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# Whole of Community Engagement

Initiative

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**Combining participatory action research  
with developmental evaluation approaches:  
Do they align?**

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# Acknowledgement

*We pay respect to the traditional and original owners of this land the muwinina people. We pay respect to those that have passed before us and to acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.*



# Acknowledging collective efforts



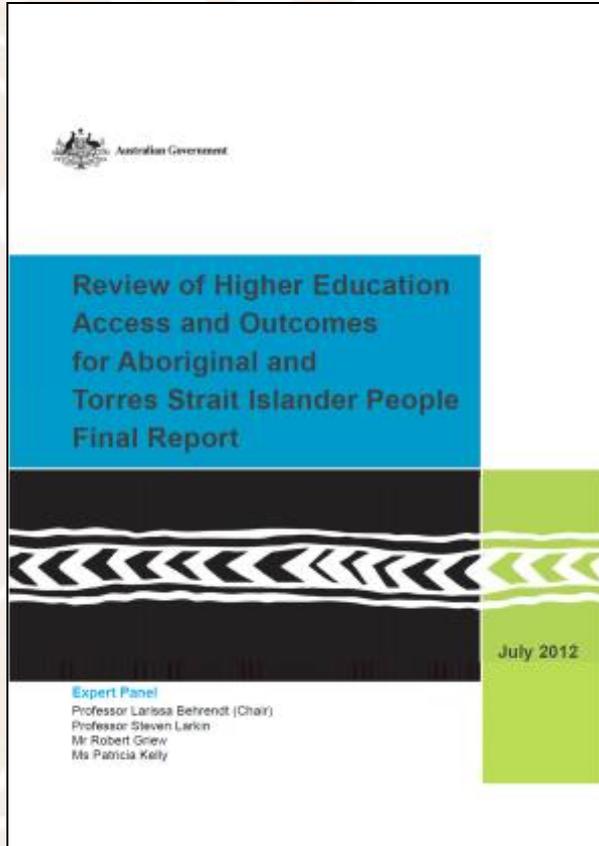
I would like to acknowledge the collective efforts of the WCE team. This presentation is drawn from our collective experiences and input.



# WCE Background

Whole of Community Engagement (WCE) initiative:

- July 2014 until June 2016
- Working with up to six remote Indigenous communities (in both Top End and Central Australia)
- Large-scale multi-site Participatory Action Research (PAR) project
- Developmental Evaluation (DE) is also be is used



# WCE Aim and Objectives

## Aim:

- To work with six remote Indigenous communities across the NT to build aspiration, expectation and capacity to participate in higher education

## Objectives:

- Explore current community perspectives of higher education, and linking with existing strategies for achieving quality of life aspirations;
- Co-create ongoing opportunities for community, research, academic and public policy leaders to engage in mutually beneficial and critical relationships; and
- Identify means for making education relevant and culturally and physically accessible;

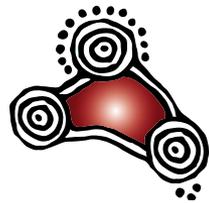




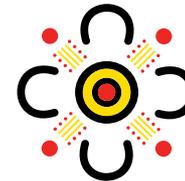
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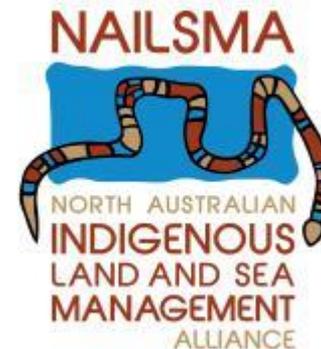
**Australian Centre for  
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# What do we know about PAR?

*“PAR seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it. At its heart is collective, self reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local context and embedded in social relationships.”*

(Baum, MacDougall and Smith 2006, p854)



# What do we know about PAR?

- \* PAR involves a variety of research methods and data collection techniques (Efron & Ravid 2013; McAteer 2013)
- \* PAR is cyclical in nature (Greenwood and Levin 1998)
- \* PAR is often used as a preferred model in Indigenous community-based research (Baum 2007; Kildea et al 2009; Josif et al 2012; Hornung 2013)



# What do we know about DE?

*“Developmental evaluation supports innovation development to guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments.”*

(Patton 2011, p1)



# What do we know about DE?

- \* DE is not a linear process
- \* DE focuses on complexity and uncertain environments (Patton 2011)
- \* DE is a relatively new and emerging evaluation approach
- \* DE is being used in health promotion contexts (Fagen et al 2011)
- \* DE is useful for programs with an equity focus (Reynolds, 2014)
- \* DE is generally inconsistent with program logic modelling (Patton 2011)



# Do they align?

- \* Conceptually these approaches are very similar – a strong alignment of principles and intent
- \* They are both consistent with preferred research and evaluation approaches in Indigenous community-based settings
- \* Both deal with complexity and have flexible approaches





## Participatory Action Research

Search to establish new facts, solve new or existing problems, prove new ideas or develop new theories

Aims to answer a specific research question

Inductive reasoning

Focus on action & empowerment; the 'researched' become partners

Creation of new knowledge

## Developmental Evaluation

Acquire and analyse information about activities, characteristics or outcomes of a program

Data is used to make judgements, improve effectiveness and/or inform decisions about future programs

Abductive reasoning

Focus on systems thinking

Provision of feedback to stakeholders

Non linear, iterative & emergent

Collect data to motivate action

Acknowledge complexity & uncertainty

Value local context, perspectives and knowledge systems

Appreciate change & continuous improvement

Flexible & responsive

"Bottom up"



# Conclusion

- \* We are in the formative stages of combining PAR and DE approaches
- \* We will continue to monitor the nexus between these two approaches
- \* We aim to build an evidence-base about this relationship within the context of education oriented community-based Indigenous evaluation and research



# Funding Acknowledgement

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