Whole of Community Engagement
Initiative

Understanding the aspirations of remote Aboriginal communities to pursue further education: Lessons learned through the Whole of Community Engagement initiative

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2. Yalu Marnggithinyaraw Indigenous Corporation

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the traditional land of the Larrakia people and pay respects to elders past, present and future. We recognise their strength and resilience.

A team effort

Information presented today is the result of collective efforts of the WCE team. It draws on the collective team experience.

WCE Background

Whole of Community Engagement (WCE) initiative:

- $7.5m funding from the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) from July 2014 until December 2016

- Large-scale multi-site Participatory Action Research project

- Working with six remote Indigenous communities in the NT in both the desert and tropics
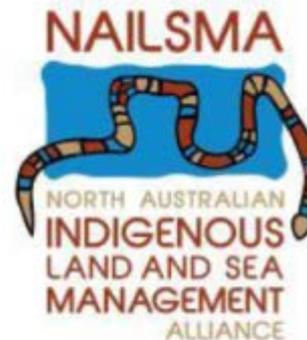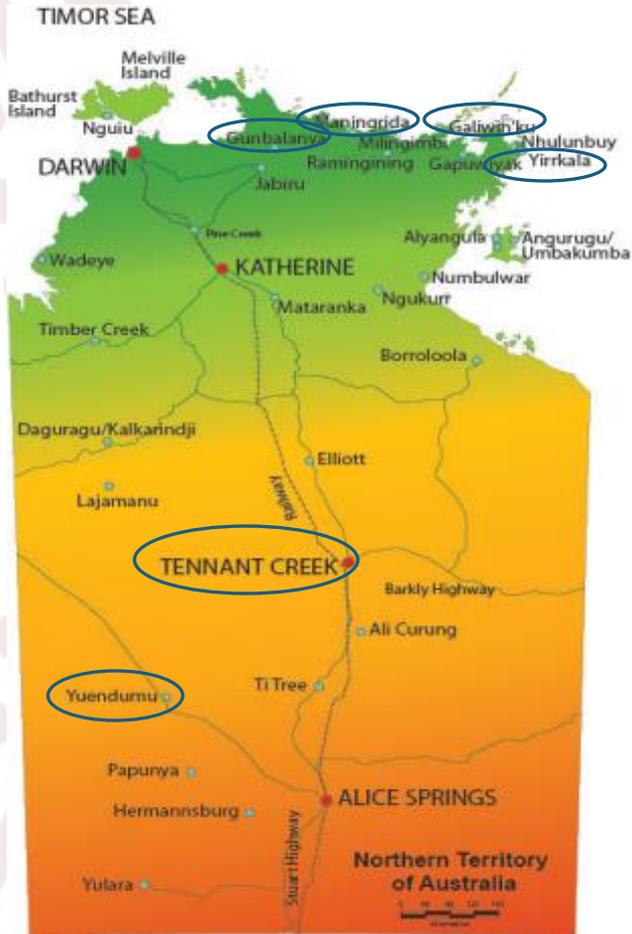
- Underpinned by a partnership approach
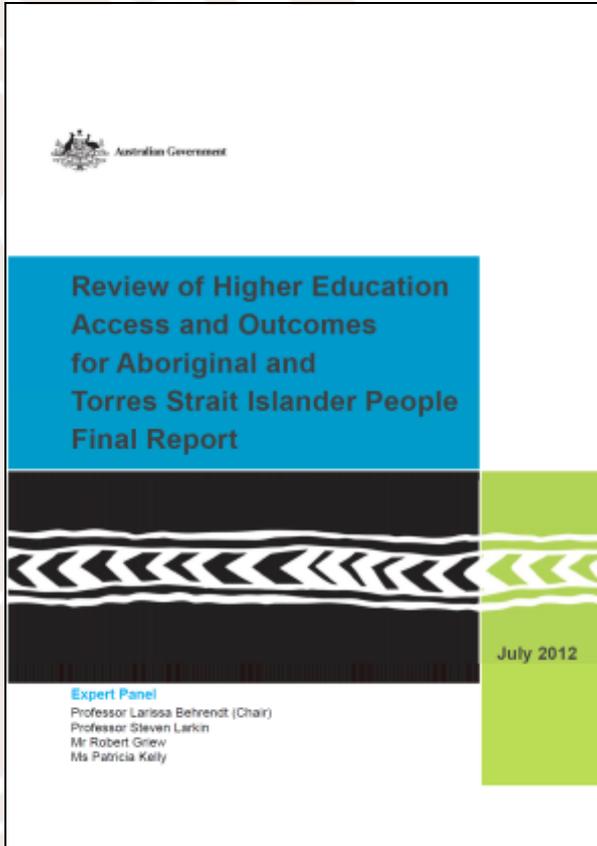
Our communities:

* Gunbalanya (n = 1,200+)

* Maningrida (n = 3,500+)

* Galiwin'ku (n = 2,100+)

* Yirrkala (n = 840+)

* Tennant Creek (n = 3,560+)

* Yuendumu (n = 810+)

WCE Aim and Objectives

Aim:

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

Objectives:

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

Galiwin'ku

Yolngu Teacher presenting pathways to higher education to students

Key learnings:

* Local ownership is critical
* Help to navigate the higher education 'jungle' is needed
* Local Indigenous mentorship programs provide positive role modelling
* Cultural Awareness Training for schools and other organisations is important
* Working in partnership provides positive outcomes

Gunbalanya

Higher Education Pathways

Mahni manbolh ngurrinan, wanjh kunmekke kayime ngurrikadjung bu ngurrire?
The road you see, it is just like your life journey
Dja wanjh bolkkime ngurriburrbu, bu baleh ngurridjare ngurrikurduyime?
Now it's time for you to think, what do you want to do?

Key learnings:

∗ Youth leaders as 'experts' of their own education experiences should be engaged and consulted

∗ Families are choosing to send their children to secondary boarding schools

∗ Independent Public School status increases family participation in governance (50% membership on the Board)

∗ Learning Together through genuine two-way mentoring is valuable

∗ Indigenous leadership and governance is critical

∗ Homelands education supports continuity of education for children moving between community and 'the bush'

Maningrida

Key learnings:

❖ The maintenance of first languages supports the acquisition of English language and literacy

❖ Language, literacy and numeracy skills development in English is a priority

❖ Two-way mentoring, with Indigenous and Mainstream knowledge exchange is critical to learner success

❖ On country programs are preferred

❖ Supporting homelands education is vital

❖ Indigenous leadership and governance in education supports appropriate curriculum decision-making

Tennant Creek

Key learnings:

* **Culture & Governance** - recognise the importance of culture / country and allow the right people to talk about the right things. This traditional knowledge needs to be shared.

* **The way we teach our children needs to change**. We need local cultural content, fresh approaches & better methods.

* **Education (and related) systems need change**. We need better coordination, longer time frames, better guidelines and less red-tape.

* **Community development** needs to go hand-in-hand with education reform. Without improving the socio-economic base and developing inter-related / inter-dependent areas such as health, justice and family services, education will always struggle.

Yirrkala

Key learnings:

* The need for more awareness of further and higher education

* Urgent need for more Yolŋu teachers VET and *degree qualified*

* An Indigenous leadership and governance focus is needed - *inclusive of youth*

* Appreciation and strength of CDU's regular presence – *gives hope*

* More focus and options for secondary schooling

* Training facility needed in the community

* Good model of homeland teacher training

* Good model of Yolŋu teacher support but more resources needed

* Importance of bi-lingual and bi-cultural education

Yuendumu

Key learnings:

Strengthening pathways from early childhood to higher education involves:

* Effective community engagement that adopts a bottom-up approach supported by government and non-government agencies

* Dominant worldview (Western) to integrate Warlpiri ways of doing, seeing and thinking in a two-way learning approach

* Warlpiri imperatives of *Yapakurlangu–lirnpa* (engaging the Yuendumu community)

* Identifying and supporting the educational needs of the community

Key Findings

* Aspirations for 'higher education' are best understood across an education continuum; and across a life course

* Investment in remote Indigenous English LLN support is critical for improving school, VET and higher education pathways

* Cultural metaphors are useful for understanding and explaining higher education pathways

* Language and culture need to be firmly embedded into school curricula, with adequate workforce support to do this effectively

* Both-ways learning is considered important

Key Findings

* Interculturality is inevitable – increasing need to navigate intersection between Aboriginal and mainstream worlds

* Need for greater co-ordination and integration of program and policy development at local, state and national levels to improve education outcomes

* Local Indigenous leadership, governance and self-determination needs to underpin remote Indigenous education transformation

* Education pathways need to be clearly linked to local employment options

* Community engagement, mentoring and academic support needs to be community-based, accessible and ongoing – preferably supported through local Indigenous employment

WCE Website

Please check-out the WCE website for more information about program achievements:

https://remotengagetoedu.com.au/

Funding Acknowledgement

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