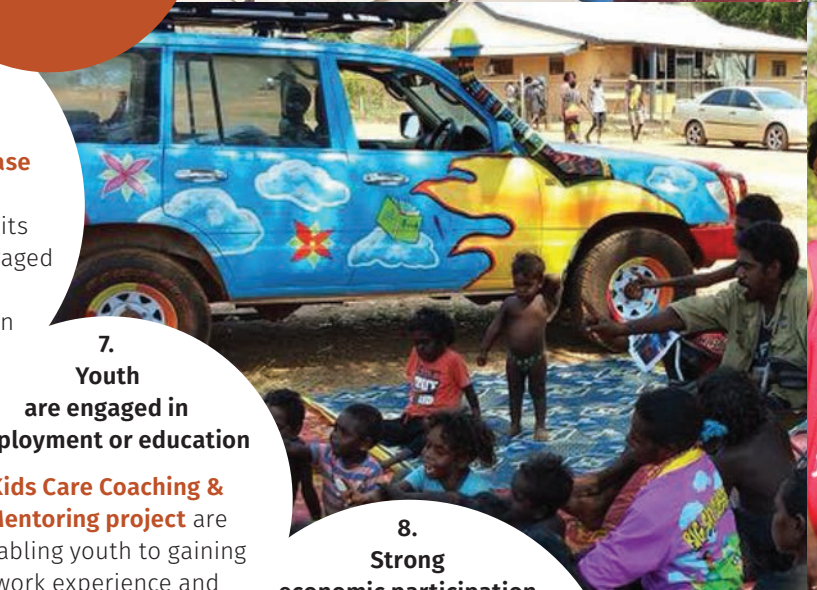
Kids Care Coaching & Mentoring project are enabling youth to gaining work experience and skills at community businesses.

5. Students achieve their full learning potential

The Big Sky Classroom and Attendance programs re-engage families with education and encourages greater attendance through a variety of incentives.

8. Strong economic participation and development of people and their communities

The SCFC program in Maningrida has provided employment opportunities to 60+ local people, as well as engaged 160+ people in training through various activities.





12. Children are not overrepresented in the child protection system

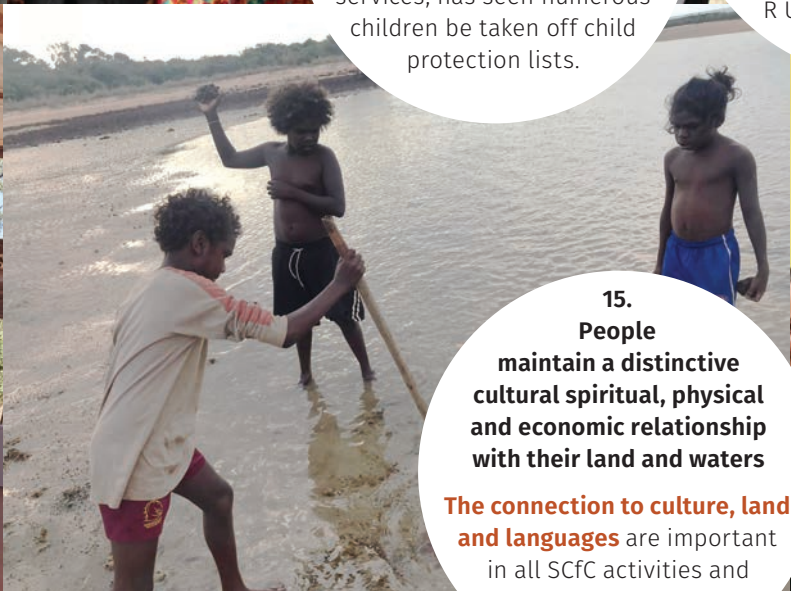
Various activities focussed on supporting parents, as well as referrals to additional services, has seen numerous children be taken off child protection lists.

14. People enjoy high levels of social and emotional well-being

High levels of social and emotional well-being are being reached for men, women, young and old through participation in annual events such as Men's Health Day, International Women's Day, R U OK Day and cultural festivals.

13. Families and households are safe

The Healthy Homes team assists families with organising maintenance repairs as well as providing health education to ensure families and households are safe.



15. People maintain a distinctive cultural spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters

The connection to culture, land and languages are important in all SCfC activities and involvement of local people is key.



16. Cultures and languages are strong supported and flourishing.

The Lurra Language & Culture Resource Production activity creates and translates educational material into local languages, keeping a strong connection with first languages and culture.



Impacts of SCfC in Maningrida

Mission Outcomes



Children and young people

Health gains

Positive role modelling and health education have contributed to important impacts relevant to the lives of children and young people in Maningrida. In considering health, reductions in the rates of teenage pregnancy in the community has prevented many of the challenges and difficulties that young mothers can face. The contributions of the program to the wider RHD awareness efforts of local and external organisations will yield health benefits for children, young people and their families.

The RHD activity has contributed significantly in that all school aged children received extensive RHD knowledge in language and now understand it. They understand it to such a level that they self present to the School Nurse, as well as encourage their family members to present to the clinic for their monthly need.

The school nurse has seen an increase in students presenting with sores and wanting health checks. The compliance is above the national average. The national average is 85% and Maningrida is reaching above 90% compliance.

Social and emotional benefits

In the case of role modelling, the success of the women's AFL competition and associated training and social activities represents an important change for girls and young women. Meanwhile, the positive developments in AFL more generally in the community, especially the reduction in conflict, are beneficial in showing to children how sport can be constructive for all ages.

Parents engaged in community-based parenting programs

SCfC has created new and engaging opportunities for young mothers in Maningrida to build parenting skills. For example, in the Start Right Eat Right and Kikka Mumma programs, young mothers have learned about nutrition, how to look after their baby and how to prepare nutritious meals for their families.



Cultural learning and participation

Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills

Culture is connected with many of the SCfC activities in Maningrida.

Students (from the Kids Care Coaching & Mentoring program) that are graduating year 12, take part in a big graduation ceremony which is very cultural and involves traditional clothing, songs and dancing.

The Reference Group, as well as many Elders in community, are worried young people are losing their local languages. The Lurra language and culture resource production (RHD activity) teaches children in the 4 most spoken languages in community, providing an education whilst maintaining a strong cultural connection to the local languages.

SCfC has funded a variety of cultural activities over the years such as the Lurra Festival, supporting sporting teams to attend cultural festivals such as Buranga and Mahbilil, the yearly International Women's / Girls Day, R U OK Day and NAIDOC events.



Workforce and human capacity

Increased hours worked by local people

The SCfC Program has employed 52 local people across 35 activities during the eighteen-month period up until December 2020. For example, the AFL Program and the Preconception Program have both employed local people in key roles including as community worker, language workers and trainees.

New work and professional development opportunities

The AFL Program is the best example of ways in which young people in Maningrida have been able to develop skills relevant to their future interests.

There are other examples of ways in which young people have been able to gain experience and skills through:

- Kids Care Coaching – students that are part of the Kids Care Coaching activity have been on work experience at various businesses in community (women's centre, local supermarket) and have been able to gain a variety of skills this way
- Lurra Language & Culture – the language workers have been receiving training on how to use microscopes in order to teach this to students when teaching them about germs associated with diseases such as scabies, RHD etc
- LCB Development – the Reference Group regularly attends governance training and develop skills in relation to prioritising community needs as well as strong leadership
- A number of First Aid courses and 4WD courses for community members have been held



Family and community safety

Community perceptions of change

Although not formally measured through an evaluation, Mala'la Health reports a strong sense of the community feeling more harmonious as a result of the improvements achieved in the management of the AFL competition. This is important for young people

For instance, many organisations in community are working together with the AFL Program, such as the Youth Centre and Youth Sport and Recreation (West Arnhem Regional Council).

Furthermore, Damian (AFL Remote Development Manager) has been working with West Arnhem Regional Council and AFLNT to achieve redevelopment and improvement of the football oval. This work started in 2020 and is yet to be completed, but will see a bigger and levelled oval, lights to allow for evening games, changing rooms, spectator seating etc.

It shows that West Arnhem Regional Council supports the football development in Maningrida.

The following changes have been observed by Mala'la:

- people encouraging each other to play
- no violence or fighting
- people wanting to be part of it/ on the committee
- people attending meetings
- people enquiring how they can get a job with AFL
- people enquiring about umpiring courses
- people are having fun at games and training sessions
- people are supporting other people to play
- people show they are proud of kids achieving being selected for U18s and other football opportunities in Darwin and interstate.

Systems Change



Community governance capacity

LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority

The SCfC Reference Group works closely with Mala'la Health in the decision making process for the program. The members are:

- Charlie Gunaburra
- Valda Bokmakarray
- Marissa Stewart
- Charlene Bonson
- Muriel Hayes
- Andrew Dowadi
- Sharon Hayes
- Trep'hrena (Tiffy) Taylor

The group has benefitted from consistent leadership from its chair, Charlie Gunabarra, since the work began. Charlie is well known in the community and beyond, receiving the Chief Minister's Public Sector Medal in 2018. Charlie is a long serving Senior Aboriginal Health Worker and health practitioner in Maningrida.

LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making, and planning

The choices made by the Reference Group demonstrate clear strategic thinking. Below are some activities that represent locally-identified issues affecting children and families in Maningrida and offer the chance for SCfC to make a lasting and positive contribution:

- The need for young mums to know how to look after a baby and learn about good foods to feed their families (Activity – Start Right Eat Right).
- People need to know good foods so they stay healthy (Activity – Nutrition)
- People need clean homes so they don't get sick (Activity – Healthy Homes)
- Disengaged children and families need to re-engage with school (Activity – Big Sky Classroom)

Cross Cutting Outcomes

Effective place-based strategies

SCfC is all about place-based approaches, meaning that all activities are designed for the circumstances of the community. In Maningrida, the selection of activities in which to invest resources from the program has been a solid example of place-based work.

For instance, the growing concern in the community about young girls having children sparked investment into the Preconception Health Education Program. This enabled the community to be fully engaged in addressing this concern in order to encourage girls to make well-informed choices.

Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements

The Rheumatic Heart Disease Awareness program has been collaborative to the point of becoming an example of remote area collective impact. In fact, most of the SCfC activities in Maningrida have involved close working arrangements with one or more organisations, including the school, language centre, clinic and sports clubs and, of course, the Mala'la Health Service itself. These activities include:

- Kids Care Coaching – Women's Centre, Maningrida Progress Association (MPA), Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, Mala'la Health Service
- AFL – West Arnhem Regional Council (WARC), Youth Sport and Recreation, Mala'la Health Service, GREATS Youth Services, Health Clinic, Maningrida College, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC)
- RHD/Lurra – Health Clinic, Menzies, Mala'la Health Service
- Culture – AFL NT, WARC, GREATS Youth Centre, BAC Fisheries, Djelk Rangers, MPA, BAC,
- Attendance – Health Clinic, MPA, BAC RSAS, WARC, Pool
- Nutrition – MPA, BAC, Rangers, Fisheries, Women's Centre, Pool

Leveraging project support

The SCfC program has been successful in leveraging project support to attract additional funding for a range of activities.

Strategic learning from Maningrida

- Having a varied Local Community Board in terms of gender and ages, has ensured the community is well-represented and community concerns identified are a true representation of the community as a whole.
- The Rheumatic Heart Disease project showed the importance of learning in first language, with people gaining a much better understanding of RHD, resulting in an increased number of people undertaking regular health checks and actively seeking treatment.
- Working collaboratively with other services in the community has been vital in achieving outcomes set by the LCB and ensuring activities are reaching their best potential.
- Being a community-led program is instrumental in achieving the best possible outcomes for each community and is highly rewarding. Having identified specific concerns and seeing the improvement over the duration of the activities, gives not only the LCB, but the whole community, a sense of achievement and pride.
- A strong partnership with Ninti One has been crucial for the survival of the SCfC Program and its future funding.





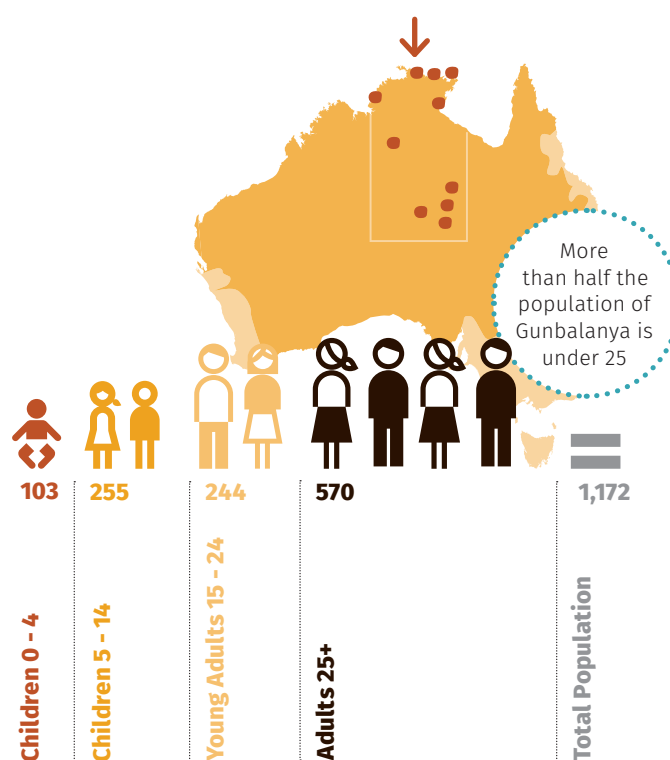
Gunbalanya

Getting to know Gunbalanya

Gunbalanya, also known as Oenpelli, is located 60km north east of Jabiru, across the East Alligator River in Arnhem Land. Around 1,200 people live there, many of whom speak Kunwinjku.¹ Burarra and Kriol are also spoken. Aboriginal people have inhabited the region for over 40,000 years and there are now 25 clan groups in the area, including the Maung, Ngumbur, Dangbon, Gundjehmi, Karik as well as the Mandjurlngunj clan, who are the traditional owners of the land on which Gunbalanya sits.²

The land around Gunbalanya is known as Stone Country, a inspired by dramatic rock formations rising from the floodplains. During the wet season, the river often becomes impassable and cuts off the main road link. When that happens, the only way of travelling to or from other towns is by plane.

Children in Gunbalanya learn the dreaming of Two Dogs, one male and one female, as taught by local Elders.³ The Two Dogs came from the Timor Sea during a hot, dry time of year. As they travelled through the floodplains they got thirsty and hungry. They couldn't find any water so they started digging and found water underground. This created a sacred waterhole now called Duruk Benengadbom, which means 'two dogs dug a well'. As they walked onward they created the features of the land, including three big rocks: Wurrkarbal the Gar-Fish; Ngalmarniyi the Long neck turtle and Arrguluk the Magpie Goose. The Two Dogs put animals on the country and made the waterfall and the creek, where people hunt and fish today. They also created Injalak, a cave where people sheltered long ago, painting the cave walls and



animal bones with ochre after cooking to hide the smells from scavengers. Message sticks were regularly sent to the north, the east, the west, and especially south to the Myalli people (in the place now known as Katherine), who share strong ancestral ties with the people of Gunbalanya.

Europeans first arrived in the 1880s, when Paddy Cahill built a cattle station that was later bought by the Commonwealth and shut down in 1919. Six years later, Anglican missionaries established a church and a school. One of the mission school's most notable students was Bill Neidjie, who became a celebrated Gagudju Elder. During mission times, many people from Gunbalanya travelled to Katherine and surrounds to help build roads and the railway.

The Gunbalanya Community School educates children from preschool to Year 12. Children also learn and play at creche facilities, a youth centre, sports club and a swimming pool. Injalak Arts, a community owned arts centre, incorporates over 200 members from Gunbalanya and surrounding outstations. West Arnhem Regional Council provides sport, recreation and youth programs, employment programs, community safety, and other local government services.

1 West Arnhem Regional Council (n.d.) Gunbalanya, <https://www.westarnhem.nt.gov.au/our-communities/gunbalanya>

2 Remote Area Health Corps (n.d.) Community Profile: Gunbalanya (Oenpelli), Top End Region, https://www.rahc.com.au/sites/default/files/pictures/RAHCMF20%20Community%20Profile_OENPELLI.pdf

3 Interviews with Gabriella Maralngurra, 21 October 2020 and Andrew Maralngurra, 4 February 2021

Governance for SCfC in Gunbalanya

The Stronger Communities for Children (SCfC) Program in Gunbalanya is governed by a local community board (LCB) set up for the purpose, called Karrimud Rowk. Translated to English, Karrimud Rowk means 'we are all together'. The facilitating partner (FP) for the program is the Adjumarllarl Aboriginal Corporation (AAC), which has its own board. The Adjumarllarl board has processes and procedures that are firmly established and so Karrimud Rowk operates within the existing governance culture of AAC.

Although the two boards are separate, three people serve on both. Membership has changed over time, as expected with any governance arrangement, but the ways that the two entities interact with each other has remained consistent. In many cases, if Adjumarllarl is seeking to achieve an objective through SCfC activities, then they will ask Karrimud Rowk to consider it and make a decision on whether or not to approve the proposal.

'Right way' decision making

Where decisions might be sensitive, such as affecting outstations associated with certain families or relating to activities in which some family members work, then the FP Coordinator visits each LCB member individually. This enables any differing views to be expressed outside a group setting, which is preferable for LCB members. In other words, individual voting is then anonymous. Decisions are therefore made in the 'right way', according to local practice.

Another example of local governance processes relates to financial management. Financial reports on the program are considered by AAC, and they then advise Karrimud Rowk as to the affordability of ideas and proposals that are being considered for SCfC. AAC focuses on the money and keeping within budget, while Karrimud Rowk takes responsibility for the implementation of the program.

The meetings of Karrimud Rowk, where decisions are made, tend not to be formalised because members are volunteers and so the meetings need to fit around their schedules and their jobs. In this regard, the meetings are different from those of AAC, which has higher-level governance responsibilities. Karrimud Rowk tries to meet every month but meetings usually take place every two months due to the commitments of members. Meetings are mostly conducted in Kunwinjku, with the FP contributing information in English as required. The FP leads the meeting but not the discussion.



Local ideas funded

Ideas for new SCfC activities come from many places. Sometimes community members approach the LCB. For example, in the case of the music program, some people said 'We need music in the community' and asked if the SCfC program could support the idea under its objectives. On occasion the LCB may have its own ideas or AAC may come up with an initiative that could be supported through SCfC funding. In response, the FP will often look to design a program or activities under SCfC and will present to Karrimud Rowk one or more options to consider.

There are so many ideas that it can be hard to prioritise. The FP sometimes has to remind the LCB of previous intentions so new ideas don't take over. It is especially difficult to plan for the future during times when funding is uncertain.

In making decisions on what to support through SCfC, the most important criteria for Karrimud Rowk are always employment and recreation. In the case of recreation, this is a subject that community members know best, and are always keen for more activities for people to do in the community, especially young people. In supporting recreational activities, the FP and LCB are always trying to encourage a second and third level of benefits beyond the activity itself. To give an example, the ranger program is an activity for kids after school, but it can achieve greater benefit if directed towards strengthening culture or to help kids learn how to be successful out bush when hunting.

Insights from a group exercise at the 2019 Knowledge Sharing Seminar

What makes your board work well?

People speak strongly.

Please tell us how your board brings good leadership to SCfC?

Decisions come from our local people in our community to bring to the young ones.

How do you see your board becoming stronger in the future?

We get the strong leaders and teach the young ones to become leaders.

Local employment prioritised

Getting people working is central to the priorities of Karrimud Rowk. In supporting activities through SCfC, the more money that goes towards wages for local people, the better. For this reason, decisions are made in a sophisticated way to ensure local employment. For example, if an external non-Aboriginal person is required for a specialist program or activity, Karrimud Rowk is keen to make sure a local person is included as an assistant. In this way work, knowledge and experience stays in the community.

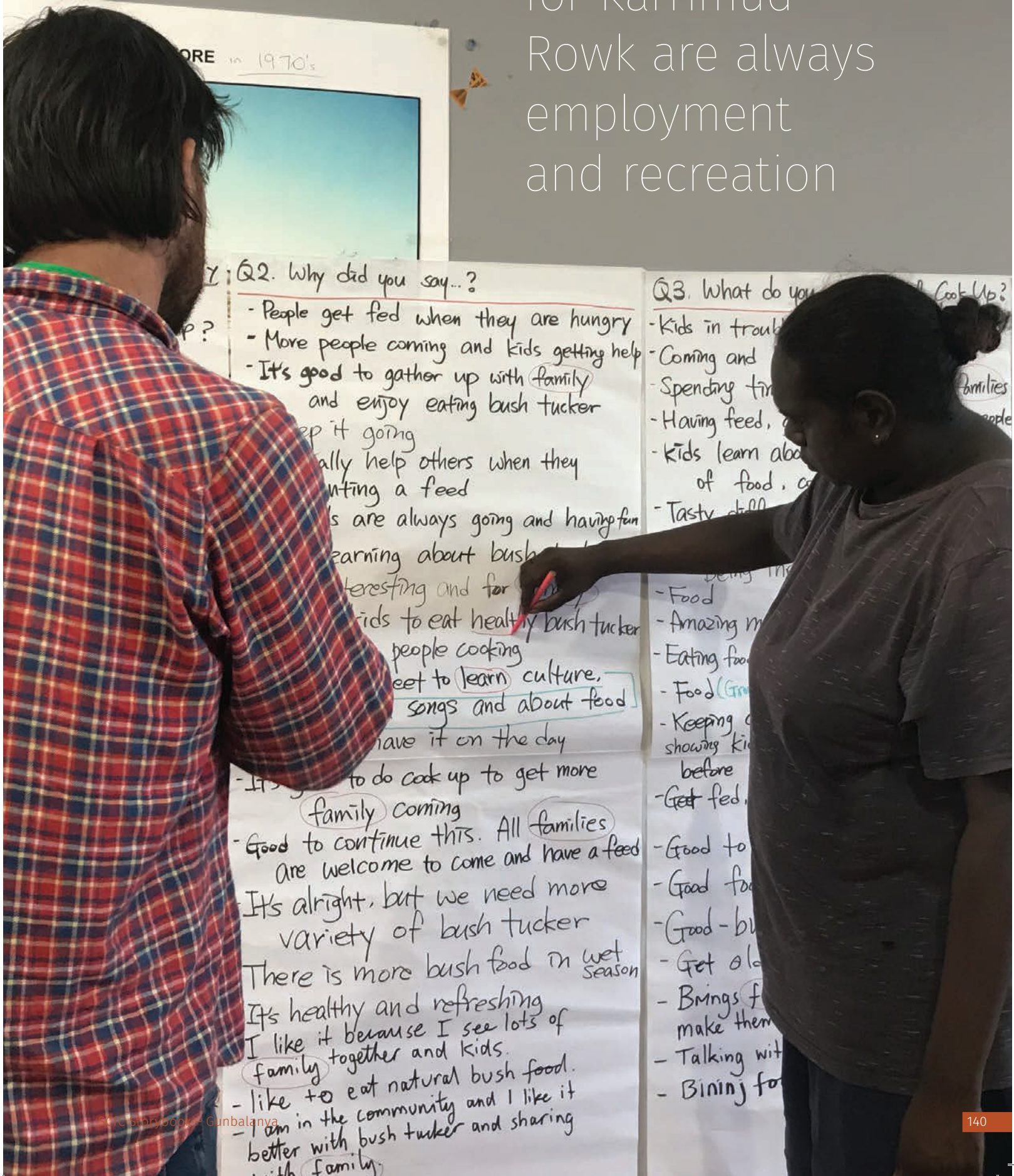
After employment and recreation comes culture, going back to country and other community needs consistent with the objectives of SCfC. A good combination is where employment or occupation plus culture are included in a proposed activity, such as a film project. Choices made by Karrimud Rowk tend to follow a pattern. For example, stories and hunting or fishing are considered preferable to sport and support for a bush camp is higher priority than a disco.

Decisions based on local experience

When funding is available, Karrimud Rowk is keen to make sure it is used without delay. So there tends to be little discussion on evidence about what works and what does not. LCB members are experienced and have seen many programs and activities in the community over the years, so they are influenced by their own knowledge. For example, Families As First Teachers (FaFT) is considered effective, so they are usually keen to support it. Members employ a clear-cut logic about what ought to be funded and where the gaps exist. On this basis decisions are made, informed by the priorities explained above.

In considering options that are outside the experience of LCB members, then they are naturally hesitant. They tend to focus on outcomes, such as employment, rather than the program content. This means that good information about the process and the rationale for a new program or activity is important. If the journey looks good, then that might be enough to attract the support of Karrimud Rowk to invest in it as SCfC activity in Gunbalanya.

...the most important criteria for Karrimud Rowk are always employment and recreation



SCfC Activities Making a Difference

In choosing activities to fund in Gunbalanya, Karrimud Rowk has focused keenly on three community priorities: employment, recreation and culture. The combination of these three criteria are proving to be powerful conduits for engaging children, young people, and families in positive change.

SCfC activities align with the education programs of the Gunbalanya Community School by supporting after hours participation in structured activity to promote well-being and participation of Gunbalanya students. SCfC also support the school with programs designed to improve school attendance and the broader participation of community members and adults to engage and be part of the school curriculum.

The activities described in the pages that follow have been chosen because they are particular sources of pride for the community. They show how Karrimud Rowk's focus on employment, recreation and culture has resulted in meaningful participation, greater knowledge, stronger social connections, and other important outcomes for children and families

Junior Rangers Program

One of the first programs initiated by the SCfC team in Gunbalanya was the Njanjma Junior Rangers program. Forty young people between the ages of 10 - 14 participated regularly, supported and led by seven adult rangers.

In May 2017, Ninti One provided training and support for local community members to assess the impact of the program. These community researchers conducted and analysed interviews with seventeen people who participated in the Junior Rangers.



Program, who reported benefits including:

- Kids learned more respect for culture and country
- There was a passing on of traditional lore and culture
- Kids learned more Binninji
- Elders got involved
- Kids learned, and also taught each other
- The program motivated kids to go to school

Turning to the wider impacts within the community, the impact study found that adults who were interviewed strongly valued how the program enabled inter-generational passage of cultural knowledge, and especially knowledge gained by children about caring for country.

Community members appreciated that this program provided a dedicated space for:

- Adults in the community to take on ranger job roles to hand down their cultural knowledge
- Kids to learn about things such as bush tucker, bush medicine, making traditional hunting tools, and how to look after country in traditional ways

Some community members also noted the importance of this program in role modelling the potential of future jobs with Njanjma Wurdurd Rangers for the Junior Rangers.



Gunbalanya Music Program

The Music Program was another SCfC activity implemented early on in Gunbalanya, and still evokes a strong sense of pride and purpose in those who were involved. The program created a common space for younger and older community members to adapt traditional stories and messages to contemporary musical styles that are more attractive to younger audiences.

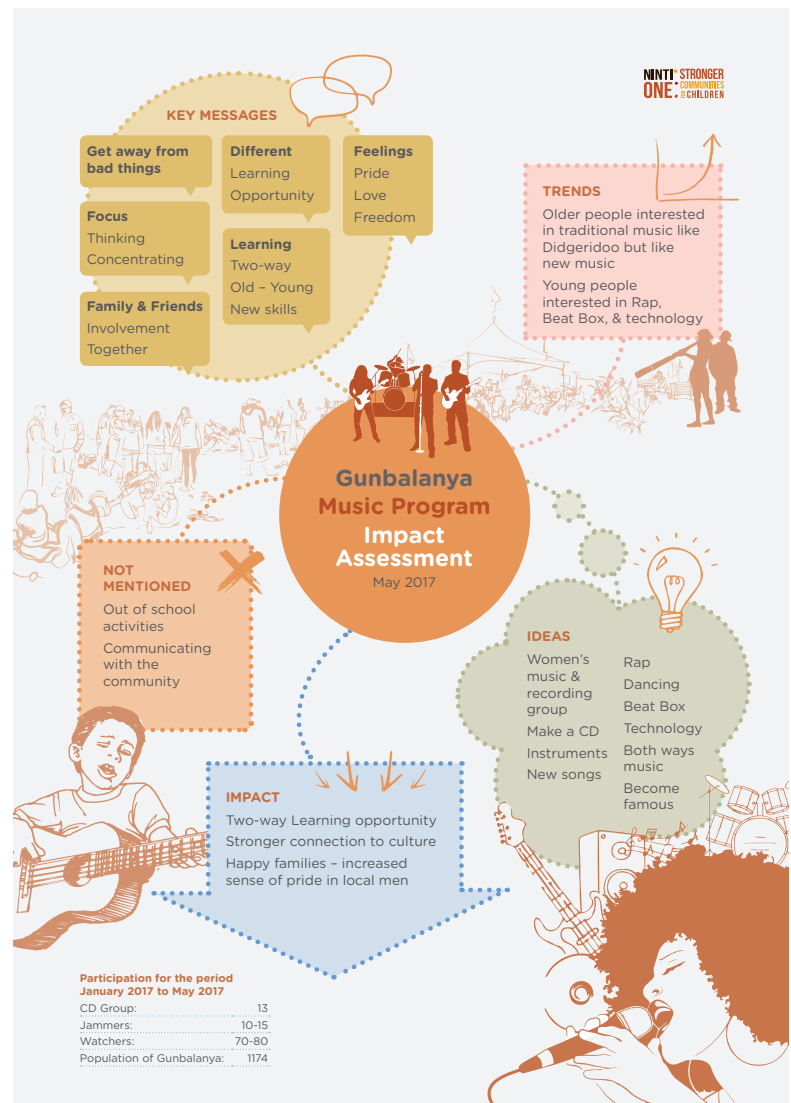
Thirteen men made up the core music production group of the Gunbalanya Music Program. There were an additional group of 10 -15 men who came along to jam, and around 70-80 people went along to watch the men jam and produce music.

In May 2017, trained community members conducted interviews with 22 men who participated in the program. Participants reported that the program provided:

- A focus, something to think about and concentrate on
- New learning and job opportunities
- Renewed feelings of freedom, love and pride in themselves because of what they are achieving and the skills they are building
- A great opportunity for the men to get away from antisocial behaviours
- Two-way learning, to mix traditional music making with modern recording instruments, and to record important stories that would otherwise be forgotten
- A space for people come together as friends and family to play and participate collectively

Building from the success of this program, SCfC has supported the Grow the Music team to work with community and the local school to record music and stage a concert for students and adult musicians. SCfC also supports their workers to encourage young musicians in the school by tutoring them on instruments twice a week.

On the right is a mind map that summarises the impact study of the music program conducted in May 2017.



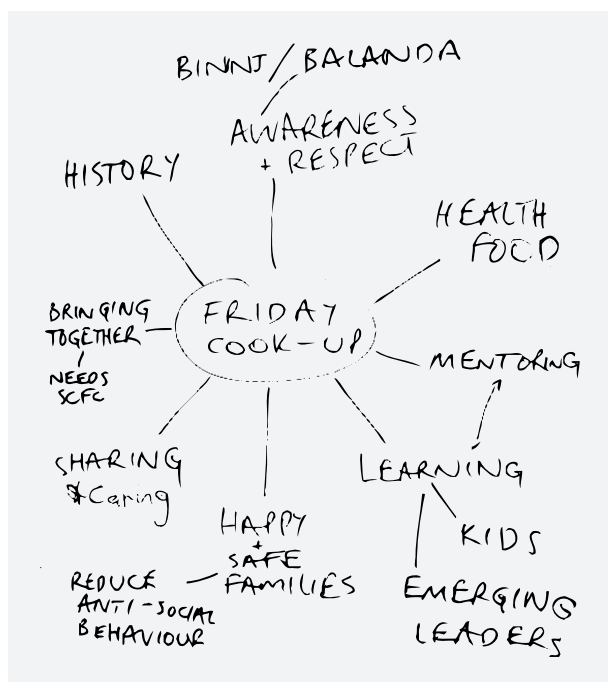


Bush Tucker Cook Up

The Bush Tucker Cook Up began with Binninj Kunborrk, which means 'Corroboree Dance'. Binninj Kunborrk was a whole-of-community cultural event held on April 2019 after weeks of planning led by Karrimud Rowk, Adjumarllarl and the Gunbalanya Youth Advisory Group (GUNYAG). The event drew strong praise and support from the community and now there is a Bush Tucker Cook Up happening every Friday night in Gunbalanya, usually with around 30-40 people meeting and feasting. It is all about celebrating culture, and especially traditional ways of collecting and cooking healthy and delicious food.

In the days leading up to Cook Up night, Adjumarllarl staff, young people and Elders come together to prepare vegetables, get the fire pit ready, and collect white sand to be used in the making of damper. Foods such as turtle, file snake and long yams are collected from the bush. Game is hunted or, when the spear grass is too high, Traditional Owners might arrange for meat to be donated.

On Cook Up night, coals are heated up for the fire pit and it is filled with meat and vegetables. The food is covered with Iron Bark leaves, corrugated iron and sand to trap the heat and cook everything to perfection. Meanwhile, children learn to make damper. Another fire is built to cook more vegetables, and boil the billycan so that people can help themselves to coffee and tea. Sometimes there is music, dance, Corroboree.



At an exercise conducted with members of the LCB to plan the impact assessment work in 2020, they described the range of benefits the activity was designed to achieve for the community, which were written up on the flipchart sheet shown below.

The Bush Tucker Cook Up has five desired outcomes:

1. Kids learning
2. People coming together
3. Sharing and teaching culture
4. Giving them (kids and Balanda) knowledge about community and culture
5. Maintaining culture to pass to next generation – When kids get older they are going to know 'both ways' (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways).

The LCB also hopes that Balanda (non-Aboriginal people) will gain understanding of local history, awareness of Aboriginal culture and that the Bush Tucker Cook Up will build mutual respect between people of both cultures.

Nourishment, culture and connection

In October 2020 and February 2021, Adjumarllal and Ninti One staff conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups to assess the impacts of Bush Tucker Cook Up in Gunbalanya. They found that people who participate in Bush Tucker Cook Up generally view it as a positive experience, with 81% of the 27 people surveyed reporting that they "liked" (18%) or "liked a lot" (63%) being in the program. In a group interview with 8 students, 100% said that they like going to the Bush Tucker Cook Up a lot. Of all the participants who were interviewed individually or in a group setting, 100% responded 'yes' when asked whether the Bush Tucker Cook Up should continue.

When asked why they like the program or what benefits they have received as a result, the following themes emerged from people's responses:

- Learning about bush tucker foods, which are 'healthy' and 'natural'
- Elders teaching the younger ones in the community
- Learning to cook bush tucker foods, the traditional way
- Getting the opportunity to



interact with family and friends

Sharing bush tucker with their families was a strong theme, mentioned by multiple people as a reason for enjoying the Cook Up. The importance of maintaining connection to culture also featured strongly across all the conversations held as part of the impact assessment.

Gunbalanya community members respond to the question

'What do you think the people get out of Bush Tucker Cook Up?'

Community connection, it is really good for people in the aged care and Elders. Because they cannot go out and hunting. Everyone is just sitting around, meeting different people, and also kids can come down from school on Friday because school finishes at 12. I think it is really good for community culture, community connection, also as just as a meeting place every Friday. It is a kind of a social event. Ladies weaving, the band playing, the fire going – I found it is a bit like a social event.

Keeping culture strong and keep young ones their heritage and showing how their family lived before white fella ways.

The future of Bush Tucker Cook Up

Looking toward improving the Cook Up in future, suggestions revolve around getting more people involved and expanding activities to engage people, especially kids. Suggestions for expanding Cook Up activities include swimming, fishing, getting more bands to play music, corroboree dancing, singing, football, and getting kids more involved in cooking.

Commenting on SCfC activities more broadly, the principal of Gunbalanya Community School suggests that 'It would be great for all agencies in Gunbalanya to work together to create a festival at Gunbalanya, this would need to happen after COVID but would be a great goal

for SCfC and all Gunbalanya agencies.'

Karrimud Rowk has noted three priorities for improving the Cook Up:

1. Increase community engagement, specifically:

- **More participation from schools**, as currently no school staff members are regularly attending in Cook Up nights
- **Changing Cook Up times** to make this happen: Thursday, Sunday afternoon have been suggested
- **More frequent engagement** with people and service providers 'to make community much happier' and 'reduce anti-social behaviour'.

2. Increase staff numbers – 'more hands on deck'

3. Increase community voice in co-design: 'we want to do more what community wants us to do more'

One of the barriers for community engagement is that families with problems are not coming to the event, and reported that they feel 'uncomfortable'. When asked how the Cook Up can have a connection to mental health, Team Health staff responded that this activity could provide a safe place for kids and families and serve as a welcoming environment enabling harmony and opportunity to learn life skills.

When asked if the project would be able to sustain without involvement of Stronger Communities for Children, one LCB member responded: 'don't think so, other service providers don't know how to lead, support and encourage community to engage.' Cultural authority was noted as key to the weekly Cook Up's success, as SCfC holds unique authority to lead and keep it strong.





Hang Out Nights Program

Hang Out Nights initially started with an idea of having a place just for girls where they can relax, feel comfortable and have some healthy food after school. Since there were no recreational activities or places for youth in general, Hang Out Night has become a place for both boys and girls. Five days a week, all young people in the community are welcome to come to the Rec Hall for a range of games and hobbies such as basketball, gardening, arts, cooking classes, gymnastics, movies, dancing, and more.

Next to the Rec Hall, young people engaging in Hang Out Nights have been cultivating a space to learn about agriculture and provide a supply of local vegetables. People have been able to plant their own seeds and watch them grow. This is being done to enliven the space, promote healthy eating and provide a positive pastime.

As of October 2020, on average, 27 children and young people (14 girls and 13 boys) attend Hang Out Nights. Two young women who enjoy working with young people are employed to facilitate the space and run activities. Hang Out Nights takes a strength-based approach, letting staff further develop activities they are passionate about, along with young people suggesting ideas and bringing them to fruition.

A healthy, fun place for children and young people

Surveys conducted by Adjumarllal and Ninti One staff in February 2021 found that Hang Out Nights have been very well-received by participants. When asked how much they like being in the program, 84% of the 25 of the children and young people surveyed said they “like” (4%) or “like it a lot” (80%). When asked why they like it, eight of them used the word “fun”.

These surveys and a subsequent focus group indicate that Hang Out Nights are producing the following benefits for children and young people in Gunbalanya:

- **Opportunity to ‘hang out’ with friends and make new ones**
- **Learning new things**, such as painting, drawing, how to play musical instruments, traditional dancing
- **Being part of something**, connecting with others through teamwork in sports and other activities such as dancing

When asked if Hang Out Night should continue, 23 participants responded with a resounding ‘yes’ and 2 said ‘maybe’. None of them said ‘no’.

Children and young people in Gunbalanya respond to the question

‘What do you get out of get out of Hang Out Nights?’

Happiness, not to feel shame, keeping knowledge for next generations

Feeling happy and enjoying



Interviews with adults in Gunbalanya show that they are also noticing positive changes produced by Hang Out Nights. People working for services such as the Remote School Attendance Scheme have noticed that dozens of children are now asking to be dropped off at the Rec Hall straight after school. Other community members talk about children who were bored before now getting active and engaged. Some people also reported a decrease in anti-social activity such as fighting and break-ins.

The SCfC Program Coordinator for Gunbalanya has noticed the confidence of children attending Hang Out Nights increasing, especially when it comes to voicing their feelings and building relationships. He has also noted increased participation by children in shaping the activity, remarking that: “kids are coming to me and the team with suggestions for the activity. It seems that kids now feel very comfortable in the place and they have a kind of ownership of this place. There has been no place in the community so far for kids, particularly the place that they feel the ownership.”

What grown-ups in Gunbalanya are saying about Hang Out Nights

No one used to use basketball court, we could hardly see anyone near the hall. But now we can see kids around there all the time, they want to go straight after school

During last school holidays, SCfC team did an amazing job... It helped with less break-ins and it helped bored kids to get engaged in something

Kids used to be left on their own... but the program helps kids to engage, get fed and enjoy activities

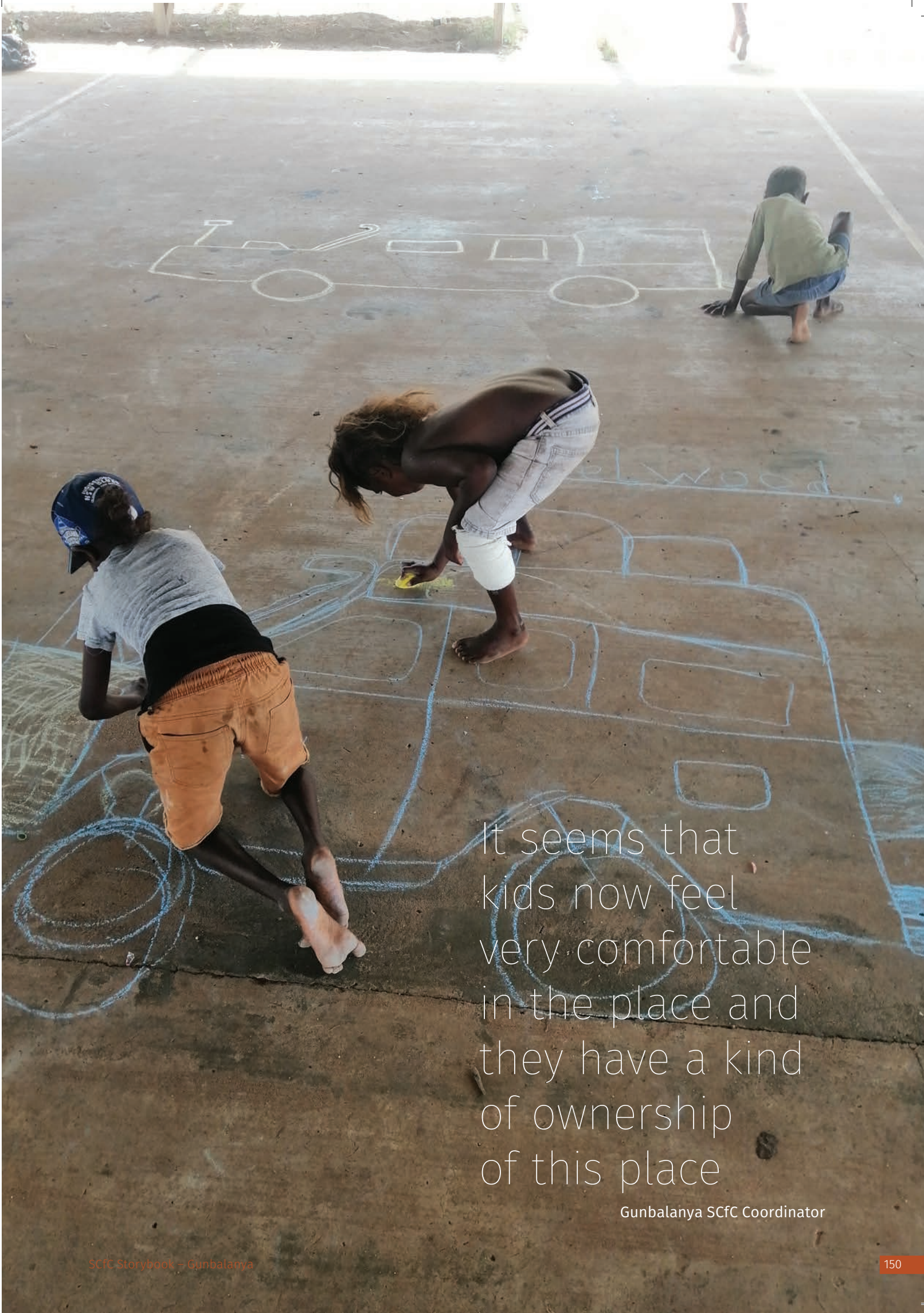
Kids are engaged in activities and socialising – less family fight and disturbances, safer environment

The future of Hang Out Nights

The impact assessment conducted by Adjumarllal and Ninti One staff in February 2021 also explored ways in which children, young people, and service providers would like to see the program improve in future. Their suggestions include :

- Increase participation and engagement of the community
- Improve infrastructure (air conditioning, better space, environment)
- Engage more female staff or support from the community
- Enable transportation for young people
- Incorporate activities such as night fishing, going out bush and waterfall, helping with cooking, more cleaning, watching movies
- Incorporate more sports options

As of April 2021, Hang Out Nights and Bush Tucker Cook Up have merged as part of the new Adjumarllal Youth Program. This enables children to come straight from school to hang out and join other community members as they prepare and feast on healthy local food. Merging these two activities and working closely with West Arnhem Council to deliver a unified youth program demonstrates how SCfC Gunbalanya is evolving in response to community's changing needs.



It seems that kids now feel very comfortable in the place and they have a kind of ownership of this place

Gunbalanya SCfC Coordinator

Impacts of SCfC in Gunbalanya

Mission Outcomes



Children and young people

Increased social and emotional maturity

Children in Gunbalanya have benefitted socially and emotionally from SCfC activities such as Junior Rangers, the Music Program, Bush Tucker Cook Ups and Hang Out Nights. These all provide fun and safe spaces for children and young people to participate in activities that have built their confidence, deepened and broadened their social connections, and engaged them in new endeavours.

The principal of Gunbalanya Community School has noted improvements in student mental health, and his view that SCfC activities have contributed to these improvements.

Children are more engaged in learning

SCfC activities have gotten children enthusiastic about learning, especially when it comes to their natural environment. For example, children have learned about land management through the Junior Rangers Program, and how to successfully grow vegetables next to the Rec Hall from Hang Out Nights. The positive influence of these and other SCfC activities is also reflected by a 6% overall increase in school attendance in the 12 months leading up to June 2021.



Cultural learning and participation

Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills

SCfC activities have provided numerous new opportunities for young people to learn, teach, come together with community Elders and connect with each other, with country and with culture. Weekly Bush Tucker Cook Ups, for example have taught children and young people traditional ways of collecting and cooking healthy, nutritious food. They work alongside their Elders to gather bushfoods, build and operate a fire pit, make damper, and participate in music and dance.



Family and community safety

Community perceptions of change

Reports from community members suggest that Hang Out Nights may be resulting in fewer break-ins, fights and family disturbances. Further data, such as crime statistics, could be useful in tracking the role of Hang Out Nights in making Gunbalanya safer for children and families.



Workforce and human capacity

Increased hours worked by local people

SCfC has generated meaningful employment for people in Gunbalanya, including valuable work experience for young people. For example, as of July 2021, 2 young women and 3 young men are employed to lead Youth Program previously Hang Out Nights and Bush Tucker Cook Up.

New work and professional development opportunities

The Local Community Board, Karrimud Rowk, has made employment a priority for SCfC in Gunbalanya. Board members have been intentional in their approach to funding by ensuring that activities that require a specialist from out of town also include a local Aboriginal person as a paid assistant. In this way, SCfC has boosted local work and professional development opportunities.

Systems Change



Community governance capacity

LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority

A close relationship between Karrimud Rowk (LCB) and Adjumarllarl (FP) has built on the strengths of both to develop strong governance capacity in Gunbalanya. Cultural authority has been key, with 'right-way' decision making practices ensuring that individual board members are free to speak their minds and able to fully express their knowledge, insights and opinions in their own language.

LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making, and planning

Members of Karrimud Rowk expressed confidence in their leadership during impact assessment activities in February 2021. For example one member explained that no other service providers would have been able to achieve the high level of community engagement in Bush Tucker Cook Up nights.

Cross Cutting Outcomes

Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements

Bininj Kunborrk, the event that started Bush Tucker Cook Ups, was the result of collaboration between fifteen partner organisations. The process of preparing and carrying out the celebration was a valuable experience that has helped these organisations build better ways of working together.

The principal of Gunbalanya Community School reports that targeted SCfC activities have successfully increased collaboration between community members and the school to support the learning, social, and cultural development of children and young people.

Access to flexible and responsive support

The merging of Hang Out Nights and Bush Tucker Cook Up demonstrates the ability of SCfC Gunbalanya to be flexible and responsive to changing needs in the community. These two programs are now delivered in partnership with West Arnhem Council as part of the unified Adjumarllal Youth Program.

Strategic learning from Gunbalanya

- ‘Right-way’ decision making has emerged in Gunbalanya through governance arrangements that build on the strengths and experiences of both the Local Community Board and the Aboriginal-controlled Facilitating Partner organisation.
- Cultural authority has been key to achieving high levels of community participation and engagement across multiple SCfC activities.
- Recreation can serve as a powerful conduit of positive change, especially when combined with local employment and cultural heritage. These have formed the main criteria for decisions about which activities SCfC supports in Gunbalanya. Meaningful jobs have been created for local people to cultivate fun and safe spaces for children, families and Elders to come together on country. These opportunities for social connection have generated important wins, such as intergenerational knowledge sharing, pride in community, confident participation and children engaging in healthy activities that were not accessible to them before SCfC.
- Achieving ownership and active participation of young people involves relinquishing power and understanding the perspectives of the young people who are attending the activities. Young people need to have trust that ideas they have will be followed through. Young people in community can feel when their interests are being overridden by the interests of adults. It’s important to make clear that young people are given the flexibility and access to ensure they can participate during decision making. For example the Local Community Board has been reaching out to recruit more suitable young people to join the board, and making sure the facilitator gives them room to speak.





Conclusion

Analysis of program impact

28 May 2021

This Storybook opened by considering what Stronger Communities for Children has achieved at the program level. Impacts were assessed according to program measures determined by Local Community Boards (LCBs) and Facilitating Partners (FPs) in ten remote Northern Territory communities. Each chapter of the Storybook has provided a narrative account of how SCfC has been implemented in particular communities, and what impacts have been observed at the local level.

This concluding chapter will consider the local impacts of SCfC across all six communities featured in the Storybook. The main framework for analysis will be the community-led program measures that have guided local researchers in collecting evidence to assess the value of specific SCfC activities for children and families. Analysis will also draw from the Inquiry Framework, depicted below, to establish a broader understanding of three types of results for measuring the long-term value of collective impact initiatives: mission outcomes, systems change, and strategic learning.

SCfC Program Measures

Children and young people



Cultural learning and participation



Family and community safety



Workforce / human capacity

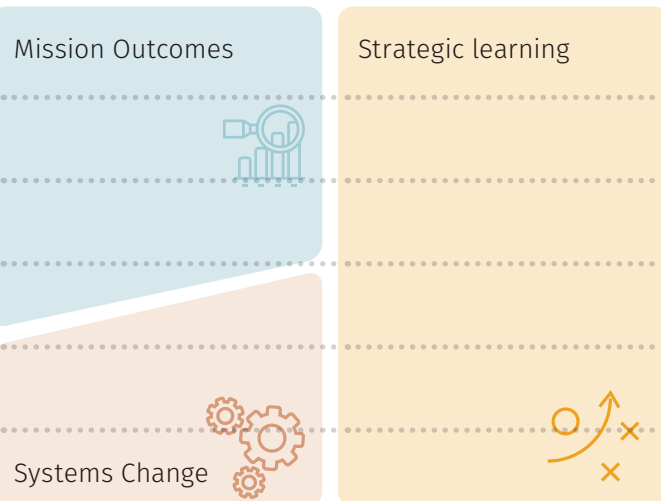


Community governance capacity



Cross-cutting outcomes

Inquiry Framework for measuring collective impact¹



¹ Cabaj, M. (2019) 'Evaluating systems change results: an Inquiry Framework', The Tamarack Institute.

Mission Outcomes

The extent to which our efforts help to make lives better

- Outcomes for individuals
- Outcomes for targeted geography/groups
- Outcomes for populations



Source: Cabaj, M. (2019) 'Evaluating systems change results: an Inquiry Framework', The Tamarack Institute.

Four of the community-led program measures for SCfC assess mission outcomes, that is, results that directly impact people's lives in positive ways that fulfill the initiative's ultimate goals.

These program measures are:

- Children and young people
- Cultural learning and participation
- Family and community safety
- Workforce / human capacity

Impacts relating to each of these measures will be discussed below. To put these results into context, it is important to keep in mind that research on collective impact suggests that it typically takes at least 3-10 years to achieve and measure mission outcomes at the population level. The discussion below considers evidence collected 4-8 years after initiating the SCfC Program in various communities and, therefore, represents only a very early picture of what has been achieved.

Gunbalanya

6%

increase in school attendance with inception of Youth Program

Ntaria

65%

senior girls attending school with a support of Young Women's Place



Children and Young People

The strongest way in which SCfC has impacted children and young people across communities is to boost their social and emotional development. Evidence from all six communities featured in the Storybook indicates that local SCfC activities have enabled children and young people to better express their emotions, manage their behaviours, strengthen social ties, build confidence and feel proud of who they are.

While most SCfC communities have chosen to invest in activities that support social and emotional well-being, the focus and target groups for these activities have varied based on local priorities. In Ntaria, for example, developing trauma-informed care and support for children has been central to their work. In Galiwin'ku and Ngukurr, social and emotional gains have resulted from bringing cultural and linguistic education into schools. In Ltyentye Apurte, engaging children in activities that mix cultural heritage with modern craft has brought about more positive behaviours and relationships, especially with Elders. In Gunbalanya, providing children with fun and safe spaces to develop social connections has factored strongly in their work and the local school principal reports noticeable gains in terms of student mental health. In Maningrida, reducing rates of teenage pregnancy has been a priority, prompting targeted health services that have resulted in fewer young women becoming pregnant before they finish school.

Another positive impact resulting from SCfC activities across multiple communities has been to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people with access to more supportive learning environments. In Galiwin'ku, for example, the Djalkiri program embeds local culture into mainstream education. In Ngukurr, children are supported to learn how to read and write their native language in school. In Ntaria, learning about 'the brain story' has helped teachers better understand and respond to challenging behaviours and created a more supportive learning environment at the local school. In Gunbalanya, SCfC activities have broadened participation of community members to engage and be part of the school curriculum, raising student attendance levels by 6% in the past year. Reports from school staff and community members suggest that SCfC activities have resulted in children coming to school more often in all these communities and, importantly, engaging more while there.



Cultural learning and participation

Children, young people and families have gained cultural knowledge and skills from SCfC activities in all six communities featured in this Storybook. In Galiwin'ku alone, SCfC provides an average of 23 opportunities per week for children to learn about and participate in their culture.

To understand the extent and importance of what has been gained, it helps to consider four types of cultural knowledge and skills strengthened by SCfC:

1. Language

SCfC activities have strengthened local languages in multiple communities. One example is in Ngukurr, where community-driven training and resourcing programs have increased Kriol literacy skills both within and beyond the local school. In Ntaria, children and families have learned how to communicate about trauma and healing in Western Aranda language. In Maningrida, children have learned how to talk about Rheumatic Heart Disease using the four most spoken languages in community. All of the Local Community Boards for SCfC use local languages when they meet.

2. Connection to country

Multiple communities are implementing SCfC activities that cultivate connections to country. In Gunbalanya, for example, children have learned how to care for country through the Junior Rangers Program, and how to collect and prepare local bush foods at weekly Cook Ups. In Ntaria, Tjuwanpa and CLC Rangers have been bringing young people out on country for a five-day journey on horseback through key outstations that are part of Western Aranda land and heritage. In Ngukurr, the School Holiday Cultural Program engages young people in outdoor activities such as fishing, swimming and bushwalks to collect native foods and traditional medicines.

3. Arts and craft

Traditional arts, music and craftsmanship have also been boosted by SCfC. The strongest example of this is in Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa), where the LCB has invested in social enterprises that combine traditional arts with mainstream Australian products, such as skateboards and furniture. In Gunbalanya, the music program has provided a space for local people to write and perform songs that bring traditional themes into modern music.

4. Intergenerational relationships

All of the impacts described above have been a product of intergenerational knowledge sharing, which has also forged stronger relationships between children, young people and their Elders. In Ltyentye Apurte, for example, Elders pass on wood crafting knowledge and skills at the Traditional Craft Centre, enabling younger generations to learn new skills and keep the tradition alive. Bush Tucker Cook Up nights in Gunbalanya have become a regular gathering where people of all generations come together, build social connections and learn from one another. In Galiwin'ku, the Djalkiri Program has provided local school children with a better understanding of where they fit within the Yolŋu system of relationships and how to show respect through the way they behave towards others.



Family and community safety

Many of the communities featured in this Storybook report that SCfC activities are creating safer environments for children and young people.

People from three of the six communities have reported during surveys and interviews that SCfC activities are reducing fighting, violence and crime. One example is Gunbalanya, where community members have remarked that Hang Out Nights are resulting in fewer break-ins and family disturbances. Another example is Maningrida, where community members see the AFL program prompting more supportive relationships and less violence.

In Ngukurr, community perceptions of change are backed by quantitative data collected by local authorities. Ngukurr Police noted significant reductions in crime corresponding with inception of the School Holiday and Cultural Program. Police statistics from school holiday periods in 2019 and 2020 show a 45% reduction in offences against the person, reduced severity of assaults, and comparatively fewer incidences of domestic violence when compared to other local jurisdictions across the Northern Territory. More recent statistics show zero property offences over the July 2020 holiday period, and an 87% decrease in property crimes over the twelve months leading up to December 2020, with zero targeted break-ins. The Police Sergeant from Ngukurr Police Station has expressed the view that this drop in crime has been part of the “positive and broad impact” resulting from the program.

In other communities, such as Ltyentye Apurte, community members have observed more helping behaviours along with a heightened sense of pride and responsibility flowing from the growth of new social enterprises supported by SCfC. In Ntaria, the Swimming and Water Safety Program is improving the community’s ability to keep children safe when the rivers are full.

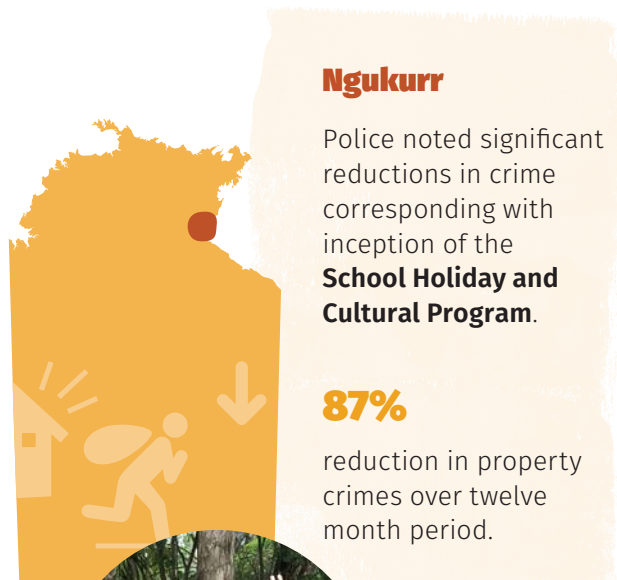
In Galiwin’ku, SCfC has laid important groundwork for addressing family violence with seed funding for Galiwin’ku Women’s Space, which was used to develop a locally-driven, evidence-based model now funded by the Northern Territory Government.

Ngukurr

Police noted significant reductions in crime corresponding with inception of the **School Holiday and Cultural Program**.

87%

reduction in property crimes over twelve month period.





Workforce and human capacity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all six communities examined in this Storybook have gained meaningful paid employment and valuable professional development through SCfC activities. In some communities, such as Ltyentye Apurte, survey and interview participants pointed to job creation as the most important benefit of SCfC, as it has increased opportunities for local people to 'earn good money, not just government money'.

Professional development opportunities provided in each community varied based on specific local needs and priorities. Training provided in multiple communities has built local workforce capacity in:

- Governance
- Leadership
- Research (impact evaluation)
- Youth program delivery
- First aid
- Youth mental health
- Conflict and mediation
- Community services
- Grief, loss and trauma recovery

Specialised professional development opportunities have also been provided to meet specific local objectives in particular communities, such as:

- Certificates and apprenticeships for specific vocations such as teaching, hairdressing, wood-working and animal husbandry
- Training on how to teach the use of microscopes to support student learning about germs and disease prevention
- Media training
- Language literacy education



**Earn good money,
not just government money**

Ltyentye Apurte

Local Community Boards and Facilitating Partners in three communities – Ntaria, Galiwin'ku and Gunbalanya – have been intentional in their approach to supporting professional development by setting up 'shadowing' arrangements, meaning opportunities for local people to work closely with someone who has a different skill set. For example, when specialists are brought from outside the community, they are paired with a paid local assistant who brings cultural knowledge while also gaining valuable new skills. Another example is when young people take on leadership roles and shadow local people already in leadership positions.

The workforce and human capacity outcomes described above are mission outcomes because of all the ways in which meaningful employment and professional development opportunities have a positive impact on the lives of families and young people. The outcomes above also represent progress in terms of systems change, which will be discussed further in the following section.

**During Jan 2019
to Dec 2020**

675

**Indigenous
people worked**

101,929

**hours,
making up**

83%

**of the
workforce
for SCfC**



Systems change

The extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues



- Changes in drivers of the system behaviours
- Changes in behaviours drivers of system actors
- Changes in overall system behaviour/s

Source: Cabaj, M. (2019) 'Evaluating systems change results: an Inquiry Framework', The Tamarack Institute.

Systems change can be understood as shifting the conditions that hold complex problems in place. Conditions relevant to SCfC might include policies, practices, resource flows, relationships, communication patterns, power dynamics, attitudes and habits of thought that limit people's abilities to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children the best possible start in life.

Three of the community-led program measures for SCfC assess systems change:

- Workforce / human capacity
- Community governance capacity
- Cross-cutting outcomes

Each of these will be discussed below.

Yalu employs

34

staff members.

32

**of them are
are Yolŋu**



Workforce and human capacity

Much has already been said about the employment and professional development opportunities provided by SCfC in all six communities featured in this Storybook. Building workforce and human capacity achieves systems change by empowering local people with the skills, knowledge and experience needed to give children the best possible start in life.

Participating in meaningful, paid employment also changes the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people think about themselves and their communities. The jobs created by SCfC place value on local knowledge and cultural authority, which also has the power to shift the ways in which non-Aboriginal people think about and treat children and young people in these communities. For example, in Ntaria, employing Western Aranda people to support trauma-informed learning environments has changed the ways in which teachers at the local school work with children who exhibit challenging behaviours.

Employment and professional development opportunities provided by Yalu Indigenous Corporation are especially noteworthy. When SCfC began in Galiwin'ku in 2013, Yalu partnered with the Red Cross to implement the program. Yalu has demonstrated strong commitment to supporting professional development, including opportunities for its staff to shadow different roles within the program. By 2019, Yalu had built the skills and capacity needed to become the sole Facilitating Partner. By 2020, Yalu was employing 32 Yolŋu staff members, who participate in all levels of the organisation to design, deliver and guide SCfC programs and services in Galiwin'ku. This is significant progress in terms of Priority Reform Area 2 of the National Closing the Gap Agreement, which aims to build the community-controlled sector.



Community governance capacity

There is evidence of increased community governance capacity in all six communities featured in this Storybook. All six have established Local Community Boards comprised of people with interest, experience and cultural authority who are confident in their ability to plan, lead and make decisions that will benefit children and families in their community.

Diverse knowledge and representation has been achieved in many of the Local Community Boards (LCBs). In some communities, it has been important to identify LCB members that represent different clans and family groups. Some have also found it important to establish a board that is a mixture of women and men, Elders, parents and young people. Two communities report that it has been beneficial to engage LCB members who also sit on other boards in the community because they bring knowledge about a variety of issues to inform SCfC planning and decision making.

Community members remarked on participatory planning and decision making processes during surveys and interviews conducted at three SCfC sites. In Ltyentye Apurte, for example, some community members report feeling a sense of ownership over the program because they “can have a say”. In Ntaria, participatory planning takes place through inclusion of kin relations in LCB membership criteria, which ensures that members are well positioned to engage the whole community.

A standout example of participatory planning and transparent decision making is in Ngukurr. In 2018, a community engagement study gathered the views of more than 100 Yugul Mangi people to form a comprehensive Community Plan that has determined SCfC activities, while also offering service providers and agencies with a detailed description of the priorities of Ngukurr residents. The process of conducting this study provided a way for the LCB to listen to a diverse range of local people and brought confidence as well as a solid evidence base for informed decision making. This laid a solid foundation for building a shared vision and prompting ‘buy-in’ from other boards, service providers, government agencies, and community members.

Cross Cutting Outcomes

The community-led program measures for SCfC include four cross-cutting outcomes:

- Effective place-based strategies
- Access to flexible and responsive support
- Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements
- Collective impact through leverage of program support (funded and in-kind)

Place-based strategies position local circumstances and relationships as central to what and how decisions are made. Three communities featured in the Storybook present very different examples of what effective place-based strategies can look like in practice.

In Ltyentye Apurte, economic and geographical circumstances pose significant barriers to families when it comes to both engaging in paid employment and accessing basic goods and services. The strategy of supporting growth in local Aboriginal-led business and social enterprises shows early signs of effectiveness in addressing these barriers, with reports from community members suggesting that it has allowed them to ‘keep the money in the community’ rather than travelling all the way to Alice Springs, and this ‘keeps the community going’.

In Ngukurr, the strategy of establishing a clear pathway for community-led cultural governance and information flows is proving effective in developing consensus and collaborative action to achieve priority outcomes. In Maningrida, growing concern about young girls having children sparked investment into the Preconception Health Education Program, which has effectively engaged the community in supporting young people to make well-informed choices and significantly reduced teen pregnancy rates.



Maningrida

Preconception Health Education Program resulted in no teenage pregnancies occurring in since February 2019.

Access to flexible, responsive support is difficult to gauge. Some evidence of impact is seen in Ntaria, where the school lost its funding for swimming classes and the LCB was able to quickly approve the Learn to Swim Project in response. Another example is in Gunbalanya, where the Adjumarllal Youth Program has recently merged two SCfC activities in response to the evolving needs of the community. An overarching example across multiple sites is increased support for social and emotional well-being, which has taken various forms in response to differing needs and priorities in each community.

Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements are evident in all six communities featured here. Leaders of the SCfC program in Maningrida report that collaboration has been vital in achieving outcomes and ensuring activities are reaching their best potential. In Galiwin'ku, Ngukurr and Ntaria, increased collaboration with local schools stands out as an important systemic change. In these three communities, local Aboriginal people have been employed to embed cultural knowledge, language and worldviews into mainstream educational pathways. Early evidence suggests that these programs are resulting in higher levels of engagement by students and their families, as well as social and emotional gains for children.

Four of the six SCfC communities examined here specifically show evidence of stronger partnerships between Aboriginal-led organisations, government, service providers and community. The stories of change in Ngukurr, Galiwin'ku, Gunbalanya and Maningrida describe examples of how SCfC has been fortifying relationships between a variety of actors. These systemic changes lay important groundwork for Priority Reform Area 2 of the National Closing the Gap Agreement, which aims to advance formal partnerships and shared decision making.

Leverage of program support is evident in five of the six communities, although it is too early to understand the results of this in terms of collective impact. A noteworthy example is in Galiwin'ku, where a modest amount of seed funding provided by SCfC has grown into the community-driven Galiwin'ku Women's Space model for addressing family violence. This Yolngu-led service has now been awarded an ongoing \$300,000 annual operational contract with the Northern Territory Government to deliver violence prevention and crisis response services, again demonstrating progress towards Closing the Gap Priority Reform Areas 1 & 2.

**During Jan 2019
to Dec 2020**

16,388+

participants in

198

**activities
involving**

97

organisations.

93%

**of stakeholders
reported
satisfaction with
Service delivery**



Strategic learning

The extent to which efforts to uncover insights key to future progress

- Learning about what we are doing
- Learning about what we are thinking
- Learning about how we are being



Source: Cabaj, M. (2019) 'Evaluating systems change results: an Inquiry Framework', The Tamarack Institute.

The rich contextual narratives provided in this Storybook give rise to strategic learning at the local, program and national level. Each chapter culminates by examining what the evidence and insight gathered from SCfC activities in specific communities tells us about how to achieve progress in future. This section will identify key insights that emerge from across all these communities to inform future work towards Closing the Gap Targets and, more specifically, towards ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the best possible start in life.

Lesson One:

Collaborative cultural activities can produce a wide range of important benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and communities.



SCfC demonstrates the far-reaching impact of cultural learning and participation. All six communities featured in this Storybook have chosen to invest in activities that connect children, families and young people with their culture, language and country.

These investments have been paying off in terms of:

- Social and emotional well-being
- Knowledge and skills
- Intergenerational relationships
- Increased engagement with school
- More supportive learning environments
- Improved collaboration between community members, service providers and government agencies
- Opportunities for local people to apply their specialised cultural knowledge and skills in the course of paid employment
- Reductions in violence and crime
- Pride in identity and community

The value of cultural learning and participation, in and of itself, was acknowledged by Local Community Boards and Facilitating Partners when they determined this as a measure for program success. The evidence now emerging from communities shows that cultural activities can also be instrumental in achieving additional outcomes.

In some cases, activities designed specifically to increase cultural knowledge and skills produced unexpected social and emotional benefits. One example is the Meigim Kriol Strongbala program in Ngukurr, which focuses on enhancing Kriol literacy. Focus groups with Assistant Teachers at Ngukurr School found unexpected outcomes from the program, most notably that students are better able to express their emotions and manage aggression since the introduction of Kriol lessons.

In other cases, SCfC activities have been intentionally designed to weave in cultural learning and participation to produce broader outcomes. Two examples are the Djalkiri Program in Galiwin'ku, which supports children's social-behavioural development through understanding of Yolŋu relationship systems, and Kids Club in Ntaria, which provides social and emotional development support for children through Western Aranda language and worldview.

The experiences of these communities suggest that service providers and government agencies should consider cultural learning and participation as a way of preserving the rich heritage of this country, boosting social and emotional well-being, and advancing progress towards multiple Closing the Gap targets.

Lesson Two:
Setting up effective community governance takes time, but can produce rapid and profound impact once achieved.



The experience of implementing SCfC in remote Northern Territory communities shows the importance of being realistic about the amount of time needed to build strong mechanisms for participatory planning and decision making. This is consistent with international research, which stresses that collective impact is a 'long-term proposition' that requires significant investment to lay a strong foundation for deep and durable change.

The examples of Ngukurr and Galiwin'ku, especially, demonstrate what can be achieved through effective community-led governance. Ngukurr's Local Community Board decided to invest in a Governance Mapping Project and Community Engagement Study that laid solid groundwork for high-quality partnerships and collaborations. One result has been a collaborative Youth Cultural Program that garners active participation by a large proportion of community members in turning around the lives of young people and producing a rapid and sharp reduction of crime.

In Galiwin'ku, transitioning implementation of SCfC to an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation has built skills and capacity that enable strong Yolŋu voice in the design and delivery of local services. This has resulted in stronger partnerships with service providers, operational contracts for culturally located services and creation of meaningful employment for local people.

In impact assessments across all six SCfC communities, community members pointed out the importance of amplifying the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in order to make appropriate decisions that produce positive outcomes for local children and families. Establishing effective mechanisms to enable this requires long-term vision and strategic capacity building, but once in place create clearer pathways for a variety of service providers to achieve impact.

Lesson Three:
Cultural authority is a crucial enabler for establishing shared vision and achieving positive change.



At the SCfC Knowledge Sharing Seminar held in October 2019, cultural authority was defined as the ability to make decisions and provide leadership based on cultural and historical knowledge. Evidence from across all SCfC sites shows that cultural authority is a crucial factor that enables both development of a shared vision and effective implementation of programs and services.

Knowing the history and culture of a community makes it possible to engage the right people in the right ways to bring a diversity of voices into decision making. In Ntaria, this has meant including kin relations in the membership criteria of the LCB to facilitate planning and information sharing with all local family groups. In Gunbalanya, it has meant 'right-way' decision making practices that include opportunities for individual board members to fully express their knowledge and opinions confidentially and in their own language.

Strengthening the capacity of local people to lead and make decisions about how resources are invested has been an important and potentially long-lasting achievement in multiple SCfC communities. One example is Galiwin'ku, where Yalu Indigenous Corporation has provided high-quality support for local employees to build the skills needed for the next generation to lead in 'two worlds'. In Ngukurr, SCfC partners reflect that 'Strengthening cultural authority that is representative of the Yugul Mangi people, reflects traditional clan systems, respects the Elders of the past and the present, strengthens the foundations for community governance for the generations to come'.

Cultural authority has also proven to be a powerful enabling factor when it comes to implementing effective programs and services. Impact assessments at multiple SCfC communities point to the importance of embedding cultural knowledge and skills in a variety of services including health (Maningrida) and education (Ngukurr, Galiwin'ku, Ntaria) to achieve better outcomes for children and families. Cultural authority has also facilitated community participation in recreational activities that strengthen social relationships (Gunbalanya) and the establishment of social enterprises that enable economic participation and preserve traditional skills and crafts (Ltyentye Apurte).

The lesson for communities, service providers and government agencies is that cultural authority should be considered essential to success. Strengthening the capacity of local people to lead and make decisions about how resources are invested is a sound strategy for achieving impact. Government agencies should also note that this strategy aligns firmly with Priority Reforms 1, 2 and 3 of the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

22%

of services are new or innovative



Lesson Four:
Meaningful paid employment and professional development opportunities are highly valued by remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



The process of measuring change in SCfC has drawn attention to the high value implementing communities place on creating local employment and professional development opportunities. Workforce and human capacity was determined by Local Community Boards and Facilitating Partners to be one of six key measures of program success, and impact assessments have consistently shown that community members see the employment of local people as a high priority.

The ways in which people talked about employment during impact assessments are revealing. The only mention of income was to point out that the SCfC gave local people opportunities to 'earn good money, not just government money'. Across the board, people talked about jobs in terms of pride, involvement, empowerment, healthier pathways toward the future and placing due value on cultural knowledge and skills.

All six SCfC communities in this Storybook have created opportunities for Aboriginal people to apply their specialised cultural knowledge and skills in the course of paid employment. Multiple LCBs have made intentional decisions to ensure that SCfC builds local workforce and human capacity. One example is Karrimud Rowk, which has made local employment a key criterion for deciding which activities will receive SCfC funding in Gunbalanya. There and in Ntaria, the LCBs ensure that all specialists brought from out of town are paired with a paid local assistant who provides cultural perspective and gains skills and experience. Another example is in Ltyentye Apurte, where developing entrepreneurship has been central to the local strategy and community members point to creation of local jobs as the biggest benefit from SCfC.

Service providers, government agencies and communities that wish to generate meaningful employment and professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can gain valuable insight from the effective and varied strategies that SCfC communities have used.

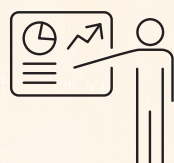
During Jan 2019 to Dec 2020

49

training and study opportunities for SCfC staff and LCB members plus

17

for other community members



Lesson Five:

Local people are well positioned to deliver responsive, culturally located support for social and emotional well-being.



The impact assessments reported in this Storybook show that children and families are benefitting from social and emotional gains in multiple communities. The narrative accounts of how communities are achieving this demonstrate a variety of approaches that have been carefully tailored to the needs, priorities and aspirations of particular populations.

The importance of responsive and culturally located support for social and emotional well-being cannot be stressed enough. Impact assessments of activities that produced social and emotional gains also found early signs of:

- Children and young people becoming more engaged in learning and school
- Less aggressive behaviour, fighting and crime
- Stronger and more respectful relationships across generations

In addition, a recent study led by the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin pointed to culturally-located support for the social and emotional well-being (SEWB) of families as an important strategy for reducing the risk of self-harm in Aboriginal children. Its findings call for 'child protection responses that can better identify and address the culturally-specific unmet needs of Aboriginal families' noting that 'a strategic approach... requires reducing the risk of maltreatment... and longer-term sustained efforts at building the SEWB of at-risk Aboriginal children and families.'

As pointed out in Lesson 1, the examples of Meigim Kriol Strongbala in Ngukurr, the Djalkiri Program in Galiwin'ku, Kids Club in Ntaria and Bush Tucker Cook Ups in Gunbalanya demonstrate how applying specialised cultural knowledge can produce social and emotional gains. Other activities, such as the AFL program in Maningrida and Young Women's Place in Ntaria, rely less on cultural knowledge and more on deep understanding of what local people want and need. All the activities achieving social and emotional gains rely on engaging children and young people to participate, which often requires trust and familiarity that only local community members possess.

One over-arching theme across this variety of approaches is that creating fun and safe spaces for children, young people and families can be a powerful conduit for building relationships that support social and emotional development. No one is better positioned to do this than local people.

Lesson Six:
Measuring local change can produce valuable insight into what works for specific communities and reinforce their achievements.



The process of measuring local change, assessing impact and creating this Storybook has prompted LCB members and FP staff to examine their communities' experiences implementing SCfC. When Ninti One has been invited to support impact assessment in these communities, the focus has been squarely placed on learning. We aim to collect 'data that tells a story', meaning information that helps local teams figure out what works well and what steps they will take next to continuously strive for better outcomes in their community.

Setting up shared measurement for assessing collective impact has been a challenge in many communities. It is normal for this to take time, as establishing mechanisms for community governance and engagement often take precedence.

This was the case in Ngukurr, which offers an example of how valuable learning and insight can be gained from sharing data with a wide range of partners. When the School Holiday Cultural Program corresponded with a sharp drop in local crime, the Ngukurr Police Sergeant took notice and began communicating with the Stronger Communities team about crime statistics. The clear pattern that emerged showed the diverse range of organisations delivering the program that their efforts were making Ngukurr a safer place. Community participation in the program has grown rapidly, and Ngukurr Police continue to share insights from crime statistics that shed light on the program's efficacy. This systematic sharing of data, paired with the Stronger Communities team's avid participation in telling their story, enables us to understand and celebrate their achievements. More importantly, it enables them and their community to recognise and take pride in what they have achieved.

Celebrating achievements is particularly powerful when decision making is led by community. The SCfC team in Maningrida have reflected on the sense of pride that has resulted from identifying specific local concerns, taking action to address them, and then observing positive changes in the community. Measuring those changes and reflecting them back to community enables SCfC teams to acknowledge and give credit to the full range of local people who engage with the program to make it a success.

The strategic learning produced by SCfC and documented in this Storybook would not have been possible without the local community researchers who designed impact assessment methods, collected and analysed data. Many of the people who led these tasks had little or no previous research experience, yet their specialised local knowledge and relationships in community were absolutely crucial to understanding the impact of the program. This indicates the importance of building research capacity in remote communities to gain strategic insight for improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

The future story of Stronger Communities for Children

This Storybook has painted an early picture of what six remote Northern Territory communities have achieved by implementing Stronger Communities for Children. It will be years before it is possible to measure the full extent of these achievements, as the program's collective impact approach aims for deep and durable systemic changes that take time to accomplish and assess.

Early measures of change are crucial, however, to improve understanding of what works and guide the direction of the program in future. SCfC has produced a wealth of strategic learning that will enable communities, service providers and government agencies to make more informed choices about how to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the best possible start in life.

Based on these early measures, we recommend that:

Communities should be supported to lay a firm foundation for change

Building mechanisms for deep engagement and community-led governance takes time, but once established produce clearer pathways toward a better future. Short-term funding cycles pose barriers to the long-term partnerships, shared vision and planning required for achieving sustainable change. Finding ways to address these barriers and strengthen community capacity to lead and make decisions informed by local cultural and historical knowledge are worthwhile challenges to pursue for all agencies and organisations wishing to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

Government agencies, service providers and communities should make the most of strategic learning produced by SCfC

When SCfC was first implemented, very little was known about how to achieve collective impact in remote Australian communities. The local and program-wide lessons documented in this Storybook represent substantial gains. Local Community Boards, Facilitating Partners, service providers and government agencies across all sectors can leverage these gains by engaging with these stories and learning from these Aboriginal-led initiatives.

Efforts to create a better future for children living in remote communities should incorporate paid employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply their specialised cultural knowledge and skills.

The data emerging from SCfC provides sound evidence that this is an effective strategy for progress towards multiple Closing the Gap targets. Evidence for the value of cultural learning and participation for improving social and emotional well-being is especially strong, but can only be led by people with the appropriate cultural knowledge and skills.

The Storybook does not end here. Communities continue in their work to change early childhood support systems so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are empowered to give emerging generations the best possible start in life. As they learn from their experiences, this Storybook will grow and change along with understanding of the program's impact.

Appendix

Summary of community-level outcomes and thematic analysis

SCfC Community: Galiwin'ku

Governance: Yolŋu Wanganhurr Mitj (YWM) · Yalu Marnggithinyaraw Indigenous Corporation (Yalu)

Assessed activities in the Storybook: Galiwin'ku Women's Space

· Djalkiri Program · Yalu Employment Strategy

	Program Measures	Outcomes	Strategic learning	Themes
Mission Outcomes	Children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people are supported to engage with school 	<p>SCfC activities that focus on children and young people learning about lore and culture are especially important to people in Galiwin'ku.</p> <p>Language and culture are deeply valued in the community and there is a commitment to work towards keeping this strong.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsive and culturally located support for SEWB Supportive learning environments Increased collaboration between Aboriginal people, organisations and schools
	Cultural learning and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language Intergenerational relationship building
	Workforce / human capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased hours worked by Yolŋu people from Galiwin'ku New work and professional development opportunities 	<p>SCfC funding allowed the governance of local Yolŋu led organisations to develop, which in turn has allowed them to seek ongoing funding from other sources. This has resulted in more support for the community overall.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaningful paid employment Shadowing
Systems Change	Community governance capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making, and planning 	<p>SCfC has strengthened partnerships between Yolŋu led organisations and Government, other service providers, and the community itself. This has laid important groundwork for advancing the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural authority 'Two worlds' capacity
	Cross-cutting outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements Leverage of program support 	<p>Ongoing funding has enabled programs to establish and refine their content and delivery, and has allowed the sustainability of the programs to develop.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened partnerships between Aboriginal-led organisations, Government, service providers, and community Leverage for culturally-located services.

SCfC Community: Ngukurr

Governance: Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation (YMDAC)

• Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti (SPWBK)

Assessed activities in the Storybook: Governance Mapping Project • School Holiday Cultural Program

• Meigim Kriol Strongbala (Making Kriol Strong)

	Program Measures	Outcomes	Strategic learning	Themes
Mission Outcomes	Children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased school attendance and engagement • Children and young people gain social and emotional maturity 	Developing community-based and driven education, training and resourcing programs for the Kriol language is fostering pride and an increased capacity in Kriol literacy. This works to increase community engagement in the school and workplace; improve communication between community and service providers; and increase student attendance and engagement at school by developing localised and culturally appropriate curricula.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play and fun • Increased collaboration between Aboriginal people, organisations and schools • Responsive and culturally located support for SEWB
	Cultural learning and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills 	Cultural Programs for young people are vital to their social and emotional well-being and their sense of identity and belonging. Youth in Ngukurr are dealing with a complex range of emotional, social, health, and economic problems. Guided by the SPWBK, the Stronger Communities' Youth Cultural and Well-being Programs, School Holiday Cultural Programs, Youth Diversion and others have provided the support, mentorship and connection to culture that youth need. In collaboration with a diverse range of organisations, and community leaders, the YMDAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Pride
	Family and community safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community perceptions of change 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational relationship building
	Workforce / human capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased hours worked by local people • New work and professional development opportunities 	Stronger Communities Program has made Ngukurr a safer and happier place for young people and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful paid employment
Systems Change	Community governance capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority • LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making, and planning 	Strengthening cultural authority that is representative of the Yugul Mangi people, reflects traditional clan systems, respects the Elders of the past and the present, strengthens the foundations for community governance for the generations to come.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural authority • Participatory and transparent decision making

Systems Change	Program Measures	Outcomes	Strategic learning	Themes
	Cross-cutting outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements Leverage of program support Effective place-based strategies 	<p>Conducting successful consultations such as the Community Engagement Study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a way for the [Local Community Board] to listen to residents across the different clans, genders, age groups and different roles and perspectives to make informed decisions. Give residents a chance to raise their voice confidentially. Bring confidence to the decision making process by the SPWBK in their recommendations to YMDAC Board of Directors. Provide solid evidence for supporting the plans developed out of the process. (Prompts shared vision and 'buy-in' from boards, community, service providers and governments} Are viewed as a win for everyone, so long so long as the leaders have oversight and control, the consultations are conducted by local people and the participants are paid for their contribution of knowledge and time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened partnerships between Aboriginal-led organisations, Government, service providers, and community

SCfC Community: Ntaria

Governance: Western Aranda Leaders Group

Assessed activities in the Storybook: Kids Club • Young Women’s Place

• Swimming and Water Safety Program • Ride for Pride

	Program Measures	Outcomes	Strategic learning	Themes
Mission Outcomes	Children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased school attendance • Personal and social development 	<p>Factors that have been critical to providing successful support for the social and emotional well-being of children include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play and fun • Age appropriate spaces • Communicating about healing through Western Aranda language and worldview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age-appropriate spaces • Play and fun • Responsive and culturally located support for social and emotional well-being (SEWB) • Supportive learning environments
	Cultural learning and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills 	<p>Learning about ‘the brain story’ has helped teachers better understand and respond to challenging behaviours. This has created a more supportive learning environment at Ntaria school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Pride • Connection to country
	Family and community safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are safer when the rivers flood 		
Systems Change	Workforce / human capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased hours worked by Western Aranda people • New work and professional development opportunities 	<p>Inclusion of kin relations in LCB membership criteria has increased its ability to engage the community and facilitate participatory planning and transparent decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful paid employment • High-leverage training • Shadowing
	Community governance capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority • LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making, and planning 	<p>Linkages with service agencies and organisations through Leaders Group members’ employment or membership on other community boards have enabled SCfC to leverage program support, build strong partnerships, and add value to existing government services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural authority • Participatory and transparent
	Cross-cutting outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to flexible and responsive support • Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements • Leverage of program support 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased collaboration between Aboriginal people and schools

SCfC Community: Ltyentye Apurte

Governance: SCfC Decision Making Group • Atyenhenge-Atherre Aboriginal Corporation (AAAC)

Assessed activities in the Storybook: Spinifex Skateboards • The Ltyentye Apurte Hair Salon • Horse Program

	Program Measures	Outcomes	Strategic learning	Themes	
Mission Outcomes	Children and young people	Children develop communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal-social skills	Bringing new activities- such as skating- that combine traditional aspects (such as art) with elements from mainstream Australia, turn into good opportunities for children to explore. Besides this intercultural strength, skating has also enhanced skills development, peer support and having fun! The fact that it is led by an Indigenous local man has also been a success factor. Thanks to Nicky Hayes!	• Play and fun	
	Cultural learning and participation	• Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills		• Pride	
	Family and community safety	• Community perceptions of change	Enhancing the development of local businesses supports empowerment and self-determination processes in the community. It brings good opportunities both for people that offer the service, since they get the chance to have local work, as well as for people accessing the services, since they might feel more comfortable and do not have to go into town. Some community members express the need to revise prices, since some people still can't afford these services, and other people suggest revising the number and gender of staff working in the businesses.	• Intergenerational relationship building	
	Workforce / human capacity	• Increased hours worked by local people		• Meaningful paid employment	
	Community governance capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New work and professional development opportunities • LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority • LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making, and planning 		<p>Having a strong Aboriginal corporation as the facilitating partner, has been a key element for business development and having control “about local development”. The impacts described here show the important role that the AAAC plays.</p> <p>Although people recognise ‘it was once broken’, AAAC is now strong again and say “we learnt from those days”. For people in Ltyentye Apurte, AAAC represents community, and as a local Aboriginal organisation they ‘help a lot’ and support community development.</p> <p>Analysis of local impacts from SCfC indicate that making Ltyentye Apurte a better place requires commitment from all community members. Besides having AAAC as a strong support, success depends on the participation of children, young people, adults and Elders. It is the joint work and the understanding of the relation between individual well-being and community well-being that has enabled Ltyentye Apurte to achieve their current state.</p>	• Cultural authority • Participatory and transparent decision making
					Cross-cutting outcomes
Systems Change					

SCfC Community: Maningrida

Governance: Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation • Maningrida SCfC Reference Group

Assessed activities in the Storybook: Australian Football League (AFL) Programs

• Rheumatic Heart Disease Community Awareness Project • Preconception Health and Education Program

	Program Measures	Outcomes	Strategic learning	Themes
Mission Outcomes	Children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health gains • Parents engaged in community-based parenting programs • Social and emotional gains 	<p>The Rheumatic Heart Disease project showed the importance of learning in first language, with people gaining a much better understanding of RHD, resulting in an increased number of people undertaking regular health checks and actively seeking treatment.</p> <p>Being a community-led program is instrumental in achieving the best possible outcomes for each community and is highly rewarding. Having identified specific concerns and seeing the improvement over the duration of the activities, gives not only the LCB, but the whole community, a sense of achievement and pride.</p> <p>Working collaboratively with other services in the community has been vital in achieving outcomes set by the LCB and ensuring activities are reaching their best potential.</p> <p>Having a varied Local Community Board in terms of gender and ages, has ensured the community is well-represented and community concerns identified are a true representation of the community as a whole.</p> <p>A strong partnership with Ninti One has been crucial for the survival of the SCfC Program and its future funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play and fun • Responsive and culturally located support for SEWB
	Cultural learning and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride • Language
	Family and community safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community perceptions of change 		
	Workforce / human capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased hours worked by local people 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful paid employment
Systems Change	Community governance capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New work and professional development opportunities • LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority • LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making, and planning 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural authority
	Cross-cutting outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements • Leverage of program support • Effective place-based strategies 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Two worlds' capacity • Increased collaboration between Aboriginal people, organisations and schools • Strengthened partnerships between Aboriginal-led organisations, Government, service providers, and community • Leverage for culturally-located services

SCfC Community: Gunbalanya

Governance: Karrimud Rowk (We Are All Together) • Adjumarllarl Aboriginal Corporation (AAC)

Assessed activities in the Storybook: Junior Rangers • Music Program • Bush Tucker Cook Up

• Hang Out Nights

	Program Measures	Outcomes	Strategic learning	Themes
Mission Outcomes	Children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are more engaged in learning • Increased social and emotional maturity 	Recreation can serve as a powerful conduit of positive change, especially when combined with local employment and cultural heritage. These have formed the main criteria for decisions about which activities SCfC supports in Gunbalanya.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play and fun • Responsive and culturally located support for SEWB
	Cultural learning and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people gained cultural knowledge and skills 	Meaningful jobs have been created for local people to cultivate fun and safe spaces for children, families and Elders to come together on country. These opportunities for social connection have generated important wins, such as intergenerational knowledge sharing, pride in community, confident participation and children engaging in healthy activities that were not accessible to them before SCfC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to country • Pride
	Family and community safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community perceptions of change 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational relationship building
	Workforce / human capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased hours worked by local people 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful paid employment • Shadowing
Systems Change	Community governance capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New work and professional development opportunities • LCB members have interest, experience and cultural authority • LCB members are confident in their leadership, decision making, and planning 		<p>‘Right-way’ decision making has emerged in Gunbalanya through governance arrangements that build on the strengths and experiences of both the Local Community Board and the Aboriginal-controlled Facilitating Partner organisation.</p> <p>Achieving ownership and active participation of young people involves relinquishing power and understanding the perspectives of the young people who are attending the activities. Young people need to have trust that ideas they have will be followed through. Young people in community can feel when their interests are being overridden by the interests of adults. It’s important to make clear that young people are given the flexibility and access to ensure they can participate during decision making. For example the Local Community Board has been reaching out to recruit more suitable young people to join the board, and making sure the facilitator gives them room to speak.</p> <p>Cultural authority has been key to achieving high levels of community participation and engagement across multiple SCfC activities.</p>
	Cross-cutting outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved partnerships and collaborative arrangements • Access to flexible and responsive support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened partnerships between Aboriginal-led organisations, Government, service providers, and community 	



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