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# Whole of Community Engagement Initiative

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## Collective School Council Statement on Remote Indigenous Education

A remote Indigenous school council gathering was held in Yirrkala from 4-6<sup>th</sup> May 2016. This was facilitated as a partnership between the Office of Pro Vice Chancellor - Indigenous Leadership at Charles Darwin University and the Yambirra Schools Council. It was facilitated as part of the Whole of Community Engagement (WCE) initiative funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP).

Strengthening education governance and leadership in remote and very remote schools is a key foundation for improving Indigenous\* education journeys for children and youth in the Northern Territory (NT). The planning and delivery of a joint school council gathering provided a safe environment for school council representatives to share stories and acknowledge the challenges and successes of school councils across the NT. The joint school council gathering included 20 Indigenous and 4 non-Indigenous representatives from:

- Yambirra Schools Council
- Shepherdson College School Council
- Maningrida College Council
- Gunbalanya School Council
- Yuendumu School Council
- Tennant Creek High School Council
- Tennant Creek Primary School Council
- Charles Darwin University
- Northern Territory Department of Education

The following themes were identified as key focus areas that need further investment and support in these Central Desert and Arnhem Land communities:

- A genuine commitment to listen to, and engage with, Indigenous people from remote and very remote communities across the NT
- More funding and support for remote school councils to strengthen Indigenous education governance and leadership capacity
- More Indigenous teachers and team teachers in remote and very remote settings with adequate supports to thrive, grow and lead
- A deeper effort to incorporate local languages, local culture and cultural education practices into school curriculum and activities with the support of local Elders and leaders
- A deeper commitment to expand and strengthen bilingual and multilingual education policies and programs across the NT
- Greater support for non-bilingual schools to incorporate local culture and language into curricula
- Increased support for non-Indigenous teachers to be culturally aware and competent, including the need to demonstrate heart and passion through their work
- A commitment to teamwork and collaboration based on trust and respect
- Opportunities to build school and community leadership potential through mentoring and coaching, particularly among remote Indigenous youth
- Ongoing support for families to support their young ones
- Opportunities to receive a quality education by learning on country
- Move towards constitutional and legislative change which recognises the right of Indigenous people to govern and self-determine education in their own communities
- System change within governments and educational institutions that is sufficiently flexible to reduce barriers and increase support for the above focus areas through meaningful engagement at the grass roots

\*For the purposes of this statement Indigenous refers to Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and/or Australian first nations people.

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Djindjipi Yankoo  
Geoffrey Shannon

Matjanga Mununggurr  
Mutjanga Mununggurr

Daisy Brown

Coralie James

Shannon - Valda Napurrula Shannon

Elizabeth Kalakanya

Simon Fisher

Yanangmul Manunggurr

Banbapuy Whitehead  
Whitehead

Jarrutji

Yalkarriwuy

Munupingu

Merrigawuy  
Merrigawuy

Andre Pascoe

MERRIGAWUY GAWAMBARR-STUBBS

Ollie

Gina Douglas