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AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY WORK

PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

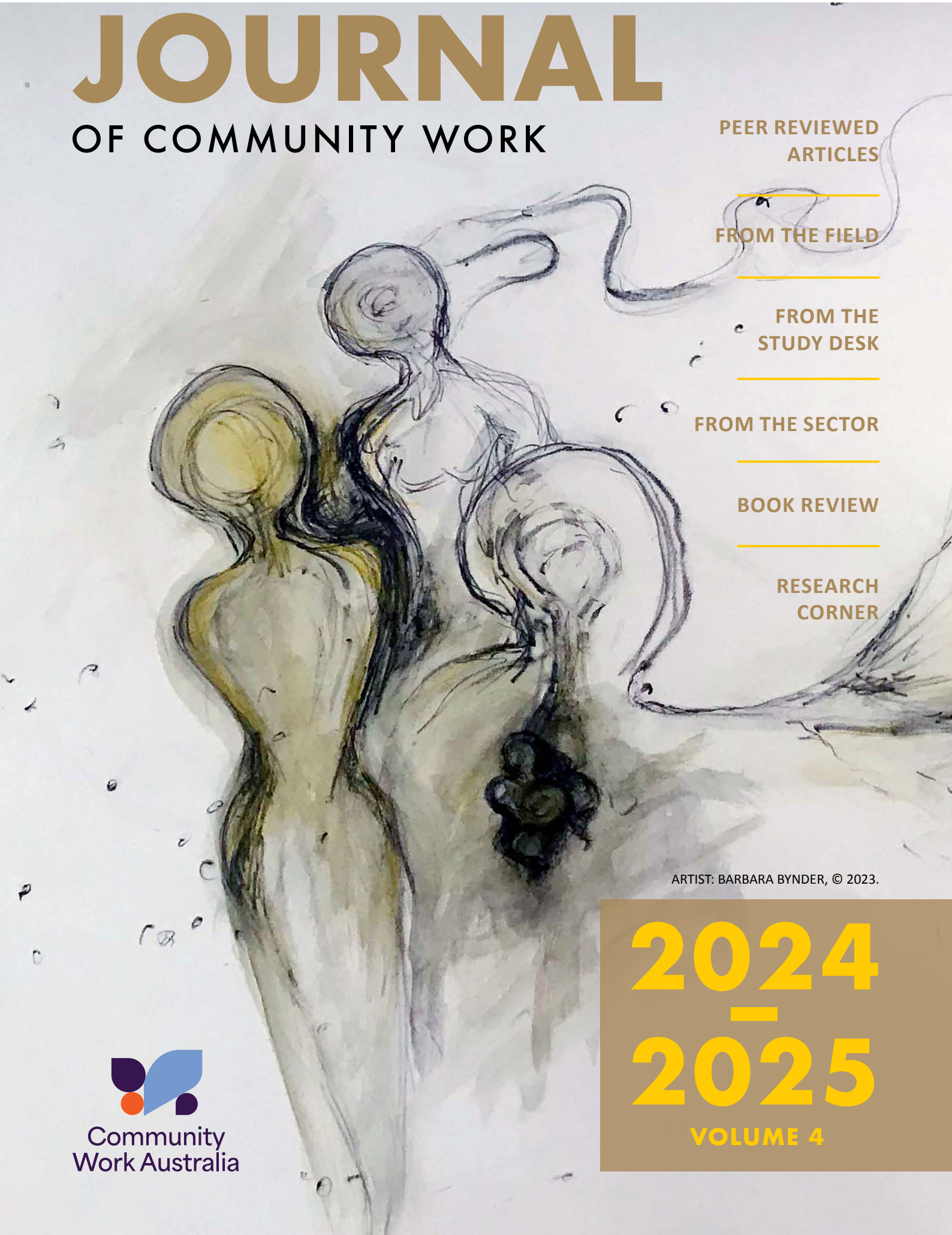
FROM THE FIELD

FROM THE STUDY DESK

FROM THE SECTOR

BOOK REVIEW

RESEARCH CORNER



ARTIST: BARBARA BYNDER, © 2023.

2024
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2025
VOLUME 4

Community Work Australia

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Journal of Community Work acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Tradition Custodians of Country, recognising their ancient and contemporary knowledge, wisdom and enduring relationship to land, air, sea, and fresh waters. We support First Nations people's Uluru Statement from the Heart and thank them for protecting earth's ecosystems since time immemorial. We extend our respect to all Indigenous peoples across Australia, including Elders past, present and emerging.

Please note this edition of the Australian Journal of Community Work contains images, stories and names of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have passed away.

AUSTRALIAN
JOURNAL
OF COMMUNITY WORK

The *Australian Journal of Community Work* (AJCW) is one approach the not-for-profit Community Work Australia (ajcw@communitywork.org.au) has adopted to fulfill its organisational objectives. This includes the **promotion and advancement of the occupation of community work in its many forms; contributing to the development of new knowledge and research in community work; and to support recognition and confidence in the community work profession**. The Journal provides key contributions towards fulfilling those aims by fostering **sharing of both practice wisdom and rigorous research**.

Overall, the AJCW provides a forum for the discussion and sharing of many facets of the community work profession, including double blind peer-reviewed papers – as well as non-peer reviewed articles, plus republished articles relevant to the community sector research. AJCW is included on Australian Research Council's (ARC) Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) current listing.

This Journal is published annually, with plans to move into publishing semi-annually. We have adopted a rolling submission process with articles welcomed anytime. However, we do request articles are received up to three months prior to publication. This will allow time for relevant papers to go through the double-blind peer reviewing process. Articles will then be lodged on Community Work Australia's website prior to the graphic designing and collation of the edition. Upon finalisation the completed edition will then appear on our website, fully downloadable at no cost.

All correspondence should be emailed to:
ajcw@communitywork.org.au

AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY WORK
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EDITORIAL

As regular readers of this Journal, and those amazing community workers from across Australia and internationally who participated in the World Conference in Darwin last year, will recall - we received a special call from the event requesting we produce a special edition of the Australian Journal of Community Work relating to Aboriginal people, their lives and communities. Further inquiry found a desire for stories related to practice and learning be explored and passed on. This edition is the answer to that call – with special thanks going to everyone who contributed to it.

Special Editor

INDIGENOUS STORIES from the FIELD and the STUDY DESK

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What did this special journal edition call for?

Congratulations to Dr Anne Jennings, the Editorial Board and staff who provided this unique opportunity to bring together both peer reviewed and non-peer viewed stories from the field and the study desk. This 'experimental writing' highlighted the importance of being brave, particularly for the authors of the non-peer reviewed articles. The challenge was to take their experiences and make public their individual and collective lived experiences and practice. These stories from the field and the study desk showcased the importance of the transformation happening at the individual and community level as each author strived in their own unique way to broker the pathways for social change and in turn social justice.

All about stories

As an Indigenous person, author of both peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed writings, I hold to the view this special edition of the journal is 'all about stories!'. These stories take the reader into private and public situations. Situations which are diverse yet complimentary, into community contexts which create meaning, depth and rigor. My role as Indigenous 'special editor' allowed me to read these stories and locate them within the context of practitioner roles within diverse community and institutional settings. I have not singled out authors or stories, as each story connected me to both the challenges and opportunities within each community setting, illuminating the field and in turn the return to the desk, to write and reflect on the strengths and barriers of what it takes for individuals to reach their full potential as a human being.

Importance and the meaning of these stories

As an Indigenous storyteller, I have learnt from Indigenous elders and communities the importance of telling, writing and sharing stories. To look for the 'meaning' of the stories. Importantly, this special edition gives voice to the storytellers who show

how these stories are weaved together to locate both context and relationships, all the while building trust capital. This trust capital is a key ingredient to strengthening and reflecting on the values of individuals who push the boundaries of community exploration and engagement with the intent of firstly, examining their own practice to achieve and invest in the 'greater good' and the wellbeing of the whole community. A world view of 'we and not me'.

A common theme through each of the stories was to showcase through these writings the value of community work through multiple and diverse ways. Each author located themselves and their work through their personal and professional values located in and with place. Importantly, what comes through was each authors ethics of care and love for their work and community. As I turned the pages of each story I learned of the brokerage and the navigation skills required to achieve the ordinariness of everyday living while traversing the complexities of community life. Importantly showing how each storyteller and story is written to inform better practice.

In concluding I recalled the conversation I had with Dr Jennings, who validated these authors were encouraged to write freely, as 'there were no rule of thumb' or formula for this body of work. These story tellers were in diverse community settings, and their stories showcased their community work and actions. Their freedom to write 'freely with no rules', encouraged the authors to build their confidence and in turn their individual competence. Each author took their private thoughts, ideas and actions and showcased the level of negotiations and transactions necessary to write 'their story their way'. In turn mastering their ability to reveal the issues and circumstance of what it takes at the community and systems level to achieve the transformation necessary for social change and social justice.

I commend this special edition, and highly recommend these stories move from the private to public readership, in celebration of practitioners whose provocations challenge each one of us to see and be in the world a different way.

Sub-Editor's note:

Dr Anne Jennings

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Sincere thanks to Professor Anne Poelina for taking time from her busy local, national and international obligations to contribute as the 'Special Editor – Indigenous: from the Field and the Study Desk' for this themed edition of the Australian Journal of Community Work.

Further, AJCW colleagues are pleased to recognise the appointment of two additional members of our Editorial Advisory Board. Warm welcome to Professor Suet Lin Hung (Shirley) from the Hong Kong Baptist University, and to Dr Marlon De Luna Era, De La Salle University in the Philippines. In addition to their university and other academic and community responsibilities, they are both Directors with the International Association for Community Development (IACD), based in Scotland - Shirley representing East Asia Trustee (Hong Kong) and Marlin's role as the Southeast Asia Region Trustee (Philippines). Their involvement with the AJCW is a result of growing international interest in our Journal, which was also demonstrated at the World Community Development Conference in Darwin last year.

As well as the Special Editor contributions Prof Poelina has so richly covered above, additional articles involving generic areas within the community work profession, include:

- A current mature-aged student's story of bravely going 'back-to-study', undertaking a Vocational Education and Training (VET) course, the Diploma of Community Service, at TAFE.
- An extensive research project undertaken by staff and students a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), exploring Australia's VET system's crucial role in supporting and educating international students, and the importance of continuously improving their learning experiences.
- Insight into a Not-For-Profit (NFP) Cooperative's contribution to social and ecological justice through a weekly radio program that covers contemporary and emerging concerns like anti-nuclear issues and fascist analysis.

Plus, lots more relating to research and practice within our community services work sector.

Front Cover Artwork by Barbara Bynder©

Barbara is a Whatjuk Noongar artist, community worker and researcher. She is author of the article *Research Methodology and Methods: the 'Foreign Other'* on page 8 of this journal, with this front-page artwork being a component of her peer-reviewed paper. Barbara has recently submitted her PhD thesis in consultation and collaboration with Noongar women.

Call for articles for the next AJCW, Vol.5, 2026

Thank you for accessing this current issue of the Australian Journal of Community Work. We are now inviting articles for the next edition of this important Community Work publication. Accepted articles from both peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed sections will be formatted and lodged on our website, prior to being collated into the final collated edition of our journal. Remember, if you're preparing an article, we'd love to have your relevant photographs (with appropriate permissions and high resolution) to enhance your work.

See page 93 for more details.

Spiritual Song of the Aborigine[1]

I am a child of the Dreamtime People
Part of this land, like the gnarled gumtree
I am the river, softly singing
Chanting our songs on my way to the sea
My spirit is the dust-devils
Mirages, that dance on the plain
I'm the snow, the wind and the falling rain
I am part of the rocks and the red desert earth
Red as the blood that flows in my veins
I am eagle, crow and snake that glides
Through the rainforest that clings to the mountainside
I awakened here when the earth was new
There was emu, wombat, kangaroo
No other man of a different hue
I am this land
And this land is me
I am Australia.

Hyllus Noel Maris 1934-1986
Yorta Yorta / Wurundjeri woman.

Hyllus Noel Maris was a remarkable Aboriginal rights campaigner, community worker, educator, poet, and script writer. In 1977 she received a scholarship to study social policy and community development in London. Her career included collaborating with Sonia Borg in writing Women of the Sun (1981), a television series dealing with the experiences of Aboriginal women through 200 years of colonisation. Seeking a balance between 'Aboriginal culture and the very best Western education', Maris became chair of the Green Hills Foundation and founded the first registered independent Aboriginal school in Vitoria, Worawa College, which opened in 1983.

[1] https://allpoetry.com/Hyllus-Noel-Maris - © by owner – use provided for educational purposes.

[2] Photo: Echuca Historical Society https://echucahistoricalsociety.org.au/poetry-trail/

[3] https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/maris-hyllus-noel-14919

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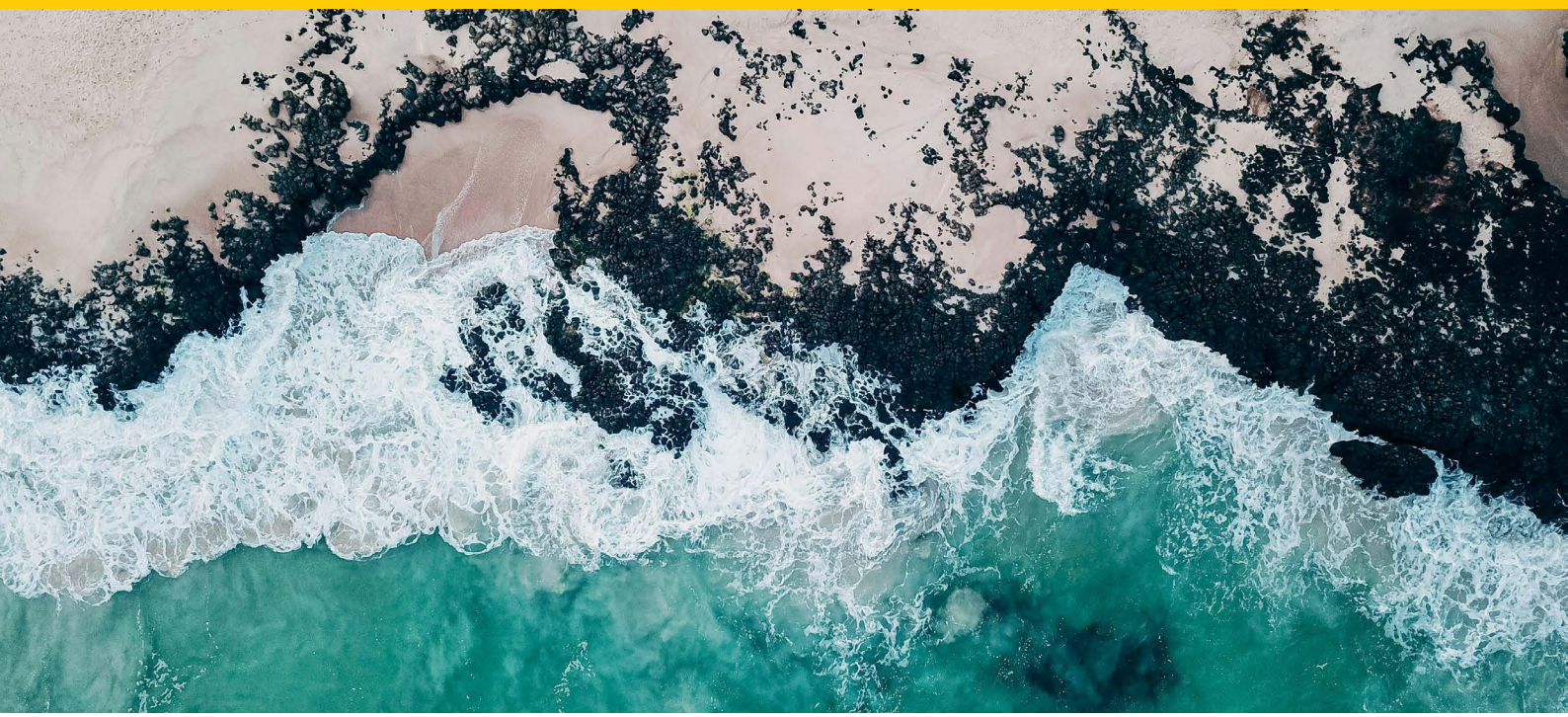

Bunbury, Western Australia. Photo by Corey Serravite on Unsplash.

PEER REVIEWED

Research Methodology and Methods: the 'Foreign Other'

Author/Correspondence

BARBARA BYNDER

Doctor of Philosophy candidate
The University of Notre Dame Australia

"Indigenous research methodologies are a relatively new field of study, and despite significant advances in understanding and application since it was first proposed in the 1990s, it is still an emerging field of study".

(Singh & Major 2017, p. 6)

INTRODUCTION

My name is Barbara Bynder, I am a proud Noongar woman who has autonomy yet belongs to a collective identity of First Nations people known as Noongar. I say this because my understanding of Noongar culture is formed from an individual lived experience and is also influenced by a collective notion of understanding and meaning of Noongar culture that is presented nationally in an agreed form of collective identity that is Noongar. Noongar people inhabit the Southwest corner of Western Australia and have 14 remaining clan groups and three dialects (Noongar Boodjar Language Centre, 2024).

I am a qualified sociologist, anthropologist and practicing artist. I recently submitted my doctoral thesis for examination to the University of Notre Dame. The fact that I may be new to the discipline as author in the context of academia, I am not new to being a First Nations person and possess a lifetime of lived experience where I have observed the changes within the Noongar community that came with the onset of modernity. It is this that drives me to help educate others about the diversity and richness that currently exists within Australian First Nations societies today. I chose to further my higher education in anthropology because my belief is that if anthropology has the power to influence mass thinking during a period that demonstrated colonialism, then it has the power to reverse that thinking and potentially change the way we understand First Nations societies today.

I have titled this paper *Research Methodology and Methods: the 'foreign other'* because the guidelines within the academy for conducting research with First Nations people seems to me to have a 'foreign other' undertone that remains embedded in what I believe is a colonial practice for qualitative research. Exploring further research methodologies demonstrates that the history of qualitative research continues to permeate contemporary research methodology, even though there has been a drive over the past three decades to reclaim and decolonise Indigenous research (Smith, 2012).

To practice decolonisation the qualitative research paradigm means that this discussion is not an argument. I say that because to make an argument means following the colonial paradigm that is currently entrenched within the academy. This discussion is a dialogue about Noongar ways of knowing, being, and doing that communicates how a First Nations focus group can influence the collection of quality data when following Indigenous methodologies and methods because culture continues to be practiced among urban Noongar people today.

The dialogue offers a unique understanding of First Nations methodology and methods, that is grounded in Noongar ways of knowing, being, and doing. I have interchanged the terms First Nations and Indigenous throughout the paper for the purpose of sentence structure and grammar and use the term Noongar where it is relevant. The dialogue is immersed in contemporary Noongar women's worldviews and is influenced by my current research practice about Noongar women and their understanding of their culture in modernity.

The purpose of the dialogue is to foster understanding that each First Nations group within Australia has its own way of knowing, being, and doing that differs between societies, yet share similarities. It is a complex and diverse space to navigate and requires a deep understanding of cultural governance that embraces a holistic approach to qualitative research to ensure cultural protocols and practices are observed from a local, state, and national viewpoint. I have always used art as reflective practice and have an understanding that art is a 'living language' that can be understood by people from all societies. Therefore this paper is littered with my arts practice to help communicate the complexity and diversity of theory and methodology and to assist with communicating notions of culture in the visual form in this paper. For me, Art is part of First Nations methodology and a practice that I will continue to use as a scholar and as an Indigenous person who recognises the significance of cultural practices.

My thesis is a component of my doctorate, which is currently with the examiners as I write.

First Nations Methodology and Methods

Indigenous methodology and methods have the potential to become its own field of study however is at risk of attaining the same or similar non-Indigenous framework as the current guidelines defined by the academy, thereby creating the notion of reductionism in cultural studies. Nakata (2013) suggests that First Nations scholars be mindful of delivering an Indigenous pedagogy that is slowly becoming a normative set of ideals for Indigenous research. It is this that drives my ambition to share my experiences as an Indigenous scholar who is working in collaboration with my own people who are known as Noongar, to offer a sense of knowledge sharing that is based on mutual respect (key protocol of Noongar culture) and is inclusive of the significance of the insider/outsider method identified in Turner-Walker's (2010) qualitative study.

Qualitative research demonstrates that First Nations methodologies are contested amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and argues that Indigenous inquiry is regulated by governments and institutions (Denzin et al, 2008; Alfred, 2009). As a Noongar woman who engages in modern forms of cultural practice daily, First Nations methodologies do not effectively demonstrate understanding and meanings of culture that exists among Noongar people living with modernity, particularly in the urban environment. The reason that I say this is because the literature (Denzin, 2005; Denzin, et al, 2008; Smith, 2012; Nakata, 2013) proposes a normative paradigm to Indigenous methodology that I believe is not favourable for understanding and meaning of First Nations cultures today. As well as this, various scholars discuss the notion that some First Nations scholars may not be willing to challenge their own thinking (Denzin, 2005; Denzin, et al, 2008; Smith, 2012; Nakata, 2013; Martin, 2003; Alfred, 2009). There is also another discussion of interest. That is the notion that First Nations researchers may not be validated because the researcher and the participants who come from the same cultural group carry cultural bias or have a specific agenda that aims to position the researcher in such a way as to not be open to peer critique based on experiential learning that is unable to be evidenced under the current paradigm within the academy. This leads to a power imbalance that not only dismisses Indigeneity of the researcher, but also removes understanding of cultural protocols that are maintained and practiced today.

Power Imbalance

There are various discussions among scholars about Indigenous research methodologies and the notion of power imbalance. Ladson Billings and Donner (2005, 2008) suggest that power relationships between races influence how data is interpreted, represented, and presented. Sociologist Tzvetan Todorov (1997) supports this argument and proposes race is socially constructed and potentially incites ideas of superiority of one race over another, leading to notions of power imbalance between races. Positioning a First Nations researcher outside or away from participants who are of the same group as they are, aspires to a cultural bias on the part of the academy.

I say this because for me, the idea of being an outsider presents not only a race power imbalance but a power imbalance between the researcher and participants that is not conducive to the understanding and meaning of cultural governance practices among Noongar people today. Using the academy's approach of outsider to the research has the potential to not only dismiss Indigenous methodology that is inclusive and shared among First Nations people but also dismisses the cultural values and value systems that exist among Noongar people. For me this feels as though cultural values and value systems are being smothered by the power of the academy (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. *Power Imbalance (Smothering cultural values and value systems)*.
Artist: Barbara Bynder, Medium: Digital Artwork © 2023.

You can see in **Fig. 1** how the dominant society structures have not only smothered but subjugated First Nations cultural values and value systems that lay beneath. The circles beneath the squares and straight lines are a representation of First Nations cultures. The squares represent the structures of the dominant society, and the lines represent the guidelines and laws that surround and permeate the structural integrity of the dominant society and can be interpreted as inflexible, therefore unable to make sufficient changes to the structural facade that is the academy. This is important because as an Indigenous person and a scholar it is challenging to communicate cultural governance, protocols, and practice in the way that is set out by the academy that defines the notion of best practice models for qualitative research.

The power imbalance removes the practice of culture as a valid form for qualitative research and smothers cultural values and value systems; therefore, challenges cultural integrity not only of the researcher but that of the participants. Kovach (2009, p. 29) stated *"…difference in philosophical, ideological, and methodological thought between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures is the reason for conflict for Indigenous researchers"* and goes on to explain First Nations methodologies are steeped in the idea of one's own cultural knowledge forming the basis that guides the epistemology, ontology, and axiology of the group.

One of the key findings for the research that I engaged in is that participants did not think about culture in the same way as I do. Observing these presented thoughts about how we can be from the same cultural group yet raised notions of difference based on our lived experience, i.e. whether we are from the stolen generations, or are camps and reserves people.

This can be part of what influences our individual understanding and meaning of our culture, yet collectively we possess shared values and a value system that is Noongar culture today. As a First Nations researcher I have experienced some of what Kovach (2009) is arguing and I find it somewhat challenging to navigate the hallways of the academy and maintain my Indigeneity. There is an expectation or perhaps it is a subtle suggestion, that I distance myself from the focus group and maintain the suggested methodology of the academy. However, First Nations methodology proposes to bring the researched and the researcher together and offers a collaborative method to qualitative research that is based on equity and equality, thereby shifting the balance of power.

Insider/Outsider Methodology and Method

First Nations researchers offer a methodology that is inclusive yet can take an insider/outsider view that is adherent to the discourse. An example of Indigenous insider/outsider methodology can be seen in Turner-Walker's (2010) study where insider knowledge is the basis for forming effective dispute management practices within remote communities in the central desert region of Australia. The study illustrates how disputes are effectively managed with mediators who are from the same cultural group. Turner Walker's (2010) research suggests that outsiders, including those who are Indigenous and not from the same cultural group, are not as effective at dispute management as those from the same cultural group.

The study demonstrates that insider knowledge presented a unique understanding of the culture's social, economic, and political norms, as well as embracing the values and value systems of the cultural group. Outsider mediators were less effective, and although Indigenous mediators from different groups were somewhat effective, they were not as effective as those from the same cultural group. This is important because the approach to program development for Indigenous communities in Australia is mostly delivered from an outsider perspective and is designed with an institutional or organisational structural framework that is determined by the law and policy of the dominant society, therefore is ineffective in delivering sustainable outcomes on a long-term basis. Insider/outsider methodology validates the effectiveness of Indigenous understanding and meaning of culture, as well as supports Nakata's (2013) argument that there is a need to maintain diversity and difference so as not to produce normative research models around First Nations methodologies.

In understanding the Insider/Outsider model for qualitative research the inclusion of personal identity is important because it is the source of cultural knowledge that I draw from and determines how I interact with Noongar people based on our shared cultural values and value systems that assists in collecting quality of data for the research. The intent for working with Indigenous methodology in this way is to 'walk beside' the dominant discourse, to share knowledge, to engage in critical thought, to embrace similarity and difference, and to understand the meaning of culture today. Indigenous methodology helps to understand where change is positioned and is beneficial in eliciting social facts that I believe are missing in current dialogues.

Indigenous methodology appears to be a sharing of sameness as opposed to expressions of difference within Indigenous Australian societies. For example, Noongar epistemology, ontology, and axiology differ to that of other Indigenous Australian cultures, therefore the idea of Indigenous methodology as a sole approach to qualitative research without being inclusive of Noongar worldviews (Insider method) has limitations in the expression and interpretation of culture, heritage, and people. Nakata (2013) and Fredericks (2009) argue that Indigenous studies is being reduced to a paradigm of common language and contest that the term Indigenous methodology presents frameworks that threaten to be more mainstream than Indigenous because Indigenous methodology is becoming reductionist within the discourse of qualitative study. Nakata proposed that

"Indigenous scholars today are concerned about how we talk about and understand Indigenous issues because complex discussions about Indigeneity has become predictable, simplified, and generalised (2013, pp. 290-291). The development of formal language within a discourse is common and if we continue to impose definitions without challenging the language, terminology and methodology, it will constrain the possibility of exploring other options to present different knowledge as well as new knowledge that may use different terminology - hence restricting the probability of developing new narratives and new ways of thinking and learning (Nakata, 2013). Kovach (2005) argues that Indigenous epistemology modifies research design, presenting new narratives and ways of interpretation that includes ontological and axiological worldviews of Indigenous cultures. Indigenous values and value systems remain shared among Noongar people today, and social facts continue to form and reform with the change in lifestyle that comes with the evolution of a living society.

To decolonise methodology within the discourse the use of Insider knowledge fosters deep understanding of social facts that differ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, as well as between Indigenous groups, and is beneficial in the translation and representation of culture, heritage, and people today. Insider knowledge propositions a model for best practice in Indigenous research that is relational with existing paradigms in the interpretation and meaning of culture in modernity.

In introducing issues and indicators about research methodologies in general, Kovach asks the question *"is it really so different?"* (2009, p. 36). Singh and Major (2017) claim that Indigenous methodology is a relatively new field of study, yet Kovach (2009) questions the 'newness' of emerging methodologies as being any different to any other methodology and goes on to say that the purpose of new methodologies is to gain new knowledge. Kovach (2009) claims that Indigenous methodologies interrupt current conversations therefore dismisses the right to gain new knowledge because it does not fit the Western European paradigm. Indigenous methodology is embedded in oral histories that translate enormous amounts of information where data can be extracted successfully. Recognising the values and value systems of the culture means that the Insider understands the cultural intent of the story being told and conceptualises a narrative (framework) that translates the data using an Indigenous world view yet must be able to comply with the dominant discourse notions of First Nations methodology. Repurposing the cultural intent of the story with the guidelines set by the Academy means that Insider knowledge mitigates the risk of misinterpreting the data.

Exemplar: Noongar Methodology in Practice

The following table is an example of Indigenous methodology in practice and was developed in collaboration with Ballardong Noongar Elder, Margaret Collard, whom I worked with to deliver a Noongar governance workshop for the Ballardong Elders group. The results present recognised Noongar values and value systems stemming from Indigenous methodology to qualitative research that followed cultural governance and protocols. Taiaiake Alfred (2009) identified five shared values and value systems of Indigeneity: harmony, autonomy, respect, lore, and law. The Elders discussed Alfred's (2009) research then applied Ballardong Noongar value systems to each point resulting in the following (Table 1, overpage):

Indigenous Value Systems (Alfred 2009)	Ballardong Noongar Value Systems	Mainstream Value Systems
Harmony	Lore + Law (unwritten)	Dominance
Autonomy	Custom	Power
Respect	Kaditjiny (knowledge)	Control
Lore	Kinship	Legislation
Law	Sharing	Policy
	Reciprocity	

Table 1. *Ballardong Elders Understanding of Governance.*

The results clearly demonstrate a difference in meaning in relation to understanding culture based on group consensus. You can see that harmony as an Indigenous value system for Noongar people is translated through lore and law. Autonomy through custom because each family and individual practice culture differently. Respect comes from knowledge. Lore sets out the rules for the kinship and relationship systems and is the theoretical framework. The term reciprocity is a key element in the Ballardong Noongar value system yet is not defined in Alfred's (2009) research elements and is not listed in the Mainstream Value System column.

For context the Mainstream Value System column is the perspective of the Ballardong Noongar Elder group and was populated by the Elders. This column is their view of mainstream values and value systems. They have a shared sense of understanding difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous models of governance. The rationale here is to demonstrate that Noongar culture continues to take an Elder's first approach in identifying cultural authority that is relational with the notion of knowledge transfer from one generation to the next.

Table 1 presents the notion of common value systems between Indigenous peoples, however when termed differently it changes the meaning according to the cultural group. By offering their interpretation of meaning to Alfred's (2009) core elements of shared values and value systems there is a different understanding to the practice of culture for Ballardong Noongar Elders. The significance of this research is the table supports the notion that understanding and meaning of culture is autonomous and shared because Noongar people are connected to each other and are 'all one family', a term that is often used to describe the kinship system of Noongar people today. It is shown in the research here, which in turn provides us with a measurable criterion in the understanding and meaning of culture today.

Further, this table clearly demonstrates that there is one value system that sits alone, reciprocity, which presents the notion of being a new value system and new knowledge, yet we know in the discourse of ethnography and anthropology that reciprocity was identified very early in the research of Indigenous cultures and is part of Indigenous Australian ways of knowing, being, and doing. Reciprocity is an unspoken value system, a cultural expectation if you like, that is recognised throughout Australian Indigenous societies. Peterson (2013) suggests that reciprocity is a core value of Indigenous Australian society that co-exists with autonomy and represents the notion of equality under an egalitarian value system.

Anthropologists such as Fred Myers (2002), Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1978), Victoria Burbank (2011) and Peter Sutton (1988), discuss the impacts of reciprocity and the notion of shared values

and value systems among Indigenous people in ways that reflects Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing. Peterson (2013) argues that reciprocity, autonomy, and hierarchical values and value systems are inter relational, some of which are unspoken. Burbank (2011) discusses values and value systems and highlights the notion that 'values' are a core part of anthropological analysis. The Berndt's (1978) discuss reciprocity through understanding of the kinship and relationship systems of Indigenous Australians and the meaning of the values and value systems among Indigenous cultural groups. The terminology is what changes the meaning of the values and value systems in **Table 1**, therefore suggests that language is a key element in differentiating how Indigenous methodologies are discussed and performed, and how data is collected, translated, interpreted, and represented.

There are many different approaches to Indigenous research, and it is important that, as Indigenous researchers, we help in the transfer of knowledge through understanding meaning of relationships that exist between each element of the research, including the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Martin & Mirraboopa (2001) suggest some principles for Indigenous methodology that include:

1. Recognition of Indigenous worldviews,
2. Understanding the meaning of relationships between epistemology, ontology, and axiology,
3. Understanding meaning between social, economic, and political structures that govern Indigenous cultures,
4. Providing platforms for Indigenous voice and lived experience,
5. Validating narrative and story as qualitative research methods.

Indigenous values and value systems are intertwined with my understanding of my culture and the insistence of tertiary institutions to meet the requirements of perceived best practice models in qualitative research that follow the dominant paradigm threatens to dismiss my Indigeneity, whilst running the risk of reducing the data collection to a specific set of ideals based on eurocentrism sets with limitations on the knowledge base for the study.

I have, for example, chosen to use art as reflective practice to promote the concept of knowledge transfer in the communication of culture, and to add value to the notion of Indigenous methodology in practice. Art helps me to formulate critical analysis of complex theories and concepts as well as challenge my own thinking because once I visualise the knowledge I can navigate my thinking, and then apply critical analysis to formulate an unbiased extrapolation of the data.

Art as Methodological Approach to Qualitative Study

Art has always been a part of my life. It is an expression of who I am. Art offers the resource to articulate theories, ideas, and concepts that encourages self-reflection, interpretation, and representation of complex theories and frameworks. For me art has meaning and is a 'living language' that I am able to refer to when I wish to clarify my thoughts and express myself. In European terms art has meaning that is represented in categories of Eurocentric ideas of its value and ideas of what is art and what is not considered to be art. For Indigenous Australians art has a different meaning.

Art is the sharing of knowledge; art is a communication tool that presents opportunity to visualise the thoughts and ideas that we aim to express. This notion is not solely for Indigenous people because art is a living language that crosses cultures and has been used as a form of expression for centuries. In terms of reflective practice, Art is now in discussion as a tool to critically analyse one's relationship with self and others using an observational method of delivery to challenge the thinking of the self, as well as include knowledge learned and shared with others (Hood, 2023). For me, art as reflective practice has meaning and depth to help communicate knowledge learned.

Catherine and Ronald Berndt, leaders in the field of contemporary anthropology, argue that *"Indigenous art has meaning"* (Berndt, C. H., 1978, p.75) and is a significant customary practise of knowledge transfer that is maintained in present day Indigenous society. Art is culture, it changes, adapts, and evolves in response to the social environment that the artist is exposed to, therefore is reflective of its time and place when it is created.

Indigenous people have used art as a form of communication, entertainment, ceremony, and ritual to transfer knowledge since time immemorial. It is found on rocks, used in the sand, on the body, as well as having a role in ceremony and rituals. Indigenous art can also be found on wood, bone, and fibre (Caruana, 1989). The cultural practice of art as a form of communication continues today and is ongoing. Morphy (2008) argues that Indigenous art has value and is a representation of how we understand culture historically and in contemporary times. Sutton (1988) discusses the potential for Indigenous art to move out of Eurocentric ideas of art categorisation to include the value of Indigenous art as something that has meaning. Whilst supporting notions of Indigeneity and identification of cultural values and value systems through the creation of art. Morphy (2008) contends that Indigenous art can be defined as cross cultural intersects because Indigenous art is about value creation and is not just about aesthetics and Eurocentric forms of art categorisation.

For me, art is more than a European construct of the *"…world seen through the human eye"* (Morphy, 2008, p.87), but is a key point in the theory of modernism. Art can also be a representation of complex theories and thoughts that make up the richness and diversity of Indigenous Australia, set within cross cultural paradigms that challenge the discourse of normative sets of language created in Indigenous methodology, and is based on the idea of Indigeneity rather than Eurocentrism. Berndt R. M., Berndt, C. H., and Stanton (1982) suggest that the value and meaning of art for Indigenous people is to contextualise the world around them and to create understanding of the natural environment through translation and interpretation where the *"… unknown can be made known, the unfamiliar made familiar"* (1982, p. 21).

The following artwork is an example of how an Indigenous methodological approach to qualitative research supports Indigenous values and value systems, promotes cultural practice, and adapts to tertiary institutional paradigms without reducing the methodology to a Eurocentric perspective of Indigeneity.

This literature review artwork (**Fig. 2**) was created whilst reflecting on how the literature presented a layering effect from the past to the present. At the time I was thinking about how the literature review weaved in and out from the past to the present and back again as it interacted with the changes to the discipline and as a result created the notion of a living knowledge base that is relational with Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Throughout the review a pattern of understanding about how knowledge is transferred academically emerged. The knowledge paradigm began to weave in and out like the Waugyl[4] from the past to the present - reflecting on change, adaptation, and evolution of the data collected over time.

The literature review is a layered and intricate design where I have applied an Indigenous philosophy to elicit understanding of the framework. Although somewhat simplified here, it is useful for understanding the depth of knowledge transfer required to incite robust discussions to maintain ethical dialogues in qualitative research. The paradigm in the literature showed connections to past, contemporary and current research, each equally important to the other, leaving opportunity for future development of new knowledge.

Adapting Indigenous philosophy to the notion of knowledge transfer offered the opportunity to contextualise the literature in such a way as to layer each element by categorising the literature in terms of understanding contemporary meaning of Indigenous qualitative research methodology, and to

[4] Waugyl is the creation serpent who gave the people lore and taught them how to practice law through the dreaming.

Fig. 2. *Literature Review.* Artist: Barbara Bynder. Medium: Digital Artwork © 2023.

apply value to the representation and interpretation of the review.

The idea is complex. The methodology applied began with understanding the patterns of knowledge from the literature review, then painting in layers beginning with historical literature, overlaid with contemporary literature, overlaid with current literature - yet each had a relationship with the other. The methodology for the review is grounded in Indigenous philosophy and cultural practice. The painting has meaning and value that I am able to refer to when designing the chapter for the literature review and is a methodological approach to qualitative research that I will continue to work with.

In Australia the study of Indigenous culture today has moved toward a cross disciplinary discourse. However, one of the current discussions about Indigenous methodology is that Indigenous researchers are reluctant to critically analyse their thinking or their study practices (Nakata, 2013). I disagree with this theorising and feel that it borders on generalisation because not all Indigenous researchers fit in with this rhetoric. For example, I purposely chose to apply the concept of art as reflective practice and as part of the methodology to my research because it allows me to reflect on, and critically analyse, my own thinking whilst creating meaning and value from the complex nature of the discourse. Art as reflective practice is not new within the art world nor is it new to research, however as an Indigenous methodological approach to qualitative research it presents a powerful tool for self-analysis, understanding, meaning, and value adding to the data collected as well as to the transfer of knowledge and is one that I use on a regular basis. Perhaps the discussion is not so much about the reluctance of some Indigenous researchers to examine and critically analyse their thinking but rather be more about valuing Indigenous philosophy, methodology, and methods to the collection of and analysis of data.

Fig. 3. *Noongar Yok.* Artist: Barbara Bynder © 2023.

Method: Engaging the Voice of Noongar Women

My doctoral research is about the dispute practice of Noongar women and whether this is relational with their idea of their culture and engages the voice of Noongar women. The significance of approaching the methodology in this way is to apply the Noongar method of 'women's business' in practice. Throughout the analysis of the data collected and to consider the sensitivity of the topic it is important to adhere to the protocols of Noongar culture as well as follow the ethical requirements of the University to ensure that the participants felt safe in sharing their story.

The method applied to this study follows Noongar cultural protocols that include an Elders first approach. In doing so I engaged a senior women's (Elders) group to share my research findings as well as discuss thoughts, ideas and learnings that help guide me in the process of value adding cultural meaning from an Indigenous women's perspective. Some of the women have lived with violence throughout various stages of their lives, therefore were not keen to discuss their personal experiences, however, have contributed to overall discussions that I had with them. The group supported me as the researcher as I traverse the cultural divide of university processes versus cultural protocols, understood my frustration with the navigation of cultural and institutional responsibility and obligation, and shared their thoughts with me about their understanding of engagement with, and conflict between, Noongar women collectively. As well as working with the women's group the method applied the ethnographic practice of recorded interviews that told the story of dispute practice between Noongar women and uses the method of participant observation, an ethnographic practice that is applied to the discourse of anthropology.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a tried and tested ethnographic method of collecting data for qualitative research and relies upon the researcher's ability to observe and participate with the group that he or she is working with. Qualitative research includes methods that rely on trust developed through participant observation and includes interviews, recordings, filming, art, and other forms of data collection to become a part of the data collection for analysis (Kawulich, 2005). The method does have limitations, for example Kawulich (2005) suggests that the researcher decides how much participation is required to acquire the data to limit the influence of bias.

In this instance the researcher has limited the discussion with the women interviewed by explaining to the participants how the process works from an academic perspective and why the limited engagement in the discussion is to take place. The women interviewed accepted the explanation and have provided their story with as little conversation with the researcher as was possible. Current research about the methodology and methods of sociology and anthropology show that the researcher takes a stance when using participant observation. Although this is an active process, my experience in participant observation is in the everyday life therefore has potential to provide deeper meaning in the gathering of data that is collected because I have been a participant observer for a very long time.

The amount of knowledge that I have gained throughout my lifetime, is for me equivalent to the years that an anthropologist spends in the field. To consolidate the approach to the method, collect data, and understand the changes that have occurred within Noongar culture, daily interactions provide another layer to the story that strengthens the depth of knowledge shared for the research.

Noongar culture is an oral society, cultural understanding is a knowing and way of doing that supports our being as Indigenous people and is not always quantifiable, nor tangible, therefore the knowledge shared in this paper is qualitative research that is determined by the understanding and meaning of Noongar ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Photo by Corey Serravite on Unsplash.

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PEER REVIEWED

Powered by Passion: Two Stories of Kimberley Aboriginal People's Liberation from Oppression

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised this article refers to, and contains, images and names of people who have died. The families of the people referred to in this article have granted permission for author Jan Richardson to use the names of people in the photos within this article for the AJCW.

ABSTRACT

Systemic injustice in Western Australia's Kimberley region before 1970 saw many Aboriginal families condemned to lives of misery. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire would name their situation as oppression, a concept not often applied to a modern, prosperous society such as Australia. In 1970 two Caucasian community development practitioners adopted Freire's interpretation of oppression and his methods to challenge it. They saw that many Aboriginal families were silenced by historically imposed government regulations of control over them. When the adults found the passion within themselves, and resources to break through demeaning controls leading to this silence, their bewilderment and inertia started to change. This paper draws on ideas that led to some families' emancipation from oppressive circumstances, recorded at the time by one of the community development practitioners. It describes the process and a particular difficulty arising from complex intercultural communication. Freire's theory of liberation necessitates people enunciating their deep-seated desires; their 'word' that generates reflection and action. This was problematic for the community development workers since English was a common language, but its cultural use was not. These stories of early community work come from an era no longer conceivable in a modern society. However, principles of community development that include the concept of oppression are relevant to adults trapped in circumstances they perceive as immutable. They show that people experiencing hopelessness and despair can, through action and reflection, radically change their world within a framework of cultural difference.

INTRODUCTION

Fifty years ago, special laws in Western Australia discriminated against Aboriginal people, allowing State governments to place families onto areas known as Native Reserves. Reserves could be with or without adequate accommodation and facilities, and the placement could be with or without the families' consent. Two community development workers perceived this as an injustice and went to the Kimberley to support any families who objected to their transfer. On the Native Reserve in Wyndham were families who were removed from a mission on their land, when the mission closed. On the Native Reserve in Fitzroy Crossing were families moved off the pastoral stations following introduction of the 1968 Equal Wages Award. As one of the community development workers, and with the permission of the people, I relate two stories of how adults trapped in these circumstances regained some authority over their lives.

Community development theorist Margaret Ledwith loves stories. She says they have power because they 'tell the tales of human suffering and human wellbeing and hold the political answers to change that we need to act on" (Ledwith, 2020, p. 3). These stories start with the Great Australian Silence, named by anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner (1968) to explain how outsiders might see these realities but forget the atrocities they represent. Stanner's idea could also explain how the people on the Reserves were silenced for generations by the government authority placed over them. Community development theory for Aboriginal families in remote areas living close to country and traditional culture in this era, needed to break through that silence. Theory must address

Photo by Ben Carless on Unsplash.

what practitioner and academic Anne Jennings names as the 'significant cultural differences' between Aboriginal and Western understandings of community, an issue she addresses in her review of current community development practice (Jennings, 2022, p. 40). And it must offer to outsiders working with those communities what Noongah Darryl Kickett called "ways which help the group or community become truly self-managing and self-determining" (Kickett, 1989, p. iii). As an old Aboriginal man instructed community development theorist Tony Kelly, "get to work and change what needed to be changed" (Kelly, 1989, p. ix). To do that, the Wyndham community development workers sought to understand the foundations of Aboriginal culture. Community development theory in 1970, seen as a 'new discipline' that offered ideas for social betterment and economic development (Sanders, 1989, p. 9), had not then incorporated knowledge about traditional Aboriginal culture.

A basic tenet of Aboriginal culture is gender separated rules, as described by anthropologist Diane Bell and solicitor Pam Ditton (1980). Community development theorist Richard Trudgen learned this when immersing himself in Yolngu families' struggles in Arnhem Land. Yolgnu adults trained Trudgen to see the hidden cultural dynamics that governed their relationships but were mostly ignored by the dominant society (Trudgen, 2000). Yothu Yindi's leader stated "We have always had Yolgnu concepts to guide us. … It is time you understood us as we are" (Yunupingu, 1998). Theorists attempted to make that available.

Three members of Curtin University of Technology, including an Indigenous man, produced a handbook for a community development course (Kickett et al, 1987). They emphasised its cross-cultural nature which included a community profile asking why the people were in that physical location, i.e. were they forced there, relocated etcetera. Kimberley social worker Fran Crawford also wrote a paper to help her Caucasian colleagues working in Aboriginal communities (Crawford, 1989). She promoted the concept that working cross-culturally should become established practice and community projects leading to rights for Indigenous people become mainstream. Researcher Jim Ife (2016) further addressed the effects on Indigenous people of post-colonialism in Australia, stressing the need to work within Aboriginal people's traditions and avoid further colonial damage. Tesoriero (2010, P. 72) framed this approach as drawing wisdom from "below rather than above", citing Freire and other theorists who valorise the consciousness-raising strategy for people to articulate their needs. Freire puts this in terms of the dialogic encounter that enables a person to name the word that describes their world. "No-one can say a true word … for another", he claims (1972, p. 76), because a person's world has a special meaning for them. Hence the need for a community development worker to understand that 'word'.

In Freire's process, a person discovers their 'word' through dialogue and when they do so, their "words, ideas, conditions and habits central to their experience" can help them identify their 'generative words and themes' (McLaren & Leonard, 1996, p 31). Generative words lead to action. Dialogue then includes problematisation, a process whereby another person asks thought-provoking questions to more fully examine a subject.

In 2016, new Indigenous voices from the Kimberley began adding specific understandings of country that influence how any community development worker should operate (Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, 2006; Poelina, et al, 2020, pp. 6-15). This theme is emphasised in another article that urges people to understand 'Country's active witness in the lives of Aboriginal peoples' (Poelina et al, 2022). But to transmit this understanding people need to converse, and herein lies the problem if dialogue is between people with different languages.

Anthropologist Margaret Bain studied the many failures in communication between Aboriginal people speaking their traditional languages and first-language English speakers. She found that one explanation lies in the difference between languages that use abstractions, ie English, and those that do not (Bain, 2005).

With better understandings of Indigenous knowledges that Poelina demands community workers embrace, and new responsibility for socio-ecological change (Jennings 2022), community development theory for cross-cultural work in remote area Aboriginal communities began to take a shape different from the Eurocentric norm and not explicit in the community development literature of the1970s.

The two Kimberley community development workers applied a political frame of reference to analyse the situations they observed. They believed the injustice they saw in 1970 demanded radical interpretation and were attracted to Paulo Freire's theory of liberation from oppression (Freire, 1972). Its relevance depended on the outsiders' understanding of oppression.

Freire defined oppression as being caused by injustice and exploitation. The task of the oppressed was to liberate themselves from an oppressive situation, "Those who are truly solidary with them", he believed, could assist (Freire, 1972, p. 29). In the Kimberley, solidarity would be with a people experiencing total social upheaval when suddenly removed from their country, deprived of their ability to maintain their cultural obligations, and bound by outside authority. Freire developed a problem-posing methodology whereby oppressed people are encouraged to critically examine the world they live in. Thus, they can understand that their helplessness and hopelessness is not due to their failings but to circumstances beyond their control (Freire, 1972).

Regaining control was the key to changing circumstances that appeared to the people as fixed. From his own experience, Freire found that people can radically challenge their circumstances if they see them as transformable. His methodology enabled people to deconstruct the story of how they got to be where they were (Freire, 1972a). Through critical dialogue and accurately naming their world, people "can change it. "Thus", he writes, "it is not the limit-situations in and of themselves which create a climate of hopelessness, but rather how they are perceived by men [people] at a given historical moment." (Freire, 1972, p. 89).

Dialogue focusing on a person's self-image from a time when they felt in control of their lives, rather than dominated by external circumstances, could lead to liberation from the self-belief that they were helpless and hopeless. Such a revolutionary shift releases the person's insights into their situation and with it, their capacity to create the world in which they wished to live. It is a theory diametrically opposed to the idea that only professional intervention can bring about change. It starts with each person naming their greatest desire for a good life. Freire calls this process finding their 'word' which is generative because it leads to analysis, which in turn can lead to action. It is inaction that Freire believes produces hopelessness and despair (Freire, 2004).

The two community development workers were initially self-funded and not beholden to bureaucratic edicts. This was important when they began to understand that what the Aboriginal people wanted was diametrically opposed to what the government dictated.

Community #1 - Wyndham 1970-1980

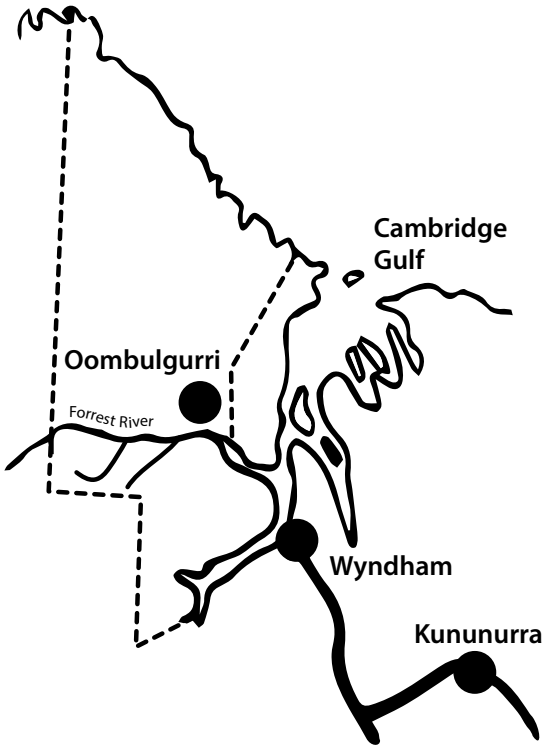

Fig 1. *Map Kununurra to Oombulgurri.*

In 1913 the Anglican church founded the Forrest River Mission on a vast area of north-west Western Australia, the traditional land that the Balanggarra people named Oombulgurri. Missionaries ran a school for the children and trained the adults in a wide variety of skills needed to manage the mission. Access from Wyndham was by boat across Cambridge Gulf's treacherous whirlpools caused by 7-9 metre tidal drops, and then a slow boat trip up the Forrest River. After 55 years, the church deemed the mission financially impossible to maintain and closed it. Against their will, the families were transported to Wyndham (Green, 1988). Freire regards losing one's freedom as a "tragic experience." (Freire, 1996, p. 7). For the Aboriginal families the tragedy was also the loss of their spiritual home.

The Department for Community Welfare placed the former Mission residents on Native Reserve #27020. Only people approved by the Department of Native Welfare could enter, giving the government control over who could visit the families and what ideas could be brought in.

NATIVE RESERVES

WARNING

SECTION 20 PROVIDES—

It is an offence for any person other than a native to enter or remain or be within the boundaries of a native reserve for any purpose whatsoever, unless he is an Officer of the Department, or a member of either House of a Federal or State Parliament, or an Officer of a Government Department or Public Authority in the course of his duty, or the holder of a permit to Enter a Reserve duly authorised by the Minister for Native Welfare.

PENALTY

Any person guilty of an offence under the provisions of this Section shall be liable—

(a) In the case of a first offence, to a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars, or to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term not exceeding six months;

(b) In the case of a second offence, to a fine not exceeding two hundred dollars, or to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term not exceeding twelve months;

(c) In the case of a third offence, to a fine not exceeding four hundred dollars, or to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term not exceeding two years.

BY ORDER
F.E. GARE
COMMISSIONER OF NATIVE WELFARE

Fig 2. *Native Reserves WARNING.*

The Reserve was a barren, stony area of land on the edge of town with a few unserviced tin huts and communal ablution blocks. After the Mission closed, 33 adults and 55 children filled the huts and 25 adults, and 35 children camped around the Reserve. These circumstances immediately created chaos and despair. On the mission, families had lived in houses that they built themselves. Adults were literate and skilled; they worked for wages in the school, the mechanical workshop, the office, store, and the agricultural/pastoral industries. There was no alcohol. In Wyndham, only some men could get work. On the Reserve, families had no decent accommodation, plenty of Social Security Benefit money and easy access to the pubs in town. It was a recipe for social disaster, and the formula delivered.

Family breakdown, hunger, violence and despair soon overcame the bewildered adults. The police made frequent visits, and the hospital increased its numbers of patients.

The work – defeating external controls

As the two community development workers, my husband Stan Davey (dec) and I wanted to learn the views of the people but were blocked by Departmental officers who suspected our motives and refused us permission to enter the Reserve. Instead, we met with the leaders down by the creek. Men and women told us that life on the Reserve was chaotic, with alcohol-fueled violence a daily and nightly occurrence. This was new behaviour, and they had no idea how to control it. They had no experience with grog, no experience with Social Security cheques, no experience with overcrowding, and no experience within a suburban township. What they did have was grief for their Country where, despite the Mission's controls, they had peace. Now, too often, the police came to restrain the violence that led to too many interactions with the hospital. Money was spent on grog instead of food. Families went hungry. They were bewildered. They were no longer strong, or in command of their own lives.

They did not have vehicles to visit their old people who had moved out of town and so they felt culturally dis-empowered. The older men had lost their pride because they no longer had authority over the young ones who claimed their rights to get money and go to the pub and not get jobs to help their families. Their only solution was to return to their country, but they had no way of doing that. Despite language differences, we heard their feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. An incident sparked my anger at a woman's pain and alerted me to a cultural difference between us.

I saw one of the Reserve women dragging her right leg. What was wrong with her, I asked some other women. 'Nothing' they said, her husband had just whacked her with a star picket the night before because she had not fed him or the children. The blow had broken her ankle, but there was nothing wrong with her.

I offered to take the injured woman to hospital, and she accepted. In the car, and because she spoke English as taught by the missionaries, I felt free to talk with her.

'Why didn't she feed her husband and children', I asked her.

'Got no money', she replied.

'But you could feed the kids when you were on the Mission', I said.

'Us women had jobs, and we got something from the store, or bush tucker'.

A skilled Freirean could have taken these words to a deeper level, where they could lead to generative themes upon which the people could reflect on their circumstances (Ira Shor, 1993). The best I could do was to pick up on what I understood as the woman knowing that the English word 'work' meant the acquisition of food. So, I asked her about work.

'You were working on the Mission?'

'Plenty of jobs for women', she told me, 'schoolteacher, store, cleaning, cooking, making bread, clinic, laundry, starching clothes, ironing.' I hoped I was understanding correctly that the women were skilled in a variety of tasks applicable to a modern economy.

'Maybe I can get you jobs in town', I told her. 'What if I can ask for some jobs where they will pay you and then you can buy food, would you like that'?

'Yes', she replied.

This was my first task as a community development worker. Find jobs for the women to do. I knew it must be the women, because I knew enough about this woman's collective culture to recognise that she did not function as an individual, and that her culture was gender-separated. My value to the woman was my gender.

I visited the shops and private homes in town, asking if they had jobs for the women on the Native Reserve. Many acquiesced, offering work ranging from cleaning shop windows to cutting down the long grass around people's houses. I transmitted that information to the injured woman, who by this time was in the company of women in culturally appropriate relationship to her. 'We gotta feed the kids, we can work like before on the Mission', they told me. I offered my practical help, the most valuable of which was my vehicle.

The women organised work gangs to do the jobs on offer, and cooks to make the food with the money they earned. They appointed me their driver to take the work gangs to their jobs. After they had been paid, I took their cooks shopping and then to a place where they could make sandwiches, which we delivered to school (Richardson, 1993). The women made enough money to also feed their husbands and so the family disputes stopped.

When the women's self-image as helpless and hopeless began to change, they expanded their organisation. They created more work for themselves, taking in laundry from the single men around town,

establishing a car washing service, selling secondhand clothes to their own people, putting on dances in an old hall and charging an entrance fee. They used all the proceeds from these activities to buy food for the kids. There was nothing they could not do.

Fig 3. *Edith Smith labouring for money to buy food for the kids. Photo provided by Author.*

Freire believed that when people break out of a culture of silence they bring about "radical structural changes" that "transform the dependent society" (Freire 1972, p. 60). The men were meeting in their culturally appropriate groups.

When the men started working with Stan, analysing their conditions, they found their word: 'return to Oombulgurri'. Uninhibited by the preposterous nature of this proposition, they began making money to fund their return. They created income earning possibilities: constructing pallets out of pieces of discarded wood and selling the pallets, putting on corroborees for tourists, establishing an art centre and selling their paintings. Their self-image changed from helpless and hopeless drinkers to competent leaders of their people with authority over the young ones.

Many committed to changing the circumstances they found themselves in.

Talk about returning to Oombulgurri began circulating in town; church, bureaucrats and local Councilors opposed the idea. This would have created a dilemma for community development workers in 2024, influenced by the Federal government's 2020 social justice policy, Closing the Gap. Its metrics on health, housing and education could not be met by supporting families to leave a township with all those facilities for a remote place without any facilities and travelling there across dangerous waterways with no communication services. Unless the move was seen as helping the people leave a toxic environment for the social and spiritual benefits that their own country would bring them, accountable only to themselves. If so, the policy needs measurement tools to reflect these risks and benefits.

In 1972 some supportive Europeans donated to the Reserve people a small dinghy with an outboard motor to enable travel from Wyndham to Oombulgurri. The exodus began.

Fig 4. *First trip to Oombulgurri – Elders Robert and Louisa Roberts. Photo provided by Author.*

Years later the Department for Community Welfare employed us as community development workers, greatly increasing our capacity to work with the Oombulgurri families. At times our actions contradicted departmental regulations, and we then worked as volunteers. Mindful at all times of our commitment to support the people make their own decisions about the life that they wanted. Community development theory does not guide practitioners through circumstances when the people made decisions community workers could not condone.

One such dilemma arose early in the first trips to Oombulgurri in the little dinghy when the boatman appointed by the people was drunk. We withdrew our services, which included using our vehicle, until the Elders appointed a sober boatman. Theories that do not address moral dilemmas in supporting others leave community development workers searching for the appropriate actions in a particular situation. By applying Freirean principles to ourselves, we could validate our own 'word' and keep ourselves safe in a world of unknown and unpredictable development.

As a few individuals started an exodus to Oombulgurri, they renewed their cultural integrity and gained their psychological freedom from the oppression created by mission and government control. They inspired others by the force of their 'word', the one thing that nobody and no circumstance could take from them. Gradually Oombulgurri began the healing process, and gradually bureaucrats viewed the people's idea positively.

Authors Note: For 39 years several generations of Oombulgurri families lived on their country, supported by government-funded infrastructure for remote area communities. In 2011 a policy change led to this financial support being terminated, and families were relocated to other townships.

Trauma of a different kind had disempowered many Aboriginal people in West Kimberley.

Community #2 - Fitzroy Crossing

The demand for Aboriginal wage justice in the pastoral industry led the federal government to introduce the 1968 Equal Wages Award. Many pastoral leases were on Aboriginal peoples' land - one reason families stayed on the stations despite poor wages and conditions. Once the Award came in, some pastoralists agreed to pay a few stockmen and required all others, with their old people and children, to leave the station.

The Department for Community Welfare took evicted families to Native Reserves on the edges of Kimberley townships such as Fitzroy Crossing. Here, over 100 people were placed on the Native Reserve ten kilometers from the town's centre, school, hospital and shops. At that time, the Reserve's infrastructure consisted of one tap in the middle of the Reserve, a few huts for people to live in, and a barren rocky area on which the others could erect some kind of shelter. Several clan groups were placed in the same area without regard for traditional differences. The consequences were chaos and horror.

Oppressed people, Freire claims, cannot be given their freedom, they must struggle as subjects rather than objects if freedom is to be authentic (Freire, 1972, p. 54). Ironically, it was through a mainstream and patronising government program that the opportunity to struggle was offered to these distraught families (Palmer & Buchanan, 2007).

Mixed on the Reserve were people from Walmajarri, Wangkatjunga and Mangala language groups from pastoral stations such as Quanbun, Millijiddee and Jubilee Downs. Also placed there were the Kadjina and Yungngora people whose land was the pastoral station Noonkanbah. Further north along the Highway were pastoral stations that allowed the families to continue living there, such as GoGo Station and Christmas Creek Station, whose people were related to families on the Reserve. We saw bewilderment and defeat in the eyes of the adults of the Reserve. We saw the dignified old man watering the lawn of the pastoral station that allowed him to stay. 'Who is he?' we asked the pastoralist. 'He's the station native

garden boy', replied the pastoralist. In another reality, he was the senior lawman for his people.

In discussions we found that the people had analysed their situation but felt helpless and unable to recover the social organisation that brought cultural safety, discipline, and peace to their people.

We began with the powerful community development question, 'what do you want to do?' or, in Freirean terms, what is your word?

The men answered: 'go back to our Country'.

Returning to Country meant disrupting the pastoral industry. That would take a long time.

The women answered: 'look after the kids'.

This was something that could start immediately.

Squalor on the reserves - lack of any facilities such as showers, hot water, shelter, bedding, a place to put clothing and other possessions - distance from the store and no vehicle to travel in. These were the fundamental impediments to women's abilities to care for their children. A severe limitation to the women's ability to work was their isolation from the goods and services available in the township. No vehicle. I became the support person, using my vehicle to transport the women to the shops. Back at camp there was no place to put the food. The families had created little humpies from bits of old tin to shape an igloo, so close to the ground that the wild winds could not blow it away. They had to park the food in the trees, high enough so dogs could not reach it. They could only wash themselves and their clothes using the one tap in the middle of the Reserve. And when the cold desert nights required fires and firewood was unavailable, they suffered. And yet those words 'look after the kids' were driving them to find ways out of the chaos and confusion and despair.

At the time, the Department had a program called Homemakers. It offered part-time employment to women with good homemaking skills who could transmit their skills to those lacking such expertise. The Department employed me in this capacity to work with the women on the Reserve. 'How long will you give me to learn the people's languages and problems?' I asked. I was given three months. I had a better idea. Departmental Director Keith Maine listened to my argument that the women on the Reserve already spoke the languages, knew the problems and could start work immediately should they be appointed Homemakers to their people. It was a radical proposition, but the Department was also desperate and agreed to a trial. Both men and women leaders accepted the idea and appointed Jeannie Margaret their Homemaker. She took the job, and began homemaking, ie. creating systems for 'looking after the kids' (Richardson, 1993).

Within a very short time, Jeannie Margaret transformed both the concept of Departmental Homemaker, and the communities around Fitzroy Crossing.

Jeannie's 'word' changed her people's world. Belonging to a collective culture, she took her pay but did not keep it. Instead, she used it to buy things that her people needed.

But why Homemakers for only one group? It was not long before the other communities wanted Homemakers. The Department saw the capacity of the women to look after their children despite all obstacles and agreed to appoint Homemakers in four communities. All the Homemakers followed Jeannie's practice of donating their pay into the Homemaker account, except for a very minor amount that they kept for their own families. With this resource, they bought tables so they could cut up the food and only the agile dogs could get it. From Perth they bought metal beds and mattresses and sold them to families so that the old people did not have to sleep on the cold rocky ground with snakes and scorpions. They secured several foam mattresses, selling them to families to make life even more comfortable.

They bought a copper and established a communal children-washing service through which they heated the water in the cold desert months, with one Homemaker washing each child, one drying the child, one clothing the child, one doing their hair, and the last, giving the child breakfast. The school principal told me it was the first time the children from the Reserve could stay awake long enough to listen to the teacher.

The women's success in revitalising their social organisation began to transform life on the Reserve. With the Homemaker funds, the women began industries. The first was a hairdressing service in the camp, enabled by a minimal capital outlay: a pair of scissors and a mirror. The hairdresser set up her business under a tree and charged $1 per haircut. The second business was dressmaking. The Homemakers bought a treadle sewing machine which the dressmaker put on a table under a tree. Her capital outlay was extended by the purchase of a pair of scissors and some material. Without using any dressmaking patterns, she made clothes for adults and children. The Homemakers then appointed clan medical workers whom a voluntary doctor trained, focusing on the well-being of pregnant women and young mothers trying to raise their babies in the horrendous camp conditions.

The men made bricks from spinifex grass mixed with cement and began building a store in one of their camps. Then they built a mud brick house for their most senior woman. When she was invited to take up residency in this new abode with holes for windows but no glass and a door frame but no door, she donated her old humpy to somebody who did not even have a humpy.

Men and women now wanted electricity to the store and negotiated with an electrician who said if they dug the trench he would lay the wiring. These developments created a problem for the government, for these were structures not permitted by law on a Reserve. But the people would not be stopped. When the cooks began making morning tea and evening meals for their families, they soon needed somewhere to keep the fresh meat and vegetables.

They bought a stand-alone coolroom to be erected in the middle of the Reserve, painting on the door of the coolroom an eagle, a symbol that was acceptable to all clans showing that the coolroom was for everybody. They appointed a man to manage the coolroom, equipping him with a butcher's apron and butcher's knife with which to cut up the beef carcass that they bought and hung in the coolroom. No one could enter the coolroom without this man's consent. When Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Ian Viner came to visit Fitzroy Crossing, the Homemakers put on afternoon tea down in the camp for him.

The Homemakers on one station leased from Nestle a soft ice-cream machine. If children went to school, the Homemakers gave them an ice-cream. They also gave one to all the old people, thus increasing their calcium intake. Further, they wanted a Ball during the annual horse races, so they did not have to sit around like cattle in the paddock watching the pastoralists living it up, they told me. They held theirs in the kindergarten, and the rule was no dancing in stockmen's boots. The men appointed 'policemen' from each clan to ensure that nobody who was unruly could join in, and the Homemakers made buckets of cool drink and sandwiches wrapped in newspaper, while some supporters sent along modern music and sound equipment.

The Homemakers appointed Eva Lawford as their own journalist. She interviewed some of the workers and wrote their stories in a newsletter that was circulated amongst the communities. We (the Homemakers and myself) also produced a News Cassette where I summarised the news, and Eva Lawford translated it onto cassettes and circulated them amongst the communities so that they gained knowledge of current political happenings. The men erected shelters with posts and wire netting covered by branches and leaves which their community used for meetings. These bough shades were also suitable for Christmas parties for the children, catered for by the Homemakers.

Fig. 5. *Bayulu Homemakers Xmas Party, supervised by the senior women and lawman Dave Lamey. Photo provided by Author.*

The communities appointed men and women elders to sit on the bench with a local magistrate and advise him on appropriate punishments for their naughty boys. The Homemakers saw that some adults who went drinking left their little children in the long grass and Departmental Welfare officers took those children. The Homemakers asked the Welfare Officers to instead take those abandoned children to them and they would care for them that night, returning the children the next morning to their families with appropriate messages about their responsibilities.

The women, always put on the back of vehicles because of gender separation rules, wanted their own vehicle. Some supportive women in town assisted by providing driver training for the Homemakers. After they gained their license, the women purchased Homemaker cars. They painted symbols on the side of their cars of a woman cradling a baby, the words written underneath in their language: 'this is a car for looking after children.' They used their Homemaker cars to take women's ceremonial objects to conduct cultural business in far-away places.

From many years working in the pastoral industry, the men and women drew on their experiences to solve another problem in their new situation. This concerned the number of diseased dogs and those now homeless because their owners had died. Modelling the pastoral industry sheep dipping system, the men constructed a trough for dipping the dogs. Senior adults selected the dogs to be treated, and Community Health Sisters provided some tick and flea chemicals for the trough. The children collected their family dogs and threw the dogs into the trough at one end; by the time the dogs had swum to the end of the trough, they were disease-free. The Homemakers employed a vet to euthanise the unwanted or very diseased dogs. This system substantially increased the health of community members and the well-being of much loved and important family dogs.

Working in the Aboriginal consensus mode, the women transformed the individualistic Homemaker concept into a tool for their emancipation and empowerment. They looked after their children, and in doing so brought health to their people. The men re-established cultural authority disrupted by individualistic work systems in the pastoral industry. The adults were able to recover their position of autonomy and authority in their own affairs, so callously and suddenly taken from them by circumstances beyond their control. Their inspiration and drive to do something for their people marches the definition of community development practice as "characterised by a range of approaches and processes, including capacity building, self-help, community building, leadership development, revitalisation projects, building social capital and showcasing successful initiatives" (Jennings, 2005, p. 3).

The men collaborated in their culturally appropriate groups and worked to achieve their word: 'get their land back'. They began to redefine their clan's social and physical identities. With Stan's support they established incorporated organisations for each group and a resource, Marra Worra Worra, that could employ a bookkeeper to service each tribal group and set up bank accounts. They 'chucked in' money and purchased trucks so that they had mobility and could undertake contract work, building up funds to enact the other plans. Once the different clan groups reclaimed their right to self-management, their ingenuity and energy released a surge in their own psychological and spiritual liberation. This explosion of creativity and competence in creating lifestyles held some of the important aspects of their traditional organisation while adapting to the modern era. Freire stated it is "striking to observe how self-deprecation changes with the first changes in the situation of oppression" (Freire, 1972, p. 50). With their hard-won image change from helpless and dependent to self-reliant and independent, these men and women recovered their self-esteem and their rights to a decent life.

Conclusion

A modern economy with a welfare system such as Australia offers, preferences universal measures of the good life over particular circumstances. When a community is traumatised by conditions, they feel are beyond their ability to negotiate, a welfare system inadequately brings psychological health and prosperity. In this article, the stories of community development show that a few individuals with a different vision had the energy and drive that empowered them to do the impossible - they radically changed their circumstances. Their inner resources were released. These resources might not surpass the level of assistance well-funded outsiders can provide, but they have a value that is immeasurable. Thus, by not being limited by others' priorities they do exactly what people want, not what a funding provider dictates, and they are flexible. By harnessing the power of people's passions to do something positive for themselves and the community, individuals can liberate themselves from the fear and immobility that can defeat those experiencing traumatic and overwhelming circumstances. Community development workers using this theory face risks. Freire theorised that when individuals express the word that holds their vision, they may not have any inkling where it might take them. This, I believe, is the value of ideas. When emanating from within a person, they have power. Ideas are self-made, not driven by 'the other', be that well-meaning or hostile. They are not constrained by 9-5 work practices or lack of professional qualifications. They have energy. They confront the impossible.

These two stories of early community work demonstrate that people who, although crushed by the trauma and tragedy of a situation, can find within themselves the idea that leads them to positive action. And they remind the community development worker that their own motives and aspirations are as important as those of the community people with whom they are working. This is an element of community development theory that can be easily overlooked.

Editor's Note:

When writers set out to research and prepare their articles there can be unexpected consequences – and in this case it's certainly a welcome result! After having her story accepted here author Jan Richardson wrote back with the following description of the profound intergenerational outcome that has resulted from her work:

> *Anne, you know the best part of this whole process is that it has reconnected me with the relatives of those old people 1970-1980. Can you believe that!! To get their permission to tell their stories and use their photos I have been talking with the grandchildren. One consequence is that I find they do not know what their grandparents look like. As there were no cameras around in 1970 to 1980, out in the bush, they don't have pictures of their old people. So they asked me to send them all the photos that I have, even though they are poor quality.*
>
> *One in particular, the old man in the Christmas party - he was the headman of his tribal people and his granddaughter asked if I had just a portrait of him. Which I don't, but I asked the Charles Darwin University photographic experts who I'd engaged to bring the photos up to publication standard, if they could isolate him from the Christmas party and blow it up so that we can give the photo to his granddaughter. And they were thrilled to do that for us. So many wonderful things have come out of all of this, just a crazy idea to tell their stories in your journal and it has connected me with people from 1970, that is over the top ridiculous.*
>
> *One of the benefits of being 83 is that I have photos from fifty years ago, and with modern technology they can be brought up to high-resolution. When this article is published we will need to send copies to the Wyndham Oombulgurri families and to the Fitzroy Crossing families who are urging me to tell their stories because the young people don't know anything about it.*
>
> *Thank you for encouraging me to struggle along with this article because look at the joy it is bringing this generation of adults who remember Stan and me and what the Homemakers did - but do not have any actual stories or photos. It is so hard to believe that those terrible conditions existed, but the photographs and the stories tell the truth. And through this journal at least some will be preserved, and this generation will have evidence of the work their old people did to change those conditions.*

Sincere thanks Dr Richardson for sharing your, and others', stories - we will certainly have copies printed to send on to those Wyndham, Oombulgurri and Fitzroy Crossing families you have been working with. A powerful, respectful outcome.

(Jan granted permission for her email to be reproduced here)

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FROM THE FIELD

FROM THE FIELD

Community First Development and our Community Development Framework

COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT

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About Community First Development

Community First Development is a not-for-profit national First Nations' led community development and research organisation that creates positive change in and with First Nations' communities. We promote the skills, talents, and cultural strength of our people, and facilitate activities where they lead positive changes for their communities.

We undertake social and economic development, and research projects in partnership with First Nations' communities, businesses, and people. Communities have control; they name the priorities and choose the design, assets, capabilities, and approaches to achieve their vision. We provide tailored support through community partners, skilled staff, trained volunteers, key supporters, and service providers.

INTRODUCTION

Approaches to community development, both within Australia and beyond, must respect and value First Nations' peoples' right to self-determination. As part of the process of shifting power, organisations undertaking community development activities must look at ways to decolonise their processes by privileging First Nations' perspectives, governance structures, and ways of being and doing. At Community First Development, First Nations' peoples' right to self-determination is at the heart of our approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Firstly, we will provide an overview of our approach, including values, principles and our monitoring and evaluation approach. Secondly, we will provide an overview of our Community Development Framework, a cycle of five interconnected areas designed to support people who are delivering community development work. Lastly, we have included two community case studies to assist with demonstrating our Framework in action.

Our Approach

At Community First Development, we work to a model that:

- operationalises self-determination where First Nations' peoples are always in control, leading and owning projects and programs that impact them, and
- disrupts disadvantage and the ongoing impacts of colonisation through reclaiming the dominant narrative and elevating successes.

Our approach to community development is based on a strong foundation of ethics. These include rights, respect and recognition, negotiation, consultation, agreement and mutual understanding, participation, collaboration and partnership. We work to a model where communities have control and ownership over the development activities they are working on. As communities hold the decision-making power they can—with tools and support from us—design and carry out development projects that align with their aspirations and directly meet their needs.

These principles form the basis of our decision making and the way we judge success or otherwise:

- We work only at the invitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families, organisations and communities.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have, and maintain ownership and control of, their community development activity.
- We take an 'asset' rather than 'deficit' approach to development.

Our Story of Change

In our approach to monitoring and evaluation we emphasise First Nations' peoples' right to self-determination, and how good ethical practice has/will be included in the design, delivery and evaluation of the program. We have developed a purpose-built database and monitoring and evaluation framework to strengthen understanding of, and reporting on, our impact. Our Story of Change is the theory we work to and underpins our monitoring and evaluation approach.

Our Story of Change was first developed in 2015 using a traditional, linear Theory of Change methodology. This was challenged by some of our First Nations' team members as it did not reflect their way of thinking. Through many yarning sessions we developed this circular concept that privileges First Nations' perspectives and better represents the way our Community Development team.

Fig. 1. *Community Development Framework.*

We see the community as an eco-system, where everything is connected. At the heart or core of this ecosystem is community 'self-determination'. We see self-determination as the most important element to supporting communities to achieve their dream. Surrounding the heart or core are a range of outcomes that contribute to making a community stronger. All outcomes are interconnected and of equal importance, and all elements need to be strong for the ecosystem to flourish. Changing one element of the ecosystem impacts on other elements and the ecosystem's overall function.

Our Community Development Framework[5]

Our Community Development Framework (the Framework) is based on over two decades of working with First Nations communities, our experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. The comprehensive Framework has been designed to support people who are delivering community development activities. At the heart of the framework are Community First Development's core values and principles, with steps for monitoring and evaluation embedded at each stage.

As demonstrated below, our Framework consists of a cycle of five interconnected areas.

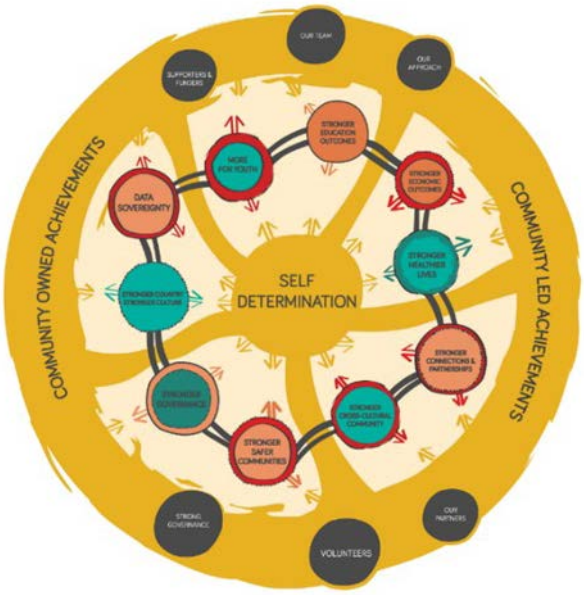

Fig. 2. *Community Development Cycle.*

[5] A full copy of the framework, 'A First Nations approach to community development: our community development framework', is available from https://www.communityfirstdevelopment.org.au

Our understanding

The first stage of the community development cycle is about understanding the way we work with communities, our key philosophies and the thinking behind our approach. Information and tools are offered to assist in building common understanding and appropriate approaches to our work.

During this stage, the requested project/activity is assessed to determine if it aligns with Community First Development's principles: by invitation, community ownership, asset based, and relationship driven. The community is also provided with a guide to how we work and monitor projects.

Engage & Empower

The second stage of the community development cycle sets out Community First Development's practice when working with communities and how to encourage participation.

This is the relationship building phase and the first step in capturing community voice. It describes how we look, listen, learn, and monitor the journey. It provides guidance on managing expectations and understanding the community, its strengths, assets, and dream. All conversations and actions should work towards ensuring a community is in control and community participation is central.

Connect & Build

The third stage of the community development cycle is where we identify the next step towards the dream and clearly describe and define the objectives of the activity/project with the community. The community also identifies what the indicators of success are and the most relevant outcomes from the Story of Change are identified.

From there we start to connect and build. This may be connecting existing strengths or assets, a referral to another service provider, developing strategies to encourage community participation, exploring funding opportunities or connecting with a skilled Community First Development volunteer.

Design & Deliver

The fourth stage of the community development cycle is all about managing a development project while it is implemented and continuing to nurture the community's dream. Just like a plant needs different elements in place to grow, there are certain things we need to do for the community's dream to grow and flourish: stick to the plan and work towards the objectives, maintain contact with the community, closely monitor the work (formal monitoring points with key stakeholders using a variety of methods to encourage participation) and make sure the right expertise is in place. Communities always own the process and the project and may change their objectives after a project commences. This is ok and we reflect this as part of the process.

Reflect & Celebrate

The fifth stage of the community development cycle is something we do throughout our time working with a community, not just at the end of an activity. When we work with the community, volunteer, or partner organisation(s) to reflect and celebrate it can bring encouragement and motivation to persevere with the plan and work towards the next step. At the final stages of an activity/project there are additional questions we reflect on. Once we have collated and analysed all the information, we can identify ways to share or display the information that is meaningful for the community, including data is always owned by them.

Building Trusting Relationships

The stages in the cycle of community development are intended to build trusting relationships and ensure that community is in control. We see the creation of open and trusting relationships with communities as critical to what we do. This is something that differentiates our approach from many others'. As one community development team member reflected, community development officers create genuine and two-way relationships with communities and are always available to support them wherever they can.

Photo by Paul Harding 00 on Shutterstock.

> ***"You need to have that openness and availability to be there for whatever the group really needs. It's just an essential part of your relationship and our role. And I think as I said if we say "that's not what we do" we won't have the type of relationship we have with communities."***
>
> Community First Development Senior Community Development Officer

The ability to 'look, listen and learn' or 'yarning', to give proper credence to the traditional practice, is a critical component of community engagement as it helps to build and maintain trust.

In our research report on how good governance practice leads to good relationships, communities provided insights on the importance of these trusting relationships, and why they are critical to achieving progress towards their goals.[6] Among many things, they discussed our ability to keep confidences, the importance of community ownership and control, and the importance of transparency, honesty and vulnerability.

[6] Community First Development (2021). *Good governance practice leads to good relationships: An exploration of the effectiveness of Community First Development's community development approach in the Australian context – Final Report: Findings and lessons learnt. Canberra, Australia: Community First Development.*

CASE STUDY – Wiluna Remote Community School

Fig. 3: Case Study. *Thomas Cameron at the opening of the Littlewell Buri Wonduri Reserve, Mingenew, WA. Photo provided by Authors.*

Wiluna Remote Community School (WRCS), approximately 950km from Perth and on the traditional lands of the Martu people, is governed by community representatives who want their students to be strong in learning, culture, and language (Martu and English). They wish to see a strong relationship between school and community to increase the chances of students completing their education.

We have worked with WRCS since 2010 on various initiatives including two mosaic projects - vegetable garden artwork in 2012 and campus artwork in 2017. Both of these projects were based on two-way learning ethos, where students learn the science that links Aboriginal ecological knowledge to the Australian Curriculum on Science through on-Country and classroom projects.

The school approached Community First Development to work with them to make mosaics for the fire pit or 'yarning area' they were building. Community First Development volunteer and artist, Jane, who facilitated the previous mosaic projects at WRCS, returned to work with the students, teachers and community Elders to create the new mosaics, this time on round stone pavers. Senior Elder, Stuart Long, was instrumental in preparing the mosaic site and providing cultural guidance. Fifteen students helped design and make the mosaics based on Martu cultural beliefs, such as the Seven Sister Dreaming and the Emu Dreaming in the Milky Way.

During NAIDOC Week 2019, community members were invited to view the completed mosaics at the school and enjoy a parade, a BBQ and cultural activities.

> ***"Two-way learning is important because it shows how Martu and teachers can work together effectively to empower Martu as educators and to value their cultural knowledge. The creation of the mosaics in this project is two-way learning in action."***
>
> Doyen, Community First Development Regional Manager

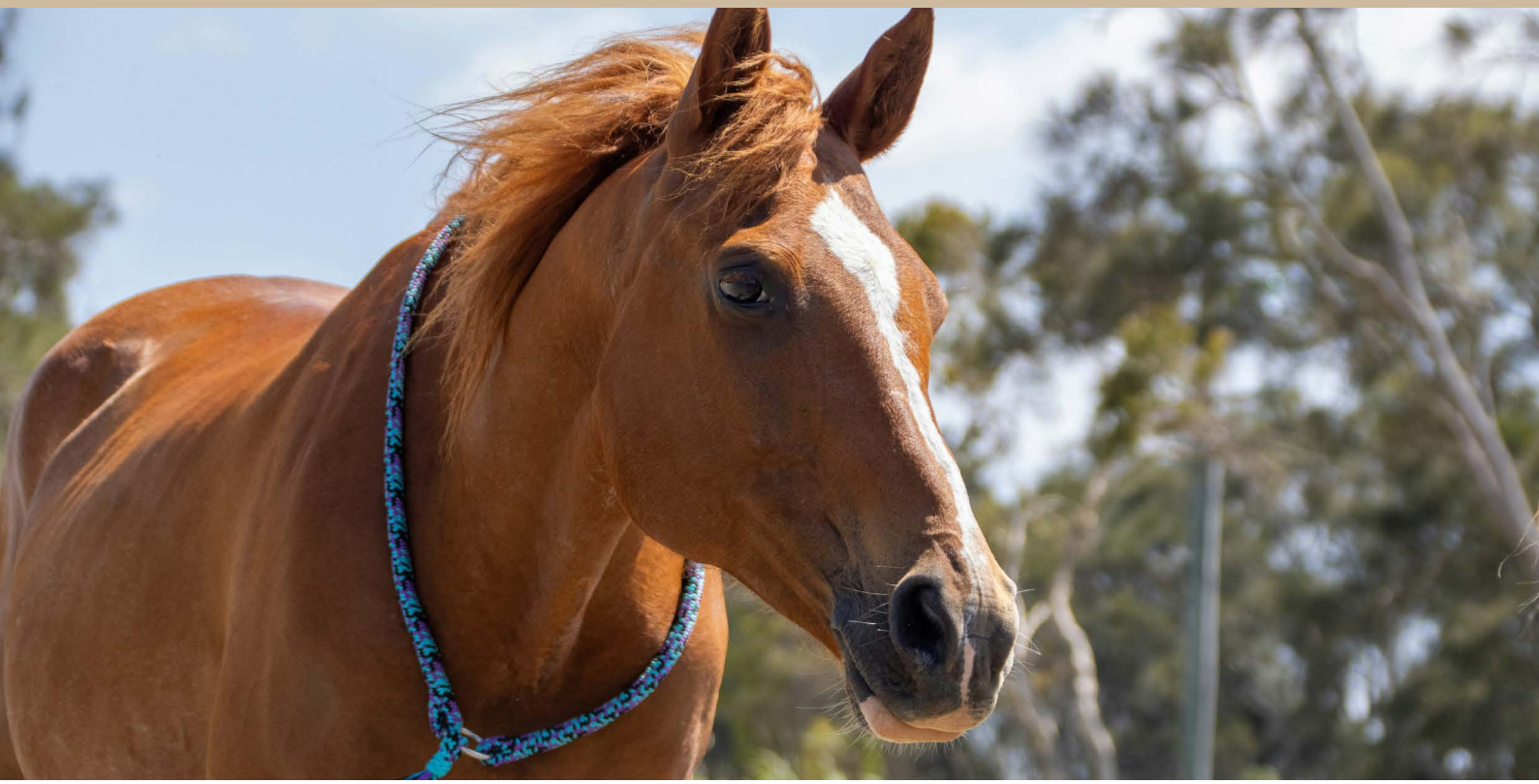

Photo by Lea Panaino on Unsplash.

FROM THE FIELD

Yawardani Jan-ga, Horses Helping

Author/Correspondence:

PROFESSOR JULI COFFIN

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Yawardani Jan-ga, Horses Helping in the Yawuru language in Broome. We provide supports for Aboriginal young people and youth aged between 6 and 26 years. We are based on Kimberley country to assist in nurturing our Aboriginal young people and youth through life's challenges and leadership. With our beautiful equine team in partnership, we aim to support those amazing qualities within us all, on country and through equine assisted learning

At Yawardani Jan-ga our daily 'grind' is greeting all our eight four-legged staff bright and early, tending to their needs such as those who get breakfast and those who want breakfast but definitely do not require it, then water and cleaning yards, in preparation for our important two-legged visitors - our deadly Aboriginal young people and others.

Young Aboriginal people participating in Yawardani Jan-ga. Photo provided by Author.

The weather is kind now but it's not so great being outside all day in the heat in the wet season, however we are very fortunate to have lots of shade on the current block and the horses and young people never complain. We must balance our exposure to the elements in the Kimberley, so our amazing staff don't get too over heated - and did I mention our amazing staff? We have such amazing staff and supporters who ensure we can do what we do - every day.!

We are in the north of Western Australia, and have now secured a new site in Derby, in partnership with Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation (ENAC), to enable Yawardani Jan-ga to be up and running again. We have also been invited to start in Fitzroy Crossing, with some awesome discussions and meetings happening and great partnerships and supporters around the one table (the Foot Soldiers - our collaborative partnership group).

In addition, some other awesome news arrived recently from the Catholic Diocese via the acting Bishop for Broome, Bishop Michael Morrissey, and that is the availability of a collaborative site here in Broome, finally! So, we will be moving around during the next few months but there will be no down time with our move to the new facility.

The Yawardani Jan-ga program has supported over 2000 young Aboriginal people by providing either one to one sessions and pair and group sessions, as well as visits and demonstration sessions. Along the way we are growing our learnings about what works best in this journey towards wellbeing. Importantly, we have trained 35 local Aboriginal people in the Yawardani Jan-ga EAL curriculum, specifically designed for our people who work directly with our children and youth to become Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) Practitioners and researchers in this unique space.

Our results are showing great promise about the ability to effect change in this very tricky space of well-being through a journey that is so different for all of us. Of course, like all programs, especially ones that are a bit different, it has had its challenges. We have been running now for three years, almost at full staff capacity, off and on. Interestingly we did not endure the massive effects of Covid as horses do not transmit to other horses, plus we are, of course, outdoors and the equipment can be easily sterilised.

With all the impacts of Covid, both during and afterwards, we were able to keep going – supporting the lives of the young people who needed it. Our data highlights a very interesting journey around challenging traditional data collection methods and reporting it to demonstrate the work we have been doing effects change in the social and emotional well-being space and outlook for our young people. *We do not use some words, for example, that we believe can - especially with our younger populations - create stigma and does not portray inclusivity, words such as 'mental' and 'therapy'.*

Part of the team undertaking Equine Assisted Learning. Photo provided by Author.

Our direct Yawuru translation of our name is 'Horses Helping.' This purpose of building aspirational communities also sits across our program as we want the ripple effect and want the community on this journey with us. We have a cultural governance group and have connections with all referrers and parent/carers while their young people are engaged with us, up to 12 months after. The data shows us that many lived experiences are improving for our young people - both during and after their time with us at Yawardani Jan-ga, such as improvements when the young person goes back to school and changes in their general relationships and engagements at home.

Happy partnership, boy and horse.
Photo provided by Author.

It might not sound like much, but can you imagine what it's like to be at school without friends or company? One of the best things I heard from a young boy who had been with us for a few years was *"Hey guess what? Well, you won't guess, but I've been invited for a sleepover, and also a birthday party, I now have two friends"*. It's hard for some of us to imagine what it is like to not feel seen, heard, or valued. Watching the change in this young boy was amazing to witness and it really made me think: if we were not here, I truly believe his situation would not have changed from those early times when we first met him, to where it is now.

Horses see deep inside us and can provide all these small pieces that humans do not do so well, including the important part of what happens to you on the inside. We know from Yawardani Jan-ga experience these tiny relationship building blocks are better, and last much longer, than what happens externally such as a positive comment. Thus, we witness the lasting effects when change is self-directed and comes from within - directly affecting the way someone feels. This provides the opportunity for sustainable change and cuts through any age grouping or demographic descriptors.

Broome Senior High School Group joining in Yawardani Jan-ga activities on the beach.
Photo provided by Author.

The AJCW congratulates Professor Juli Coffin on receiving the ***2024 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander: Australian Mental Health Prize*** – recognising and celebrating outstanding leadership at national or community level.

Part of the Opening Ceremony at the IACD/Community Work Australia International Community Development Conference, Darwin 2023. Photo provided by IACD.

FROM THE FIELD

World Community Development Conference - History

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This year marks the twenty fifth anniversary of the first conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, which formally launched the International Association for Community Development (IACD). The 1999 conference to launch IACD was organised by Scotland's national agency supporting community education and community development - the Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC). SCEC already had a high European profile, including being the hub for Eurodesk, a pan-European support service. McConnell was SCEC's CEO at the time and chaired the steering group that prepared the event and chaired the launch conference.

For several years I had been on the Board of a Belgian based network called the Association Internationale pour le Dévelopment Communautaire (AICD). AICD was a largely francophone[7] non-governmental organisation which supported community development practitioners in the developing world since the 1970s. AICD had itself replaced the International Community Development Society set up in 1953 with the support of the United Nations. Both organisations had held periodic conferences and had accreditation at the U.N. The new IACD is seen as the direct successor to these two earlier organisations.

It was proposed that a new, more global and diverse, practitioners' association should be created to support community development practice - embracing practice in both the developing and developed world. It was agreed that AICD would close, give up its UN accreditation to a new body and that SCEC would provide an office and staff support to establish it. As a result of international marketing support provided by the Oxford University Press Community Development Journal (CDJ), IACD's partner journal, and direct invitations to known national community development networks and organisations in other countries, some three hundred practitioners and academics from around the world attended the four-day conference held at the University of Edinburgh. The event included plenary debates, workshops, and field visits.

Community workers, social workers, adult educators, community artists, community architects, community enterprise workers, community environmental practitioners, community youth workers, university and college extension professionals, rural and urban development practitioners and academics and policy advisers from both developed and developing countries participated. Those attending expressed a clear appetite for the creation of a new international body, and at the end of the conference people were invited to join a new board emphasising the need for diversity and geographic spread.

People from the USA, India, China, UK, Canada, Israel, Cameroon, Malaysia, Kenya, New Zealand, and South Africa nominated for the board. Gary Craig, the longstanding editor of CDJ, was elected the new association's first President. Mini Bedi from India and Ron Hustedde from the USA became its first Vice Presidents. Charlie McConnell took on the role as Secretary General. It was agreed that the new IACD would be diverse and inclusive, and above all a more representative and authentic international voice for community development practitioners than the previous organisations. Previously, the board of AICD comprised almost exclusively white, male Belgians! The new organisation opened to both agencies supporting community development and to individual fieldworkers, managers, policy advisers, academics, and students.

Former IACD Directors Anita Paul and Mini Bedi. Photo provided by IACD.

[7] Francophone – body of people and organisations around the world who use the French language regularly for private or public purposes.

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The rest, as they say, is history. Over twenty international conferences later, an active UN presence, a vibrant magazine, website and social media and the publication in over a dozen languages of IACD's International Standards for Community Development Practice.

None of these would have happened without the unpaid energy of the many subsequent board and committee members and conference partners, together with the Scottish champions who have supported IACD financially - SCEC, the Carnegie Foundation, the City and University of Dundee, and the Scottish Government.

A big thank you also to Community Work Australia who, together with other Australian partners, organised joint World Community Development Conferences in Brisbane 2009 and Darwin 2023; and in New Zealand in Rotorua 2001 and Auckland 2017. And if I may, I want to thank several Australian members over the past quarter century who have helped shape its work - notably Ingrid Burkett (IACD's first female President), Michelle Dunscombe (IACD's current Vice President), Peter Westoby, Anne Jennings, and Dee Brooks, as well as those active board members from the wider Oceania region including Margie Scotts, Love Chile, Mary Jane Rivers and John Stansfield. And so many more!

IACD Conference Brisbane 2009 – Ingrid Burkett, Australia, (3rd left) with recently appointed AJCW Editorial Advisory Committee member Prof. Suet (Shirley) Lin Hung, Hong Kong, (4th left). Photo provided by IACD.

As Charlie explained to AJCW:

"I know we all feel some pride that together we have created IACD as a vibrant international voice, still flying the flag for community development / community work."

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Photo by Brooke Cagle on Unsplash.

FROM THE FIELD

Can the international experience in the Australian VET System be improved? If so, how?

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INTRODUCTION

The Australian vocational education and training (VET) system holds a crucial role in accommodating international students. Long term monitoring of international student feedback along with analysis of existing systems, highlighted recurring identified concerns across diverse international student clusters, such as culture and enrolled courses. Recognised existing systems, including communication platforms, access to information and supports, flexibility in course delivery, and self-advocacy, were utilised as a basis for discussion and opinions.

Analysis of existing student, agent, and organisational roles and responsibilities, guided by compliance, regulations, and ethical practice against expectation of both the college and international student clusters was conducted. Gathered information and data identify changes within existing systems to appropriately relay necessary leadership to steer and imbed improvements. Potential improvements to enhance the international student experience within educational systems can occur, as found by the study conducted by St George and Sutherland Community College (SGSCC), with focus on international students enrolled in the Community Workers Australia endorsed courses.

The research was conducted to:

- Examine how international students discovered and chose VET courses.
- Assess initial expectations versus actual outcomes among international student experiences.
- Identify areas for improvement in the current experience of international students within the VET system.
- Propose actionable strategies for enhancing international student experiences in the Australian VET system.

ABSTRACT

The research conducted by St George Sutherland Community College (SGSCC) explores opportunities to enhance the international student experience within the Australian VET system. Diverse student clusters collaborated to facilitate forums on campus, gathering information from international students, to compare expressed concerns with initial classroom discussions of the Advanced Diploma Community Sector Management students. Although first and second year Community Workers Australia students lack experience in the educational systems in comparison to their fellow peers enrolled in the Advanced Diploma course, it is understandable that potential seen gaps, supported by data, may show a differ of views. This was evident with Advanced Diploma students solely identifying a need for a student body. Many commonalities were also found amongst various student clusters, regardless of time enrolled in the education system.

Forums were delivered by students to ensure transparency and accountability without the apprehension of trainer knowledge and awareness. Where lack of access was acknowledged, online platforms were utilised to expand reach of student cohorts, via sharing survey links with various Colleges across Australia. Upon moving to online platforms, further assessment of trainer insight was gathered based on assessment of student language, literacy, and numeracy (LLN) capabilities to better gauge if simulation practices meet or match student expectations, and for measurement against student self-rated LLN capabilities. Combining data and information from online surveys, forums, and trainer insight, this report provides comprehensive analysis of current experiences and offers strategies to create and maintain an enriched educational journey for international students. For this report, 126 international students enrolled in Community Workers Australia endorsed courses, and five Trainers and Assessors delivering Community Workers Australia endorsed courses, were targeted. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; appropriate storage of information was upheld where required.

Methodology

Mixed approaches were utilised to gather insight from students and trainers. Four forums led by students were conducted on campus to gather qualitative insights, these forums coincided with the days research students attended in person classes. A Google Survey questionnaire was distributed to SGSCC students unable to access forums, and external Community Workers Australia-affiliated colleges across Australia, to capture a broader perspective. In addition to initial surveying questions, trainer insight on assessment of student language, literacy, and numeracy skills highlighted student preparation for course curriculum and requirements. This addition was enforced to also identify actual student skills in analysis against student expectations and plausible outcomes. Data gathered focused on topics such as course discovery, enrolment experiences, and expectations. This was reflective of questions prepared by students such as ‘did you apply yourself or through an agent?’, ‘after enrolling, have your expectations been met?’, and ‘Is there any need for improvement on the day facility - student communication - for more voice to be heard?’.

Upon gathering responses, commonalities were found within student observations and interactions as seen via a forum facilitated with a year one Community Workers Australia class on the 30th August 2023; ‘Out of 20 students, 1 applied with the help of the school and other help (some applied onshore and some applied offshore/overseas)’, ‘Students suggested that, except for the work placement meeting, there should be excursion trips to visit some of the facilities/organisations that they might go to in order for them to have the idea on where they might possibly go and the kind of work they might do’, and ‘Flexibility on class sessions (Options to opt for face to face class or online sessions/learning)’. Data gathered via the forums and online surveys was collaborated and used to assess and identify trends, discrepancies, and areas for improvement.

Findings

Collaborated forum and survey responses show that 58.2% of international students discover VET courses through an agent. A further 30.9% discovered courses and colleges through friend recommendations. It is evident that agents are a main gateway to courses for international students, with 99% having primarily applied for their current course enrolments via an agent. In consideration of many students self-discovering courses, further research is required to identify the agent role and responsibilities, including level of student need in the enrolment process.

Assessment of intention to enrol found 55% of students were using education pathways to meet permanent residency requirements. A further 20% of students stated opportunities to employment, and 12% were looking to expand their relationships. While 96.4% of students reported that their enrolment experience aligned with their pre-enrolment expectations, only 14% felt their expectations were fully met. Students flagged the following areas as priority, where improvements may enhance the VET education experience, with flexible class arrangements, better employment pathways, and improved communication and facilities on campuses.

Areas for Improvement

Priority areas highlighted by students include the 'need for flexible class arrangements' with 21% of students requesting online accessibility to classes, 'better employment pathways' reflecting the career advice and support 32% of students are requesting, and coordinated additional seminars and training related to industry and course content that 25% of students believe will enhance the student experience. Majority (56%) of enrolled students would like to see an improvement in administration student communication, and a further 60% would like to see upgrades to campus facilities to better cater to student needs effectively. A varied perception was found when comparing trainer and assessor observation of student language, literacy, and numeracy skills with 20% rating students at the lowest end of the scale and 20% at the highest, whereas majority of students ranked themselves at the higher end of the scale.

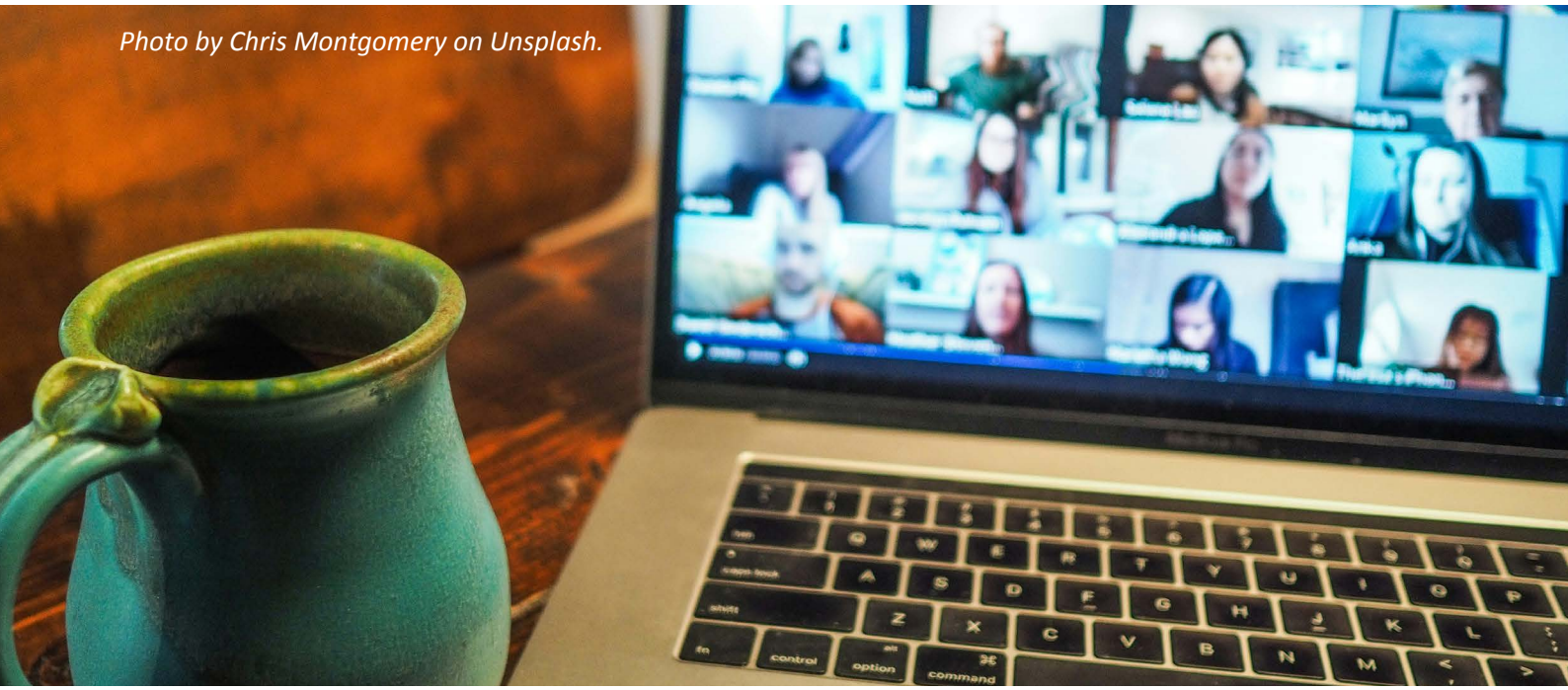


Photo by Chris Montgomery on Unsplash.

Recommendations

Implementation of strategies to improve communication between students and college management, including regular feedback processes and transparent information dissemination utilising various platforms such as student web-based assessment platforms, student body representatives, social media, and individual or grouped student support activities.

- Further research is required in organisational ability to offer flexible class arrangements, with access to online study opportunities to accommodate diverse advocated student needs such as employment. Flexibility of class arrangements are reflective of regulatory bodies and legislation; hence, findings are unlikely to be adapted.

- Development of comprehensive employment pathways and support to facilitate students transition into the workforce upon graduation via career advice and support. In consideration of employment pathways via host employers engaged during work placement activities, further research on the onus of responsibility and roles will provide better insight. Individual and group activities on employability skills training may be suited to ensure students are skilled and aware of employer expectations.

- Assess and allocate resources for facility upgrades to create a conducive learning environment and address student comfort and accessibility concerns, regarding access to adequate bathroom facilities, resources such as printers and photocopiers, and parking.

- Creating access to community events, activities, and information related to industry and course content, such as expos, guest speakers, and service visits.

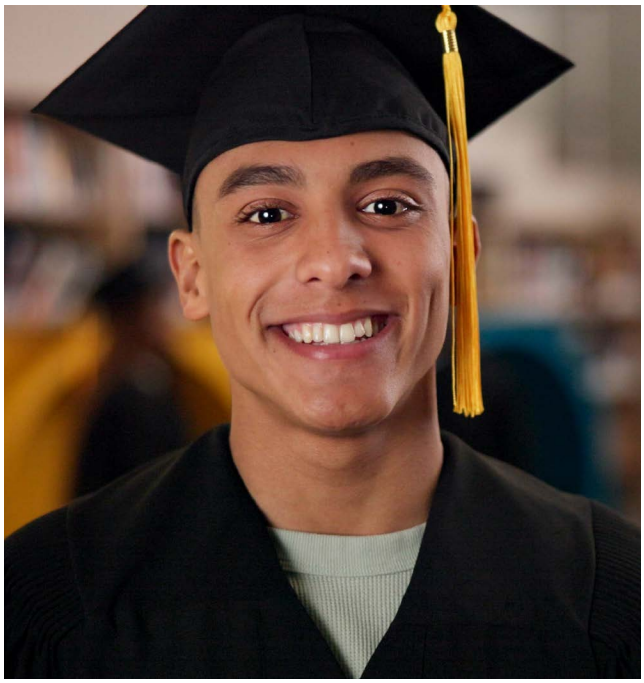
- Ongoing communication with agents, networks, and partners to ensure course expectations and requirements for students are current and students are aware of compliance and organisational requirements.

Conclusion

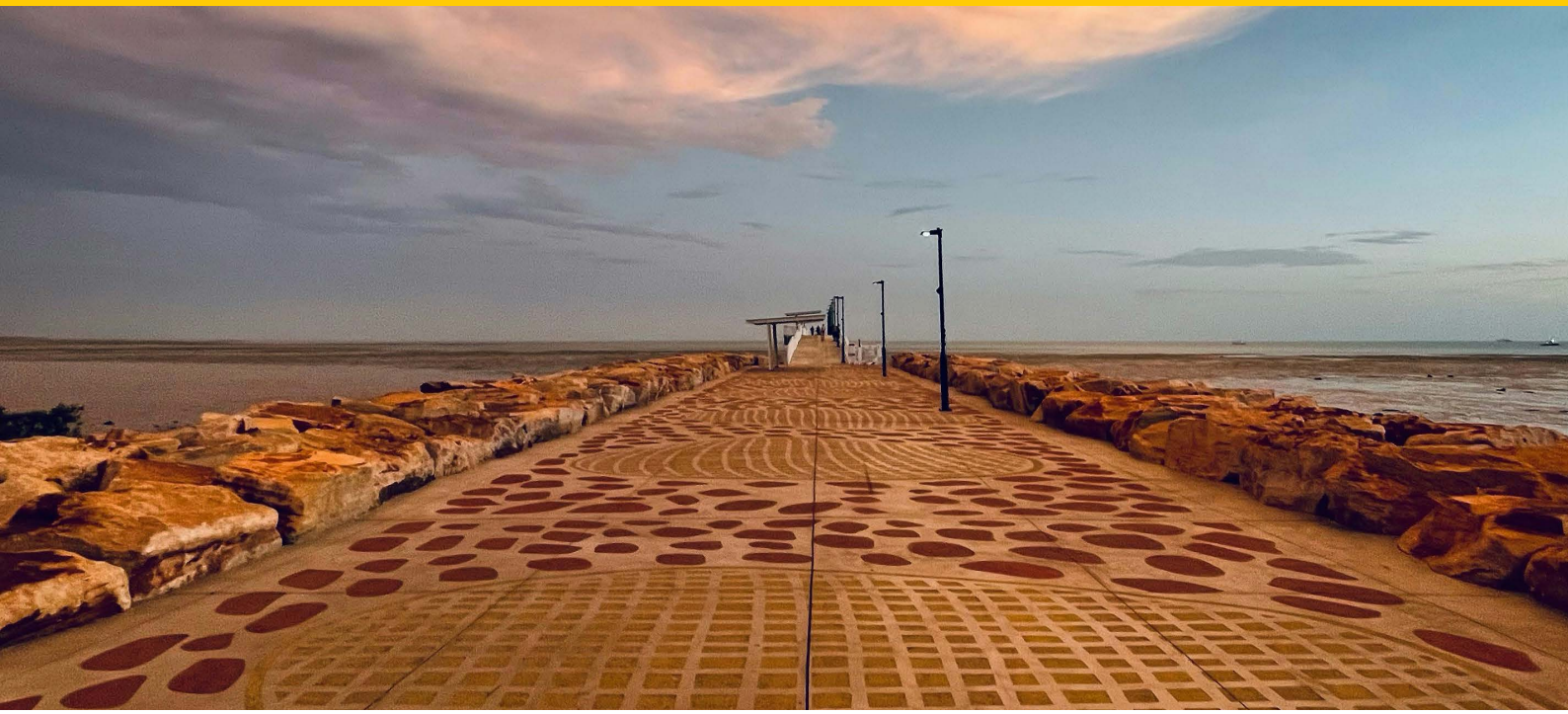
Conducted research highlights the importance of continuously improving the international student experience within the Australian VET system. Enabling international students to share their perspectives on positive experiences and identified opportunities for improvement via self-advocacy, enhances prospects for students engaged within the education system, and overall organisational processes to better meet student need.

Provision of a student voice, via a student representative body or newsletter, and addressing identified key areas for enhancement, educational institutions can maintain an ongoing supportive and inclusive learning environment, maintaining cultural competence and upholding continuous improvement frameworks.

Further exploration of the impact on student educational experiences related to agent responsibilities and roles in collaboration with Registered Training Organisations allows deeper understanding of expectations, compliance, and ethical practices. Implementing recommended strategies benefit international students whilst contributing to the overall advancement of the Australian VET sector.



FROM THE STUDY DESK



Town Beach in Broome, Western Australia. Photo by Tianlei Sun on Unsplash

FROM THE STUDY DESK

Interview with Masters' Student, Anna Dwyer

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Interview with Master of Philosophy student Anna Dwyer from The University of Notre Dame Australia by Dr Anne Jennings, AJCW Editor, 2024.

Hello Anna, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for the Australian Journal of Community Work's "From the Study Desk" section.

Can you please start by telling us about yourself growing up in remote Western Australia?

Firstly, I would like to say that I am a person who come from ground roots up to where I am sitting today. My name is Anna Dwyer and I'm a Karajarri woman and Traditional Owner from the Bidyadanga Aboriginal Community on Karajarri Country – which is about 190 kms south of Broome in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. I was born in Broome, however in the early days of Bidyadanga the health clinic was not available at the time and so then Mum, like all the other mums, had to move to Broome on Yawuru Country, to have their babies. People from Country/communities across the region had their own little camps especially around Broome.

The Anne Street Reserve started around the 1960's and 70's and I have spent a lot of my childhood at this place. Like many others our family lived in a little house made of corrugated iron we call it 'the Shack' and in this shack it had a couple of rooms, an outdoor ablution block of 6 that catered for the 12 houses, 6 on each side. We had no stove in the houses to cook our food on and so a lot of the time and for many of us including my mother would cook the meals outside in our own bush kitchen. When my mother cooks the meals you can smell the aroma in the air especially the cooked fish, turtle and rice. This food involved a lot of food sharing between all of us and if we had plenty leftovers then it would be shared to the other families at the reserve.

Many who lived at the reserve have memories of their own and still talk about their stories, songs and friendships today. Personally, I can remember it created a feeling of peace and happiness – despite the poverty[8]. Even though we came from different communities and language groups, it was what it is called a communal living today, and it worked well for most of us.

So, what was it like for you when you lived there Anna?

I loved my childhood and as a kid I enjoyed playing with all the others, getting into mischief, having lots of extended family and friends around me especially my siblings and cousins. We shared anything we had, built cubbies in broken cars and probably drove the adults mad! I guess that's where I started listening and hearing other Aboriginal languages spoken within the community which gave me an opportunity to understand and pick up a few different language words. In my early childhood of schooling, I did kindy and primary school, however that school has now disappeared, then I did my year 6 and 7 in a school called St Marys near the old Catholic Church in Broome, which has also disappeared as well.

However, as the years went on, I extended my schooling in year 8, 9, and 10 at the old Broome District High School. I then went on to Pundulmurra TAFE College in South Headland in the Pilbara region, about 600 kms away, but 'only' 440 km south of Bidyadanga. I did a 'general' education course there. As a 16-year-old I was very shy and very humble, which continued into much of my adult life (but not now!).

When I look back and think about my past life, I realise there was no such thing as career advice, no mentors, information, or encouragement to explore employment options or progress to considering future opportunities. So - I just did what I always did best, created my own pathway, and slowly but surely got to where I am today.

What was next then – into the workforce?

Later in life, I worked in many organisations throughout the Kimberley and remote communities where I have learnt new skills, I would take on huge responsibilities, engage with people and mostly build on my own confidence. As the years went by, I knew I had many obligations to my immediate families and community, where I have found I was called upon to help Aboriginal people who did not have very good English language, with whatever spoken and/or with written information that was required. You need to understand many remote community members have

[8] For stories from that time "Rich history of Broome's Anne Street Reserve", research by Anna Dwyer and Kathryn Thorburn, with recording by ABC go to: https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/kimberley-mornings/anne-street/11255940

3 or 4 languages, with English being their last. So, I became the 'go between person' – feeling a strong sense of belonging and holding the community together with the people that I was supporting.

This journey has grown in me, and this is where I had a sense of family, both immediate and extended, which has, and will always be, very important to me of course. So, for my immediate family from my mother, she was the Matriarch of 5 generations and therefore I come from a huge family 5 times a football team. In 2020 my mother has passed away and I think about her a lot, she was a great loss. However, I will always acknowledge her as my guardian Angel a nurturer as a mother, she didn't drink nor smoke, and she was a woman with high status around the Karajarri traditional lore. Importantly, she spoke her own language fluently, and her leadership was very strong, specially related to traditional ceremonies, culture and understanding of her country. My mother was a natural cultural educator and a 'role model' – her caring and sharing ways of sharing her experiences, became the same with me.

My father was a great man who also passed away 20 years ago. He too was my inspiration, through his firsthand experience by understanding the true Karajarri lore, country and culture. I can remember at the age of 8 years old my father told me that "one day I am going to be a big person", well I can understand this now. I was, and am, called upon to help people where I can, even for when I am at work – nothing's changed much even today – I just juggle work, children/grandchildren, and my fellow Countryman. I suppose all those experiences I carry are under the banner of respecting people and appreciating life.

Photo by Will Roocke on Unsplash.

Anna, you're sitting here now as an accomplished Aboriginal researcher and doing your Masters' degree – how did that come about?

I guess thinking about a 'pathway' for me which really triggered me, is where I felt I should do a master's degree by research through the University of Notre Dame based in Broome. My background is that of a linguist, where I work with language all the time and I am registered as a Karajarri Interpreter through the Kimberley interpreting service in Broome. However, I have found that I was doing more and more translating and supporting people who did not have strong English nor have an understanding around Western way of thinking and working. This has led me to realise how different those western processes are to how we operate! I felt, I needed more, so undertook, and succeeded in being awarded, an Advanced Diploma of Australian Languages and Linguistic Studies at the Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education at Bachelor in the Northern Territory. This course took me all the way to the Torres Straits, living and studying at a place called Thursday Island, gaining expanded knowledge to complete my language work.

Then over 14 years I undertook several roles for the regional Kimberley Land Council, organising and facilitating community meetings, as well working together with the traditional owners throughout the Kimberley, and most importantly undertaking community work. In 2008, I gained a position in the Nulungu Research Institute of the University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome Campus. I started with administrative work and eventually worked my way up by to becoming an early career researcher. Today my position title me as Research Fellow and Associate Lecture. Not only do I undertake my own research I also collaborate closely with my fellow colleagues on many projects that benefit the Kimberley. In the beginning of my career I felt I had no skills however I had some great mentors, both female and male, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who encouraged and sort of pressed me to firstly believe in myself, as well as passing on much needed skills for this role.

Kimberley, WA, Australia.
Photo by Isabelle Truong on Unsplash.

In my other role outside of my work, I was appointed as a Director for the Karajarri Wanjira and Nangkariny Foundation and the Karajarri Traditional Lands Association. These positions usually take up to 2 years then someone else is voted in, however I have continued to represent my people while continuing undertaking Nulungu Research on issues of Law/lore and Culture, Health, Energy Usage and Climate Change.

Sounds like you've found your place in life Anna – home, community, and profession.

I supposed so, I guess this is what I am good at. However, through my own personal reflection I know my research work is very important to me, and more so for the people that I am researching for, because I would like to see more changes and make a difference for many communities. I can tell you - my work is a lifetime experience of what I've always known best and achieved.

However, I really hadn't fully understood the value within Western society puts on university and publications, and I have continued doing what I could to create opportunities for my fellow Karajarri families and other Aboriginal people across the region. As a Karajarri woman and a Research Fellow, I am in a fortunate position of having an equal voice with other researchers, in relation to choosing my own research themes and subjects. Over time I have researched, published in journals, and presented in many conferences around Australia. For me,

as a grassroots woman, I have worked really hard throughout my life - finding my path by 'climbing many mountains'. My Google Scholar profile H-index is 10, including 268 citations since 2019 from 37 publications and presentations I have led or contributed to.

In addition, I have other roles within the University of Notre Dame in Broome, where I have additional duties to undertaken and accomplish. This includes developing and delivering guest lectures to Diploma of Nursing students on Cultural security and sensitivity when caring for Aboriginal patients. Other students from different universities enrol in Aboriginal Studies courses here and they are always interested to learn about subjects around Land and Caring for Country programs and other topics that are relevant to understand about Indigenous issues. Moving forward the acknowledgement I have received includes being awarded the university's Vice Chancellors 'Award for Initiative that Enhance Student Learning'. I can tell you that really surprised me! On top of that I felt really humbled when I received special recognition of my research and community work by being granted the Kullarri NAIDOC Award for *PERSON OF THE YEAR, 2018*, This achievement was for my contributions to Aboriginal research and education through the Nulungu Research Institute. This made me feel very proud.

Even with these experiences, I would say that I have continued to feel that I didn't do an adequate amount of work, because I felt I should be doing more for myself and specifically in a university level. This is a challenge for me and writing papers culturally and academically is a unique skill that I have taken on by writing for journals. Even so researching your own stories are usually required from researchers – even with all my work and the recognition of my Aboriginal knowledge and language skills, left me feeling "I don't think I'm good enough!" That was, however, until my Director, Co-workers and others within the university support team helped me apply for – no, not entrance to a bachelor's degree – but straight into a master's degree – and I was accepted! WOW! I still can't

Photo by Christin Hume on Unsplash.

believe it – they valued what I value – Aboriginal knowledge that is used to support social and ecological change, mainly using qualitative research methodology. So now I'm into it – researching!

That is fantastic Anna – so what would you say to anyone who is interested in tertiary studies, and possibly undertaking research, who doesn't think 'they're smart enough'?

As mentioned before, I am no longer a shy person, but I continue feeling humbled – so I have turned this into encouraging and supporting my family members, friends and anyone who are interested about studying in a university or even to encourage those to find employment here at the Broome Campus. Personally, I say a big "YES" to those interested, asking them to forget about the ways education was gained in schools. I firmly believe tertiary education and research work will teach them ways to learn first, then understanding ways of doing and learning can move on to being open to high level of education within their chosen field and courses.

A message to all, *"My pathway was certainly different than most – 'I did it my way' comes to mind for me. If people are serious about research or interested to find out more, I suggest they find others who can mentor them through many of the processes that appear to be a maize at the beginning. There's no rush – JUST DO IT" Anna Dwyer.*

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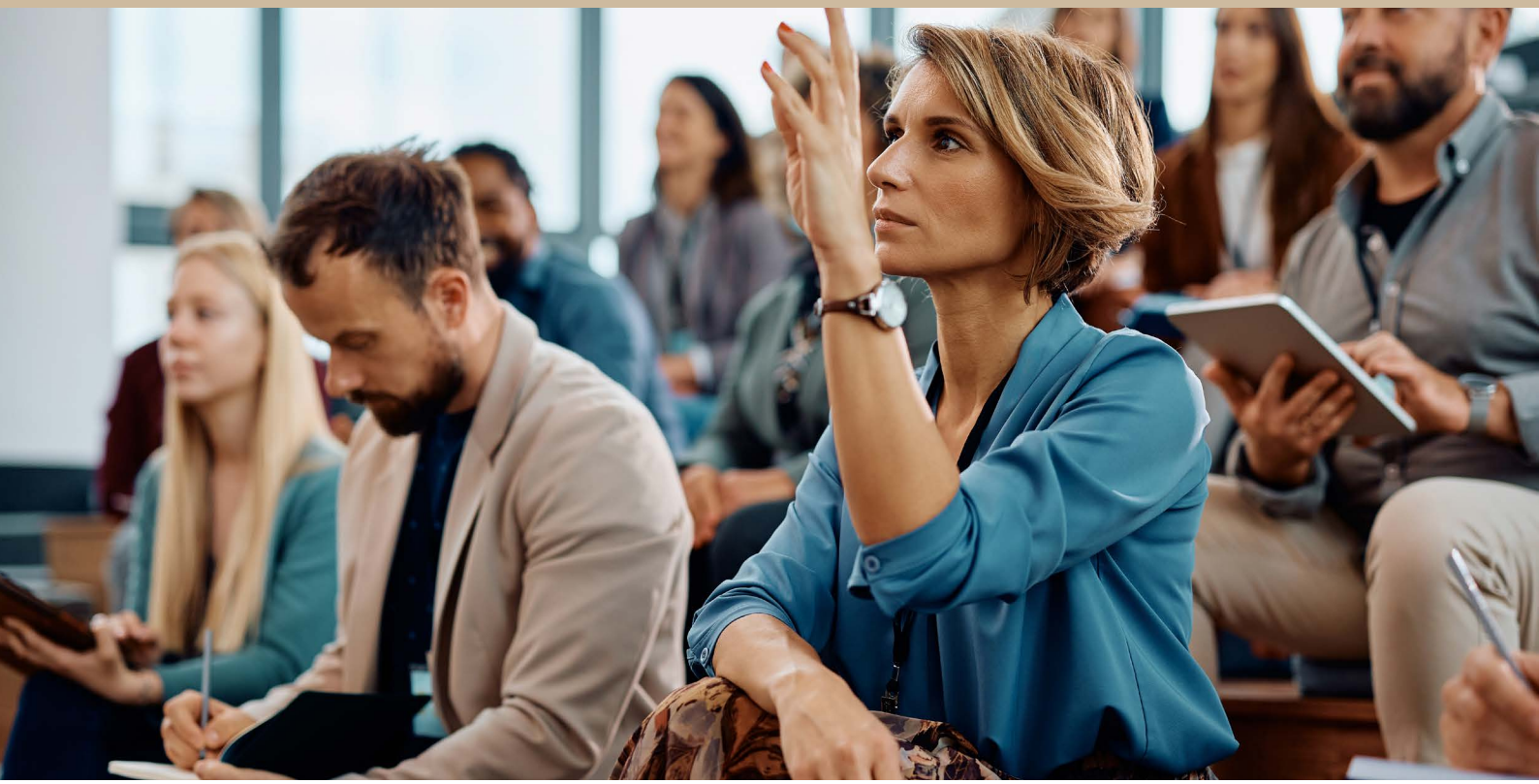

FROM THE STUDY DESK

My Journey to TAFE

Author/Correspondence:

SUSAN NASH

Diploma of Community Services student
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My journey towards undertaking the Diploma in Community Service began when I was 42 years old, after I responded to an advertisement in the paper looking for people to train as prison officers. After 20 years working in the travel industry, I was looking for a career change and the job description appealed to my sense of social justice, adventure, and curiosity. I successfully applied and completed six weeks intensive training ,then started work as a prison officer in the men's prison system.

During my career with Corrections Victoria, I worked in various sectors of the prison system, in locations across Victoria. This included in maximum, medium and minimum-security rated prisons, and involved male, female and transgender prisoners, and including high profile offenders.

I was interested in engaging with the prisoners in a meaningful way and with purpose, instead of in a custodial capacity - so after a couple of years I moved from the prison officer role into the role of an Assessment Officer (AO). This role required interviewing prisoners (in person or via Zoom) throughout the Victorian prison system who had received a sentence of six months or more. The purpose of the interview was to prepare a risk assessment report (together with various collateral documents from court, GP's etc) that informed case management plans, parole consideration and level of supervision required within the community.

In the last eight years of my career with Corrections Victoria, I was an Assessment and Transition Coordinator (ATC). This position required placement at a prison location, and I chose to work in women's prisons. This involved working with women in the last 12 months of their sentence, supporting them to transition from prison into the community. Activities included building networks within the fields of mental health, housing, drug & alcohol, child protection, NDIS and a range of other services - to reduce their risk of reoffending and the possibility of returning to prison. Women leaving prison can face many barriers, stigmas and challenges finding housing and employment, applying for the return of their children, navigating their way through bureaucracy, while coping with day to day living pressures. They can struggle to create new social and community connections, especially within a society that can harshly ostracize them for having a criminal history.

During my time in these roles, I attended numerous training programs including motivational interviewing, family violence, sexual abuse, depression, suicide / self-harm and thus took advantage of career opportunities and secondments because I was keen to learn and improve my skills.

At the beginning of 2023, I accepted a voluntary early retirement redundancy package and left Corrections Victoria after almost 20 years of continued service.

I then applied to Melbourne Polytech (mostly because of the proximity of the TAFE to home - I can walk to/from) and started the Diploma in Community Service course in July 2023. I had been fearful of returning to school at my age because I was worried about using technology and my ability to manage the workload!! However, I was encouraged by friends to 'give it a go' (what's the worst that can happen??).

I enjoy the stimulation of the classroom, hearing other students' life experiences and ways of doing things has been awesome. Although over the years I have accrued a lot of life skills and practical 'on the job' training and knowledge, I found 'you don't know what you don't know' (or sometimes you don't know what you know!) - so learning the theory behind why we do what we do has been stimulating and beneficial.

> ***"I'm not sure where this will lead me, but I'm pleased I took a leap of faith to study and I'm proud of my work so far - you are never too old to learn, grow and develop and I have enjoyed the experience."***

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FROM THE SECTOR

FROM THE SECTOR

Now is the time to act. The referendum must not lead to despair, but to a search for new ways to secure justice

June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, (2023)[9]

The referendum for an Indigenous voice became mired in conflict but there is now a mandate to set up regional and remote First Nations voices. June Oscar, AO

[9] June Oscar AO prepared this paper in 2023, after the referendum. She has now completed her term as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner - in April 2024.

The day the proposal for a constitutionally enshrined Indigenous voice was rejected by the majority of my fellow Australians will be remembered by many as a sombre day in our country's history.

After the result, there is much pain to process. However, more than 200 years of cruel and wanton dispossession has clearly revealed that the people of our First Nations are resilient and enduring. We will heal and we will forge the way ahead through other ways and means. We must find strength in the groundswell of support. Millions of Australians mobilised around First Nations justice throughout this referendum year. They are still there with us.

People like my non-Indigenous brother who called me after the result, give me great hope. He and others like him have become more engaged through this process. They have developed a deepened understanding of our shared histories, the difficulty of making substantive change, and the barriers that need to be overcome.

Now is the time for action. There is so much that we can do together to educate and inspire the next generation. As we look forward to future opportunities, it is valuable to reflect on the origins and subsequent trajectory of the referendum.

I was there at the momentous constitutional gathering in 2017 on the ancient lands of the Anangu, standing with other First Nations leaders from across this vast nation of nations, as the Uluru statement from the heart was presented. We united in hope, striving to chart a path forward that would extend an invitation to all Australians to join us in putting an end to the exclusion of our people from the constitution – the birth certificate of the modern Australian nation state.

We aimed to underscore that policies designed and enforced by those who are unfamiliar with our lives only serve to undermine our rights and harm our communities. We were determined to rectify the wrong of our lived experiences and knowledge being excluded from decisions that profoundly affect us, a terrible indignity we have endured since colonisation of this continent began.

The truth is, from that pivotal moment until early this year when the referendum campaign was set in motion, I genuinely believed the majority of Australians had come to embrace the generous offer to right the historical wrongs of our exclusion, and to recognise that our sovereignties could coexist, with no loss to any Australian, and much to be gained in our shared healing.

The referendum was meant to unify us, but instead, during months of campaigning, we found ourselves mired in intense conflict. What we have experienced makes it abundantly clear that we need a Makarrata process, a period of truth-telling, healing, and dialogue as a nation – as fellow Australians – so we can reset and move forward together.

> ***"We now have a clear mandate to establish regional and remote voices"***

This process will necessarily be difficult, especially because the referendum and the merciless politics around it have underscored a harsh reality: it is increasingly challenging, if not impossible, to engage in reasonable and safe public discussions in today's political and media climate.

The impact of this civic dysfunction cannot be overstated. It threatens the very core of our democracy. This is a significant challenge we must now confront and endeavour to overcome. There is no denying that the wildfire of mis- and disinformation that permeated physical and online spaces played a significant role in sowing fear and uncertainty among Australians. In turn, this fuelled unprecedented levels of racism and intolerance against First Nations peoples and communities.

Perhaps one of the most egregious pieces of misinformation of the campaign was the false assertion that Indigenous peoples in regional and remote Australia did not support the voice.

The results from relevant polling booths unequivocally demonstrated that we do indeed support the proposal for a voice. We now have a clear mandate to establish regional and remote voices. This should inform the agenda for structural reform.

The repercussions of the referendum and the tsunami of prejudice it unleashed will reverberate through the generations, far beyond the polling booths. Already we see the rejection of the voice deployed as a weapon, whether it be by schoolyard bullies or by those in the political sphere who wish to pathologize our cultures, to dismiss the harms that colonisation has wrought, and to deny us the realisation of our rights as Indigenous peoples.

However, my fellow First Nations peoples as well as our allies and supporters, please do not despair for our future. Despite how we feel in the aftermath, this was not a referendum on our human rights, our rightful place in this nation or our self-determination. They are not privileges to be granted or denied by a simple majority. Our rights are the bedrock of justice, equality, and respect. They are not contingent on the outcome of a single vote but are an integral part of our shared commitment to building a fair and equitable society. With meaningful investment in social and emotional wellbeing and healing mechanisms, our communities will regroup and join forces with our supporters to chart the way forward.

I express my gratitude to all of our people, and to non-Indigenous Australians, who boldly and courageously campaigned for the voice. I assure you your efforts were not in vain. A momentum for change has been created with millions of Australians, and there are numerous paths ahead. With open hearts and open minds, we can unite as a nation and navigate our way towards truth, justice, and a better future for all who now call these lands home.

The AJCW extends appreciation to June Oscar AO and the Australian Human Rights Commission for this article. It is republished, unchanged, under *Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence*. It is available on: https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/opinions/now-time-act-referendum-must-not-lead-despair-search-new-ways-secure-justice

FROM THE SECTOR

CLOSETHEGAP – Voyage to Voice, Treaty, Truth and Beyond. Close the Gap Campaign Report 2024

Prepared by Lowitja Institute for the Close the Gap Campaign Alliance Group.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, individuals, and organisations have worked tirelessly over the last 12 months to push for better outcomes and recognition for our communities. The year has seen extraordinary advocacy, action, and strength, as well as steep challenges and deep disappointments, including the defeat of the Voice proposal in the October 2023 Referendum. Despite the setbacks, this report refocuses the narrative on our peoples' strengths and successes.

It showcases our people's unwavering commitment to our communities, and our staunch calls for governments and, more broadly, Australia to do more towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recognition, rights, justice, and equity. This follows a difficult and often devastating year where mainstream media and political commentary projected an intense deficit lens about our peoples that went to the heart of our identities and rights, the issue of racism in our country, and the need more than ever for a truthtelling process.

The themes of this year's report are **Progressing Voice, Treaty, and Truth; Leadership and Governance; and Building our Economies**. They are explored through nine case studies, which are exemplars of Blak excellence. The themes speak to economic, social, political, and cultural determinants of health that are crucial to commitments by Australian governments to closing the gap.

> ***"The sub-themes are important topics that provide insight into how First Nations leaders see and understand their roles and responsibilities, both to themselves and their communities. They also clearly demonstrate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people know what is required to create meaningful change."***
>
> June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

The report also features a Year in Review, highlighting other important issues that inform our recommendations, including progress (or lack thereof) under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the need for a standalone National Plan for First Nations Family Safety as part of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032. We call for ongoing investment in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, and in cultural safety in healthcare, both crucial to close the gap.

The Year in Review also features the Voice Referendum, playing special tribute to the dedicated work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the campaign, with three spotlighted organisations: Wungening Aboriginal Corporation; the Central Land Council; and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO).

Focus of our themes

Despite the devastating 2023 Voice Referendum result, the Close the Gap Campaign and many in our communities remain committed to the principles of the Uluru Statement From the Heart and will continue to seek Voice, Treaty, and Truth, despite their grief at the vote.

Historic place-based jurisdictional progress towards these goals in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria is showcased in the case studies under the 'Progressing Voice, Treaty, Truth' theme. As they show, our leaders and communities are paving a way forward for future generations. However, this progress is at risk, following the disappointing withdrawal of principled political bipartisanship in the wake of the Referendum. We call for renewed commitments and dedicated work from governments and political parties to ensure this important work is not derailed or disrupted.

Despite the attention in 2023 on the Referendum, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap continued to be a significant focus for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) and governments alike over the past year. Achieving the targets and meeting the four Priority Reforms under the National Agreement remains the focus across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy landscape.

Leadership and governance are not qualities to be underestimated as we strive for self-determination, and 2023 saw opportunities for our peoples to elevate our voices, advocate, and demonstrate our expertise on the national and global stage. Under the 'Leadership and Governance' theme, we focus on the internationally ground-breaking role being forged by Australia's inaugural Ambassador for First Nations People, Lowitja Institute's work to advance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in

climate action in Australia and globally, and how the First Peoples Disability Network's (FPDN) Disability Yarning podcast became an act of self-determination and driver of policy change.

We recommend funding for the establishment of a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health and support the FPDN's calls for greater inclusion of disability in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and for greater cultural safety in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The 'Building our Economies' theme reflects that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have always been innovators and entrepreneurs and are pursuing economic empowerment for our peoples. Here, we share success stories that highlight the work of leading profit-for-purpose retailer Clothing The Gaps, the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation and its focus on community, culture and commerce in the Pilbara, and the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association's dedicated efforts to support the growth and capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical specialists.

The case studies underscore the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and building culturally safe workforces; they shine a light on what needs to change. We call for understanding and accountability on the racial wealth gap that our people experience after generations of exploitation; support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and entrepreneurship under the Australian Government's Indigenous Procurement Policy 6 (IPP) review in 2024; and for restored and expanded opportunities for our peoples to engage and succeed in international trade.

The themes in this report speak to the principles underpinning the Priority Reforms and demonstrate the strides our communities have taken. They show that, with opportunity, leadership, and empowerment, comes success and impact – an important reminder in a post Referendum environment.

> ***"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need representation at the highest levels of government. They need genuine shared agreement-making, bipartisanship, unity, and a shared collective vision, driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and knowledges, to address the gaps in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's life outcomes. Because we know this is how we close the gap."***
>
> Karl Briscoe, Chief Executive Officer, National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners

It is critical that governments implement the National Agreement in full and commit properly to Priority Reform Three: systemic and structural transformation of mainstream government organisations to respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is the reform which most deeply challenges governments and relies on them to act. The report calls for independent oversight of this priority, as part of a refreshed National Agreement in 2024. The report also calls for stronger work on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led data development, in accordance with Priority Reform Four, and commitments to the 2021– 2031 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan and other supporting plans.

The Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap makes it clear that governments have not come close to transforming the ways they work and relinquishing the power they hold. It found that overall progress against the Priority Reforms has been 'slow, uncoordinated and piecemeal'. Governments must restore our peoples' rights, authority, and autonomy to recognise the inherent truth of our self-determination: that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the answers.

Our communities have held – and will continue to hold – governments accountable for their progress, or lack thereof, towards meeting their commitments under the National Agreement. We will continue to call for self-determination and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership.

This report sends a clear message to allies and supporters to stand with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and empower us to lead in the solutions that affect our communities and our futures. We commend our recommendations to Australian governments and stand ready to work with them towards their implementation.

Sections republished with thanks - the Executive Summary from the *CLOSETHEGAP- Voyage to Voice, Treaty, Truth and Beyond Close the Gap Campaign Report 2024*, prepared by Lowitja Institute for the Close the Gap Campaign Alliance Group.

Photo by Rineshkumar Ghirao on Unsplash.

FROM THE SECTOR

Putting First Nations Employment Strategies into Action

Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace.

Improving employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples needs both a conscious effort on the part of employers to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and the development of workplace policies which aim to retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees once recruited. Workplace policies should include a cultural safety policy. A workplace that respects the cultural safety of its First Nations employees recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees have a unique culture and puts a variety of measures and practices in place to ensure that First Nations employees cultural needs are met, and that non-indigenous employees can act in a culturally sensitive manner.

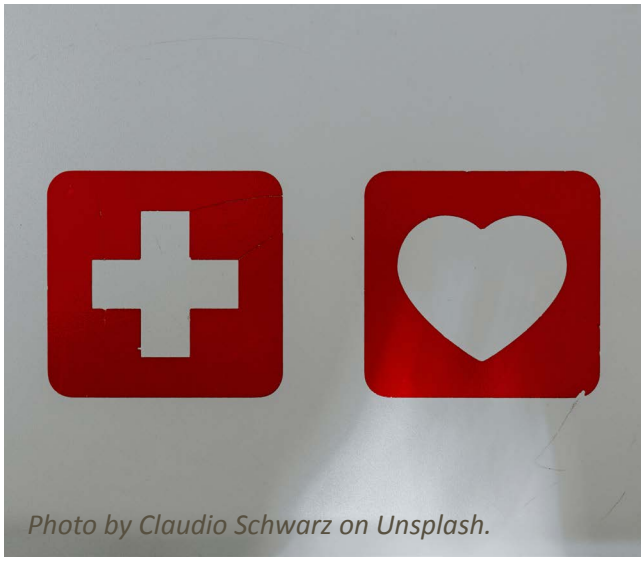

Photo by Claudio Schwarz on Unsplash.

Examples of workplaces which have developed policies to attract and retain First Nations employees:

Identifying an industry that suits the already existing skills of the intended employees:

- The Ngaanyatjarra Camel Company[1], formed by the Board of The Ngaanyatjarra Council, took advantage of the hundreds of thousands of wild camels roaming on Ngaanyatjarra Council lands to provide employment opportunities that were located on country and that the local people found meaningful. Over 40 First Nations peoples work to muster the camels, which are sold to camel breeders in the Middle East. One representative commented on how the work suited the local people saying, "We find people who like the work and really want to do it. Building good relationships is important to [the local people]. They are not terribly motivated by money. It's about relationships, being in a team. It's part of their identity, enjoying the work."

Advertising roles through established First Nations employment networks

- The **St Vincent de Paul Society in NSW**, in their policy document 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention Strategy'[2], has developed policies that will aid in the attraction and retention of First Nations employees in their services. This includes developing partnerships with First Nations employment services, conducting 'Yarning Circles' in specific locations to advertise the work of the society and developing culturally sensitive employment selection methods.

[1] https://ngaanyatjarra.org.au
[2] https://www.vinnies.org.au/nsw

Development of a First Nations Employment Strategy

- The **Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)**, have instituted the AHPRA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2020 – 2025 (Employment Strategy)[3]. The strategy document identifies key priorities for increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the regulatory body including implementing culturally safe workplace practices and investing in developing the capabilities and careers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. See also:

Examples of workplaces that have developed policies/practices which promote cultural safety for First Nations employees:

Provision of Cultural Awareness Training

- **Sandvik Mining and Rock Solutions Australia**, the Australian arm of the multinational engineering company, have put into place a Reconciliation Action Plan[4] that includes the provision of cultural awareness training. The training, developed in partnership with Mirri Mirri Productions, includes eLearning modules such as guides on respectful terminology when working with First Nations Australians and First Nations Dates of Significance. Senior management at the company also participated in an OnCountry experience with the Worimi Aboriginal Land Council to further their cultural awareness.

Creation of detailed guidelines for cultural safety

- Charity Group, **Mission Australia**, created an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Practice Guideline[5] for their employees to use. Formulated with the help of Yilabara Solutions, an Aboriginal owned consulting organisation, the 34-page guideline goes in depth to describe to employees what cultural safety in the workplace should look like. The guideline includes general information to build awareness, checklists to help with the implementation of the guidelines and self-assessment tools to assist accountability.

Establishing traineeship programs

- Developed in partnership with Wan-Yaari Aboriginal Consultancy Services, **Barwon Water** in the Geelong area have developed an Aboriginal employment and retention strategy[6]. The strategy includes a commitment to building a culturally safe workplace through cultural safety training and a commitment to inclusive workplace practices and environment. The commitment to creating a culturally safe environment for First Nations peoples is evident in:
    - The placing of an Acknowledgment of Country plaque in the entryway of the premises,
    - A sculpture designed by a local Aboriginal artist in the foyer,
    - Aboriginal artwork displayed throughout the working spaces,
    - The naming of meeting rooms in local Wadawurrung language.

Sincere thanks to Peter Arndt, Director, and the team of the *Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace* (Catholic Social Justice agency), for this article. Further information available from: https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/

[3] https://www.ahpra.gov.au/About-Ahpra/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Health-Strategy/Employment-strategy.aspx

[4] https://australianmining.com.au/sandvik-unveil-second-reconciliation-action-plan

[5] https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/resource-sharing-hub

[6] https://www.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/about-us/news-and-events/news/barwon-waters-aboriginal-employment-and-retention-strategy-recognised-with-national-award

UPDATES

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY WORKERS FOUNDATION

By Sha Cordingley, Special Projects Advisor.

The Australian Community Workers Foundation is a Community Work Australia initiative arising from the desire for a legacy project to mark Community Work Australia's 50 years anniversary. The past few years have seen the development of the Trust Deed, registration with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC), and the achievement of Deductible Gift Status (DGR) status for this charity.

The long-term aim of the Australian Community Workers Foundation is to provide financial support to potential students who may be experiencing disadvantage because they:

- live with disability;
- have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage;
- are refugees or asylum seekers;
- have a background of economic or social disadvantage; or
- live in a remote area that limits their access to education.

ACWF
Australian Community Workers Foundation

Fig. 1. *Newly developed logo for the Australian Community Workers Foundation*

Photo by Tim Gouw on Unsplash.

Photo by Christina @ wocintechchat.com.

This year the Foundation has entered into agreements with several universities to initiate an ACWF Student Prize to recognise excellence or determination in the study of community services. Next year the ACWF will be in the position to offer a small number of bursaries and scholarships.

Community Work Australia is committed to building and supporting the Foundation as an adjunct to the important work it undertakes to ensure community workers are widely recognised as professionals who have the requisite skills, ethics, and knowledge to play a proactive role in bringing about a fair and socially just society. Community Work Australia believes this vision for a fair and just society will have been achieved *when everyone's human rights in Australia are recognised, protected, and respected* - including those who have been excluded from educational opportunities and a meaningful career in community work through some form of disadvantage.

Whilst Community Work Australia has donated to the Foundation for several years, we still have a long way to go. The Foundation's new logo represents the idea of Community Work Australia supporting education and community workforce growth. The logo features two leaves and a flower taken from the existing Community Work Australia logo to symbolise growth. It goes without saying that for the Foundation to continue growing we need your help. To donate or find out more about the Foundation please see Community Work Australia's website www.communitywork.org.au/acwf/ for further details.

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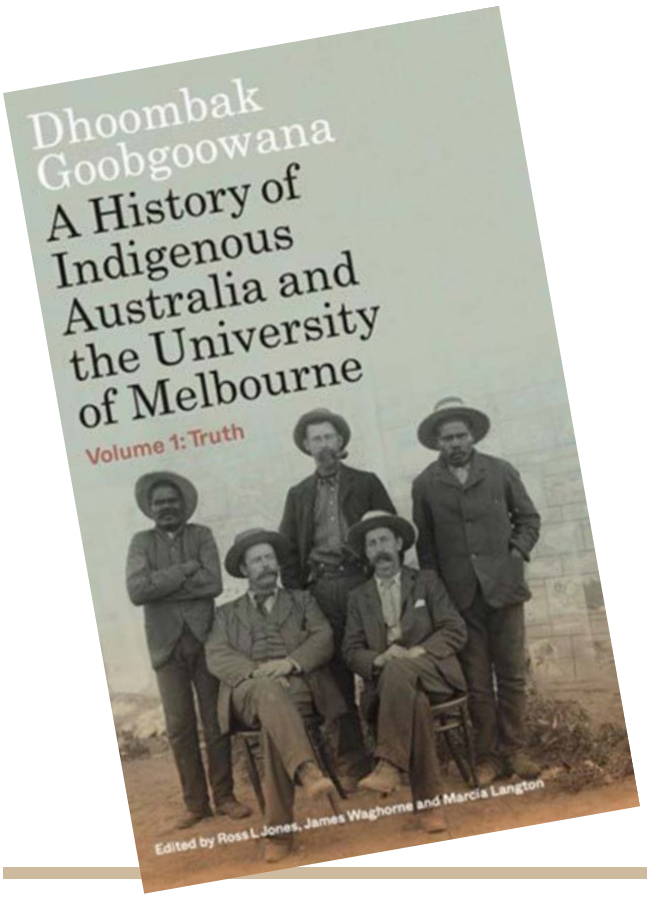
BOOK REVIEW

"Dhoombak Goobgoowana – A history of Indigenous Australia and the University of Melbourne – Volume 1: Truth"

An Indigenous-led book challenges the presumption that universities make only 'good' contributions to the community – confronting the University of Melbourne's disturbing history.

Authored by: Dr James Waghorne, Professor Marcia Langton AO, and Dr Ross Jones.
Review by: University of Melbourne (2024).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised this book refers to, and contains, images and names of people who have died. It also includes distressing descriptions and derogatory terms for Indigenous people used in their historical context.



The University of Melbourne was established in 1853, during Victoria's colonial era, and its first leaders were also leaders of the colony. Sir Redmond Barry, regarded as the University's founder, also founded the State Library of Victoria. He was a judge, and perhaps best known for imposing the death sentence on Ned Kelly. We are more interested in his role in 1841 as defence lawyer for two Aboriginal men accused of murder.

In the case of Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner[10], Barry argued what may now be regarded as the foundations of the recognition of Indigenous peoplehood and native title, interrogating the legal basis of British authority over Aborigines who were not citizens. He also argued that the evidence against them was dubious and circumstantial. Despite his defence, they were found guilty and hanged on 20 January 1842, becoming the first people in Victoria to be legally executed.

[10] See: https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-melbourne/melbourne-profile/aboriginal-culture/Pages/tunnerminnerwait-and-maulboyheener.aspx

In this way, the beginning of a highly contested history of the University began, with those sympathetic to the situation of the First Peoples, and those whose actions and attitudes were aimed at eliminating Indigenous peoples.

Acknowledging this contested history is the work of the Indigenous History of the University of Melbourne project11, established in 2020. This project is revealing the significance of the University's past connections with Indigenous Australians, its most egregious events and its gradual reforms. Further, this project has led us to publish a new history of the University, Dhoombak Goobgoowana – A history of Indigenous Australia and the University of Melbourne.

One divisive example of this history was the 2016 decision to rename the Richard Berry Building. Berry's story highlights problems with the University's long connection with Indigenous Australia. Berry was a Professor of Anatomy between 1905 and 1929 and Dean of the Medical School in his last four years. He enjoyed widespread acclaim as a public intellectual in his lifetime. But from the 1990s, scholars uncovered his role as a leader of the eugenics movement[12] in Australia. Eugenics was the widespread scientific theory justifying inequality between social groups and races. His research work included studies of both living and dead Indigenous Australians, whom he classified as 'sub-normal' based on his comparison to non-Indigenous Australians. He then applied these specious findings to influence public policy.

Dhoombak Goobgoowana is the work of the Indigenous History of the University of Melbourne project. The legacies of a number of Berry's contemporaries have also been challenged – including Professor of Biology Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer, education reformer Frank Tate and the Professor of Zoology, Wilfred Agar. Our new and ongoing research, which is included in Dhoombak Goobgoowana, finds that Tate and Agar, along with Berry, advocated eugenic measures to limit the reproduction of people they referred to as having 'inferior' genetic stock. This included Indigenous Australians.

At the same time, post-colonial scholarship criticised the role of anthropologists, like Spencer, in managing policies that brought harm to Indigenous people. While he was Northern Territory Protector of Aborigines, Spencer oversaw child-removal policies. He also had an interest in eugenics which led to his nomination as President of the short-lived first eugenics society in Victoria.

These examples challenge the presumption that universities make only 'good' contributions to the wider community. Their image as unchanging 'ancient' organisations is also upended, as it becomes clear just how radically ideas of progress and public good can change. After all, the activities of these celebrated men were central to their university and its public work and reputation. Berry, for example, had been supported for decades by the University, the Victorian government, the major newspapers and international philanthropic organisations like the Rockefeller Foundation.

These examples also offer new ways of understanding how the University's history has been written. The Richard Berry Building was named in 1970 – long after Berry had left the University – but other buildings have been named more recently and are now, rightly, challenged. The naming of buildings after great men was a way of celebrating the University's history. However, our work is showing just how much of this story is incomplete. As a result, a fuller and more problematic history is being written.

The history, to be published across two volumes, covers all faculties and graduate schools at the University. As well as its racist past and eugenics, we explore the meaning of place and the University's campus footprint from the past to the present, including the support of benefactors whose wealth was derived from pastoral runs on stolen Indigenous lands.

[11] https://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/research/research-projects/policy-and-management-in-higher-education/indigenous-history-project

[12] https://theconversation.com/eugenics-in-australia-the-secret-of-melbournes-elite-3350

Dhoombak Goobgoowana also examines the University's Indigenous collections, including human remains, art and cultural artefacts. The books follow the University's slow and uneven efforts to recruit and support Indigenous students and staff – tracing the emerging recognition of Indigenous knowledge, including the contributions of Indigenous people in the University's past research work.

The Indigenous History of the University of Melbourne project is overseen by an Indigenous standing committee chaired by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) Professor Barry Judd. Currently, some seventy academics across all disciplines are contributing to the history – and around a third of these are Indigenous who are guiding, advising and leading the project, featuring testimony from Indigenous leaders like Uncle Jim Berg, Professors Ian Anderson and Marcia Langton AO among others.

Much of this history is disturbing and many past actions of the University and its staff are contemptible. But there are also examples that indicate the growing understanding of the need to repair and reinvigorate the University's relationship with Indigenous Australians. One example of the complexity the University faces is the Donald Thomson collection.

This collection was assembled by the professor of anthropology over several decades of fieldwork with Indigenous communities in Arnhem Land, Central Australia and Cape York. Thomson demonstrated empathy and understanding for the people with whom he worked and supported causes such as land rights and language protection, while also adopting anthropological practices that involved the collection of materials, including human remains (which are under the control of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council). The collection is one of the most significant contributions in the world and was listed on UNESCO's Australian Memory of the World Register in 2008.

Under Indigenous supervision, the University is currently reconnecting the items in the collection with the Indigenous peoples they were removed from. This complex exercise has required revision of policies to ensure that the University is compliant with Australian laws and long-standing international standards and human rights in relation to collections of Indigenous cultural heritage.

Importantly, this truth-telling project acknowledges the University's contested past and is a first step towards formally acknowledging its institutional and colonial history.

[13] See: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/au/

SECTOR INFORMATION/ REPORTS

Introducing Indigenist Critical Policy Analysis: A rights-based approach to analysing public policies and processes

Australian Journal of Social Issues.

Bryant, M. (2024).

Abstract

Institutional racism within Australia, grounded in the country's settler-colonial structure, has sidelined Indigenous interests in public policymaking since federation. In an attempt to redress this, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) was endorsed by the Australian government in 2009. UNDRIP is an authoritative international standard that could inform the ways that governments engage with Indigenous peoples and protect their rights.

This paper introduces Indigenist Critical Policy Analysis (ICPA). While mainstream policy evaluation assesses whether policies and processes have met the governments stated objectives, ICPA assesses whether they uphold or violate Indigenous rights. ICPA involves reviewing policy documents against the key principles and specific Articles of UNDRIP. Presenting a worked example of ICPA, the *NSW Regional Health Strategic Plan 2022–2032* is assessed against the five phases: (1) Orientation; (2) Close examination; (3) Determination; (4) Strengthening practice; and (5) Indigenous final word. This analysis finds that the Strategic Plan is poorly aligned with UNDRIP. Specifically, there is little evidence that Indigenous values influenced or held any authority in the process. ICPA offers a practical approach to analysing policy for compatibility with Indigenous rights under international law that could be used by Indigenous organisations and policymakers.

Photo by David Clode on Unsplash.

Introduction

The question of how public policies and processes are assessed in relation to the needs of Indigenous peoples is a challenging one (McConnell et al., 2020; Sanders, 2023; Street et al., 2020; Sullivan et al., 2023).

What makes for good or bad policy? How should success or failure be judged? These questions are challenging, particularly in the context of Indigenous affairs. There is a consensus that policies affecting Indigenous peoples are often ineffective; there is insufficient evidence, especially from Indigenous perspectives to discern which policies work and which do not (Productivity Commission, 2020b, 2020c, 2024).

To address this challenge, this paper introduces an approach called "Indigenist Critical Policy Analysis" (ICPA). It offers a framework for assessing public policies and processes from an Indigenist standpoint, aligning them with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (United Nations, 2007). ICPA can help to demonstrate how standard policy structures sideline Indigenous interests and provide evidence to support transformations in government processes such as those called for by the Priority Reforms outlined in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020 (CTG Agreement 2020) (Australian Government, 2020).

ICPA assists analysts to identify areas of public policies and processes that may not serve Indigenous peoples, or to highlight examples of best practice for replication. In addition to articulating a framework for conducting an ICPA, this paper seeks to demonstrate its utility by applying it to an Australian case study, the *NSW Regional Health Strategic Plan 2022–2032* (the Strategic Plan).

Before doing so, this paper briefly provides an overview of the opportunities for a change in approach to policymaking processes in Australia. It describes the socio-political and historical contexts of policymaking in Australia and provides a critique of the existing mechanisms for assessing policy processes. It concludes with suggestions regarding policy development practices that may support the efforts of Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors within and outside of governments to develop policy that meaningfully engages with Indigenous peoples.

Natalie Bryant – an Aboriginal woman from the Yuin Nation in NSW - is a Sir Roland Wilson Pat Turner PhD Candidate at the Centre for Indigenous Policy Research at the Australian National University.
The full document is available on: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajs4.350

Photo by Iqro Rinaldi on Unsplash.

SECTOR INFORMATION/REPORTS

Holding on to Our Future: *the Final Report of the Inquiry into the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in the removal and placement of Aboriginal Children in South Australia,* 2024.

Report by April Lawrie, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, South Australia.

Dedication to Aboriginal children and young people

The Inquiry, Holdi*ng on to Our Future, the Final Report of the Inquiry into the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in the removal and placement of Aboriginal Children in South Australia* dedicates its findings and recommendations to the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children growing up in care in South Australia - for they are part of the future leaders and custodians of culture and country. This Inquiry aspires to shape a better future for Aboriginal children, where the value attributed to family in the eye of the Aboriginal beholder is the value that is needed in law, policy and practice (Lawrie, 2024, p. 2).

Headline Findings

1. The Department for Child Protection has no defined strategy to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people, or a culturally appropriate accountability and oversight mechanism for monitoring its performance in the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. As such, the cultural responsiveness of the Department is severely lacking.
2. There is insufficient funding to meet the demand identified for culturally appropriate, early intervention services for vulnerable Aboriginal children and their families.
3. The State is unnecessarily removing disproportionate and growing numbers of Aboriginal children from their families and communities, causing long term harm to their health, wellbeing and life chances, when they could be responding in a more child-family centred and culturally responsive way.
4. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle has been taken out of the hands of the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal community voices were not included or deemed necessary in the drafting of the Principle in the current legislation and in policy.
5. The way decisions are managed and made regarding Aboriginal children's best interests needs to change. Better outcomes for Aboriginal children are achieved when Aboriginal people, families and communities lead decision-making.
6. Systemic racism and cultural bias contribute to the disproportionate rates of Aboriginal child removals and placement into non-Aboriginal care (Lawrie, 2024, p. 18).

*(**Note**: Further findings are available under these headings: Prevention, Partnership, Participation, Placement and Connection[14]).*

Headline Recommendations

1. The Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 be amended to insert the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and that they be applied as the paramount consideration for Aboriginal children when considering their safety, wellbeing and best interests. The principle should be applied to the standard of Active Efforts in all significant decisions. Active Efforts must be purposeful, thorough and timely.
2. A sixth element of Performance to be included to the adopted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle for South Australia. The implementation of Performance to the standard of Active Efforts is demonstrated by accurate reporting and compliance of all elements, including comprehensive measures embedded within practice and case management systems.
3. Legislate a mandatory annual reporting requirement that the Chief Executive report on the implementation of Active Efforts for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and on matters of funding directly invested in Active Efforts measures across the child protection service system.

Photo by Aditya Romansa on Unsplash.

[14] See: (Lawrie, 2024, pp. 19-23).

4. The Department for Child Protection to work in partnership with the Aboriginal community through the newly established Aboriginal child and family peak body to develop its own Aboriginal strategy aimed at improving outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people.
5. The Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 be amended to include that the Youth Court should satisfy itself that the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle have been applied to the standard of Active Efforts before making an order under the Act. If it is not so satisfied, the Youth Court should have the power to make specific orders requiring the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection to comply with the obligation to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle to the standard of Active Efforts (Lawrie, 2024, p. 24).

*(**Note**: Further recommendations are also available under the following headings: Prevention, Partnership, Participation, Placement and Connection[15]).*

The Way Forward

Aboriginal children continue to be over-represented in the child protection system and removed from their families at an alarming rate. Despite changes to legislation in response to Royal Commissions, Inquiries and Coronial Inquests, removal rates have continued to increase year after year. The evidence provided to this Inquiry shows that removal of Aboriginal children from their families does not have positive outcomes and increases the intergenerational trauma and disconnection from family, kin, community and culture.

The Aboriginal community needs to be more involved in preventing Aboriginal child removals. It is time for Aboriginal people to make decisions for Aboriginal children and their best interests.

Photo by Rendy Novantino on Unsplash.

There must be change in the way decisions are made and to centre Aboriginal people in decision-making. Families of Aboriginal children must be involved early in the process, and they must lead decision-making. Aboriginal parents must be given intensive and sustained support to prevent issues from escalating.

The Aboriginal community must be legally empowered and adequately resourced to implement a culturally appropriate care service system to keep Aboriginal children growing up safe and connected with family and culture. The future of our Aboriginal children needs to be in the hands of Aboriginal people. The South Australian Government should urgently implement the recommendations of the Inquiry (Lawrie, 2024, p. 146).

The full article is available on: https://cacyp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CACYP-Inquiry_Final-Report_14052024.pdf

[15] See: (Lawrie, 2024, pp. 25-29).

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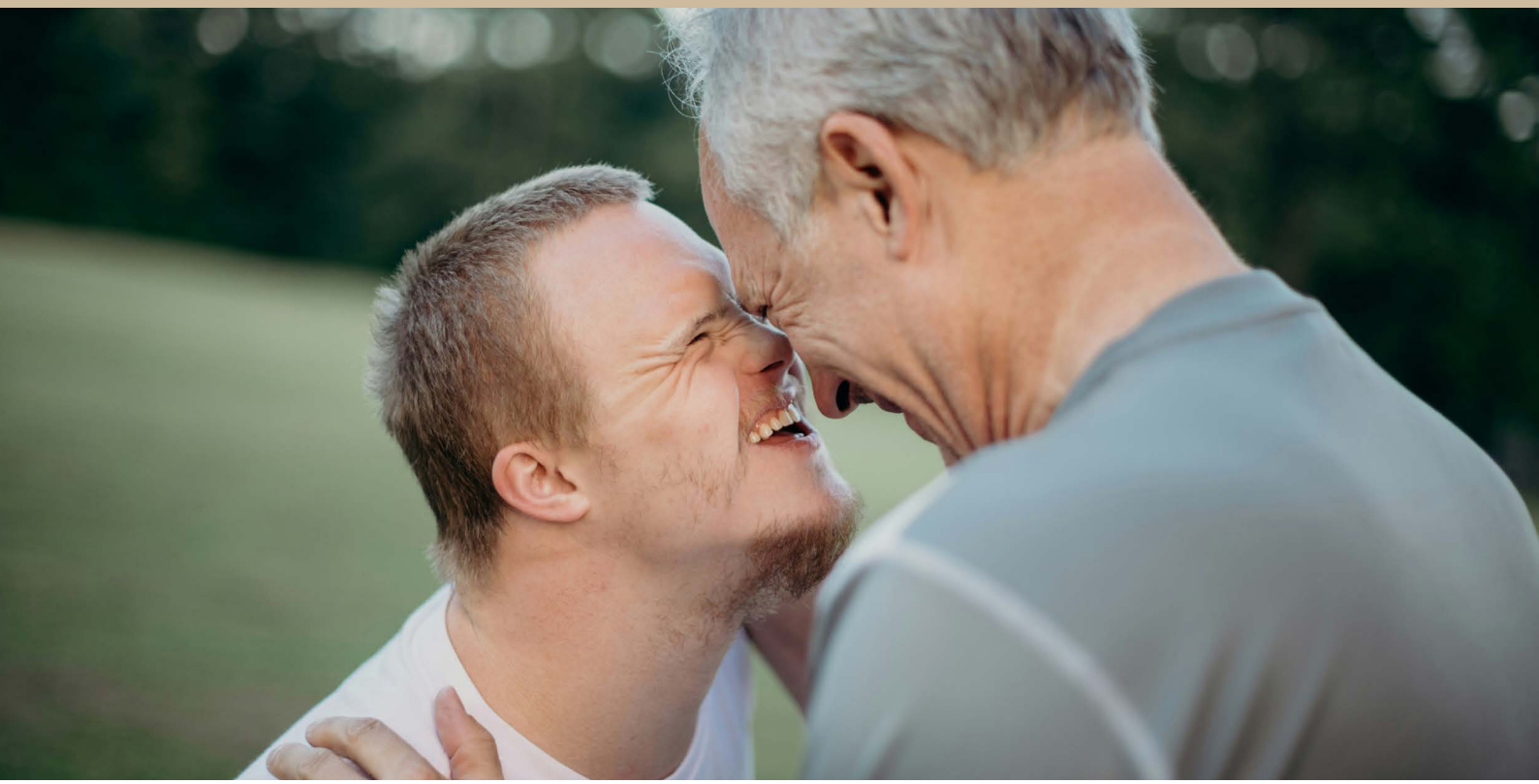

Photo by Nathan Anderson on Unsplash.

SECTOR INFORMATION/REPORTS

Barriers to Volunteering for Marginalised Groups: *First Nations Peoples, newly arrived Migrants and People with Disability.*

University of Canberra, 2023.

Executive Summary

Volunteering and volunteer involving organisations (VIO) are in challenging times. Many VIO are experiencing a shortage of volunteers who are essential to the delivery of many services and who underpin the social fabric of the Australian way of life.

This may only get more difficult with challenging economic circumstances putting increasing demands upon the VIOs at a time when there are also changing expectation around volunteering. On top of this is a string of large sport events in Australian 'Green and Gold Decade' that will need many thousands of volunteers, often drawn from the existing volunteer pool.

The University of Canberra and AMAN Consulting Pty Ltd were commissioned by Volunteering WA (on behalf of Volunteer Management Activity) to explore the barriers to volunteering for the three groups who are often underrepresented, and maybe marginalised, as providers of services in the volunteering community:

- First Nations Peoples,
- Newly arrived migrants,
- People with disability.

It must be noted that these are not three mutually exclusive groups. For example, both First Nations, and newly arrived migrants may also have a disability. While newly arrived migrants may also have lived experience of being First Nations in their home countries. So, while the report has sections for each group, the reader should also reflect upon how these insights may also apply to the other groups discussed here, and those beyond the remit of this research.

To explore the current academic knowledge in this space and to inform potential recommendations, we undertook a systematic literature review (SLR) and then semi-structured interviews with a small sample of key stakeholders across and within the three target groups. Disappointingly, there were only 62 articles internationally and over many decades that met the inclusion criteria.

- focused on the volunteer group as providers of volunteering services.
- volunteering in a formal context.
- published in peer-reviewed journals or grey literature; and,
- written in English.

Of the 61, 8 were related to First Nations volunteers, 31 with newly arrived migrants, and 22 on volunteers with disabilities. From the literature some of the barriers were common across the three groups, including.

- Volunteers' fear of rejection, so is the VIO culturally aware and safe for these groups?
- Cultural and values alignment, especially for newly arrived migrants, whose home countries may have very different cultures, social structures, and gendered roles.
- Lack of information in a format and language suitable for the target markets.
- Does the VIO have the resources (e.g., human, financial, infrastructure and knowledge) to support the needs of the volunteers?

The interview data supported the findings of the literature review and provided more current insight into the problem. It was clear that there was an interest and a willingness to be more inclusive that would be beneficial both for meeting staffing needs, but also for the customers of the VIO's services. However, as noted above, they may have resource limitations.

There are also group-specific issues. For example:

- First Nations Peoples: discrimination, mutual misunderstanding of what volunteering means to more Western-centric definitions and motivated by community-based or altruistic reasons.
- Newly arrived migrants: language, cultural differences, discrimination; economic demands in the first few years; and,
- People with disability: ableism, transport, built environment, information, and communication technology. VIOs lack of ability to adapt to the needs of people with disability.

Photo by Unseen Studio on Unsplash.

Hence, there will be a 'time and place' when it is both appropriate and inappropriate to consider collectively the volunteering interests of First Nations Peoples, newly arrived migrants, and people with disability.

VIO efforts to address and improve the volunteering rates and volunteering experiences of the three marginalised groups discussed here, should incorporate short-, medium- and long-term actions. These need to be planned, resourced, and evaluated for impact and ongoing organisational alignment.

Examples are below:

Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
Culturally relevant language and images.	Streamline unnecessary bureaucratic processes (this may benefit all in the VIO!)	Organisation Capacity Building and Cultural Literacy, and Evaluation.
Provide training programs.	Support volunteer roles with stipends where costs are a barrier.	Develop and implement newly arrived migrant policies.
Provide female-only spaces and opportunities.	Ongoing cultural awareness training that is evaluated for impact and currency.	
Build strategic relationships.	Sector wide networking and communication.	
Provide accessible opportunities to volunteer.		
Ensure volunteering work is meaningful and recognised.		

The full article is available on: https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Barriers-to-Volunteering-for-First-Nations-Peoples-Newly-Arrived-Migrants-and-People-with-Disability.pdf

Photo by Ismael Paramo on Unsplash.

Photo by Ye Jinghan on Unsplash.

SECTOR INFORMATION/REPORTS

The health and wellbeing of First Nations Younger People in Australia's prisons

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024.

This report shows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people are over-represented in Australia's prisons. First Nations people in contact with the criminal justice system often have complex health and wellbeing needs and may require access to culturally safe health care services. First Nations people in prison are often there for short periods and many enter and exit the system multiple times.

The report highlighted targeting of Throughcare services for First Nations people in prison could be enhanced by improvements in routine national reporting, including on the size and characteristics of the population entering and being released from prison.

First Nations people are over-represented among those on remand and serving short sentences and can therefore be cycling through the prison system at a higher rate. If administrative data could be collected routinely on the health of all people in prison as part of the National Prisoner Health Data Collection (NPHDC) in future, this could better inform Throughcare policy and service planning, including for First Nations people.

The full article is available on: https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/9e2c3486-1c45-40e6-883f-ed2d3e329da2/aihw-phe-342-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-first-nations-people-in-australia-s-prisons-2022.pdf?v=20240508153645&inline=true

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SECTOR INFORMATION/REPORTS

At the Precipice: *Australia's Community Sector through the Cost-of-Living Crisis: Findings from the Australian Community Sector Survey.*

Australian Council of Social Service, 2023.

This report was commissioned by the Australian Council of Social Service and the State and Territory Councils of Social Service. Information contained in it comes from 1,476 community sector staff – people who are working closely with clients and communities in organisations directly delivering services and supports - as well as peak bodies and other member-based or representative organisations.

This significant report captured their experiences through a period of converging pressures affecting clients and communities - including inadequate income support payments, rapidly escalating housing costs, a cost-of-living crisis, the continued impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, fires, and floods. As a result, few community service agencies have been able to consistently meet growing levels of need among clients and communities. This especially relates to areas of acute shortages, such as for homelessness supports, int the context of Australia's ongoing crisis of housing affordability and accessibility.

This Australian Community Sector Survey report provides a comprehensive look at the operational challenges confronting the sector, including funding, contracting and workforce issues. Service providers are facing unprecedented pressure to help growing numbers of people in need, yet resource levels remain inadequate. As a result, community organisations struggle not only to help as many people as possible, but also to plan, optimise and manage all aspects of delivering complex and essential services in a context of rising costs.

Organisational leaders and frontline staff are both concerned about how much longer this situation can continue. There is a clear and unmistakable call from survey respondents for improving the adequacy of funding, ensuring government is investing in the full cost of service delivery and ensuring the best possible outcomes for people in need.

This important review of Australia's community services sector is available on:

https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/At-the-Precipice_ACSS-2023.pdf

Photo by Nico Smit on Unsplash.

RESEARCH CORNER

Community Work Australia recognises the importance of comprehensive research relating to the community services sector and supports this through their ***Research Agenda*** (available at https://communitywork.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AJCW-Journal-v19-20.pdf pages 73-76), and through this ***Australian Journal of Community Work*** (AJCW).

This '**Research Corner**' segment of the journal will regularly highlight valuable research that is publicly available through Creative Commons licenses, in Open Access journals, or through other accessible periodicals.

Roche, S., Taylor-Zach, N., Taylor, R., & Mendes, P. (2024).

Perspectives on the ongoing impact of compulsory income management in the Northern Territory

Australian Journal of Social Issues, 2024.

Abstract

Since 2007, income support recipients in the Northern Territory (NT) have been subjected to compulsory income management (CIM), a form of welfare conditionality which continues, despite the withdrawal of CIM from other locations in Australia and research that identifies negligible benefits. Implemented with the goal of improving social well-being and health outcomes, CIM quarantines a proportion of income support payments which cannot be used to purchase alcohol, gambling, pornography and in some cases tobacco, to direct payments to priority needs of recipients and encourage socially responsible behaviour.

This article presents the perspectives of welfare sector stakeholders in the NT on the ongoing impact of CIM on income support recipients and their communities. It draws on semi-structured interviews with 26 participants with expertise across non-government service delivery, government, legal and advocacy sectors. The findings detail that CIM is considered ineffective in reducing social harms such as substance misuse, can contribute to situations of family violence, and exacerbates challenges for recipients living in regional and remote areas. It also highlights the poor compatibility of community income management in regional and remote contexts, its top-down design, and views that CIM is a form of social control and disempowerment.

Interested to find out more? The full article is available on: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/ajs4.323

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RESEARCH CORNER

Knight, J., Mulholland, K., Chang, E.P. (2024).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voices Have the Solutions to Suicide Prevention: Who's listening and who's taking action?

Lowitja Institute.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are a diverse people of great strengths, power and endurance with a profound understanding of human beings and the environment. In 2021 5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths were attributed to suicide compared to 2 per cent of non-Indigenous deaths. Suicide was the leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15-44 years.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP) is a milestone, government-funded, Aboriginal-led evidence-based initiative to reduce suicide rates. A key ai of the ATSISPEP was to provide an evidence base for culturally responsive programs and services to support suicide prevention in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and inform state and national government policies and commissioning frameworks.

In summary, the findings from the current review demonstrate the widespread uptake and influence of ATSISPEP report findings and recommendations across Primary Health Networks and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention policy and practice at local, state and national levels.

The full detailed report is available via the Lowitja Newsletter on: https://www.lowitja.org.au

Photo by Dan Meyers on Unsplash.

Guerzoni, M.A., Prehn, J., & Peacock, H. (2024).

Mothers and sportsmen: The gendered and racialized nature of role model selection for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youths

Australian Journal of Social Issues, 2024.

Abstract

This article seeks to understand who Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children select as role models, and the reasons underlying these choices. Drawing data from Wave 8 of the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children, it comprises a sample of 307 children (169 male and 138 female) aged between 10.5 and 12 years at the time of data collection. Content analysis was used to analyse survey responses regarding two questions pertaining to role models, the analytical process being underpinned by Indigenous standpoint theory.

The findings show that participants tended to select role models correlating with their gender and who were Indigenous or people of colour. For boys, most selected Indigenous sportsmen, whilst girls more evenly selected mothers, women from the entertainment industry, and sportswomen.

The reasons why these individuals were selected were similar for boys and girls: the role model's ability, mastery and/or competency in a given field. These findings are important for educators and schools in guiding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths in their educational and career choices, and for policymakers in creating campaigns and pathways into fields where Indigenous persons are underrepresented.

The full article is available on: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajs4.311

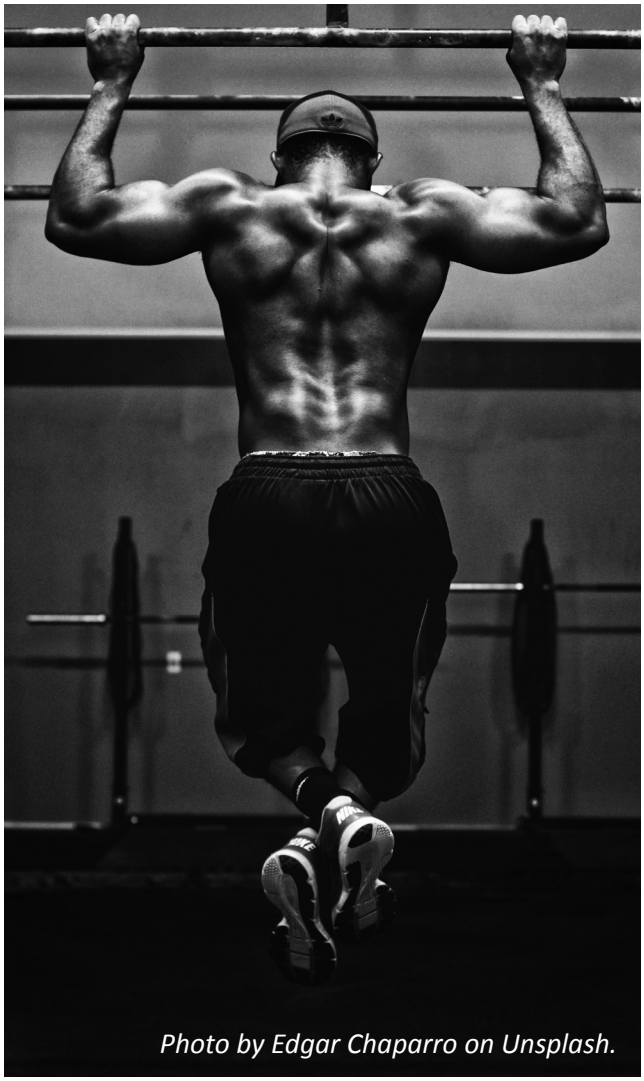

Photo by Edgar Chaparro on Unsplash.

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RESEARCH CORNER

Mosby, V. (2023).

A Grounded Theory of Living in Two Worlds: Torres Strait Islanders' Experience of Contemporary Migration

***Australian Social Work*, 76(3).**

Abstract[16]

This study explored the resettlement experiences of Torres Strait Islanders who moved to the Australian mainland. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 individuals, using a grounded theory method. Findings suggest that Torres Strait Islander contemporary out-movers are adjusting rather than assimilating to the Australian mainstream culture.

The concept of "living in two worlds" required managing the crossing between the obligations of island life and demands and expectations of the mainstream. As people made sense of their experiences, out-movers developed strategies to "manage the crossings" from one world to another- the simpler lifestyle of "island life" that offered a greater sense of certainty and familiarity, and "mainstream" which may present many challenges, competing demands and expectations.

While Torres Strait Islander out-movement is internal, there are similarities to international migration experiences, and like other internal movements, this movement tended to go unnoticed. Migration is an important area of social work practice that needs the attention of social workers, particularly with the predicted increases in out-movements that may occur in response to economic and climate-related change.

[16] NOTE: Abstract only available, not Open Access – the full research is available in the *Australian Social Work* journal.

Implications

Torres Strait Islander internal migration is absent from social work literature.

- There is a gap in knowledge of how contemporary migrants experience and make sense of life on the mainland.
- Social work can learn from this movement to prepare for further migration responding to environmental and economic imperatives, both internally and internationally.

Note: This is not an open access journal. Article can be obtained through: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0312407X.2022.2156801

Photo by Frank McKenna on Unsplash.

Hill, B., Nilson, C., Uink, B., & Fetherstone, C. (2023).

Transformation at the cultural interface: exploring the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students

***The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*. 52(2).**

Abstract

Research on transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), particularly within the context of higher education, has demonstrated the significant impact university learning can have on a wide range of cohorts across diverse earning contexts. However, the extensive body of literature pertaining to transformative learning remains largely silent on the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students and the extent to which their engagement with academia can be transformative. Nevertheless, Nakata's (2007b) cultural interface theory has shaped policy, practice and thought in Indigenous higher education, elucidating the nuances, complexities and challenges that confront Indigenous students in their journey through university.

In bringing together these two critical theories, this study investigated the journeys of three undergraduate Indigenous university students finding that university can indeed be a site of positive personal transformation. Such changes were fostered through critical peer support relationships, relationships with family and loved ones as well as a growing confidence and pride in their cultural identities. These findings have important implications for the way institutions support and teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and provides a nuanced insight into their university journeys at the cultural interface.

The full article is available on: https://ajie.atsis.uq.edu.au/ajie/article/view/656/905

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RESEARCH CORNER

McKnight, A.D.B., Probst, Y., O'Flynn, G., Tillott, S., & Standly, R.M. (2023).

Relationships are essential but not always easy: The role of methodology in embedding Aboriginal community and Country in academic research

***Health Promotion Journal of Australia,* 1-7.**

Abstract

This article is told as a story about how a project, *Strong culture, healthier lifestyles*, took steps towards decolonisation as an evolving methodological journey with Country. The story is primarily about how our methodology moved from a Western model of 'doing' research, to the research team being part of the research process, as team members with Country and the participating local community members: a methodology of partnership.

First, we provide a general overview of the initial project to set up how we came to understand its disconnection to community and Country. Second, we unpack the storying approach as methodology that is bound with the local Country: Yuin on the South Coast of New South Wales, Australia. Third, using the storying approach, we reflect through Country and the community to discover ways forward in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge partnerships. We share our story in an attempt to limit colonial practice (decolonisation) and replace it with a reculturalising approach; the re-connecting of Country as a source of interconnectedness into the research process. Country includes all the living communities of nature, and we explore how this relationship in the human element (community) impacted and developed our methodology of partnership.

The full article is available on: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hpja.781

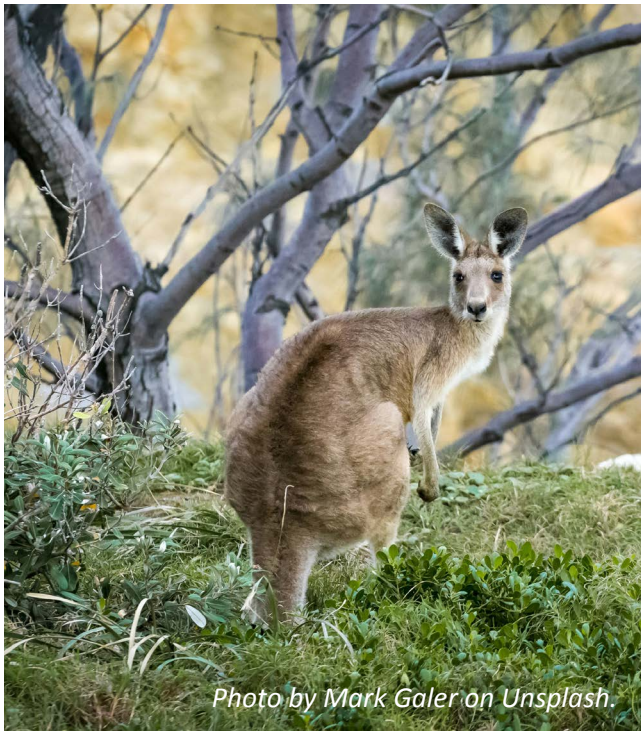


Photo by Mark Galer on Unsplash.

NCVER. (2023).

From VET to sustainable employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

By examining the personal and training characteristics associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' attainment of sustainable employment, the research aimed to determine the vocational education and training (VET) potential for enabling longer-term benefits for this cohort.

Summary of findings

This analysis shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who had commenced a VET program had an increased likelihood of achieving sustainable employment when compared with those who had not commenced VET. Outcomes were similar irrespective of whether the student had completed or not completed a VET program. Several characteristics were shown to influence the likelihood of sustainable employment, including socioeconomic status, apprenticeship/traineeship status, provider type and qualification level.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who commenced a VET program in 2016 had an increased likelihood of achieving sustainable employment compared with those who had not commenced a VET program in 2016. The outcomes were similar irrespective of whether students had completed (19% more likely) or not completed (21% more likely) a VET program, suggesting that VET participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is important.

The following personal and training characteristics had the strongest effects on the likelihood of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples achieving sustainable employment:

- Those residing in the least disadvantaged areas (high score on Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage) were up to 320% more likely to achieve sustainable employment than those residing in areas of high disadvantage.
- Those who were an apprentice or trainee were 150% more likely to achieve sustainable employment compared with non-apprentices or trainees, noting that employment is an inherent element of an apprenticeship or traineeship.
- Students who were enrolled at a TAFE (technical and further education) institute or university were up to 30% more likely to achieve sustainable employment than those enrolled at a private training provider or community education provider.
- Those who were enrolled in a Certificate IV were 100% more likely to achieve sustainable employment compared with those enrolled in a Certificate II or Certificate III.
- Students aged 15—19 years old were more likely to achieve sustainable employment than those in older age groups.

Full report available on: https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/from-vet-to-sustainable-employment-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples

Note: There is also a Support Document that provides details of data extraction, transformation, and methodology.

NOTICE BOARD

Community Work in Theory and Practice:

Cooperation within a mutually respectful alliance.

Borderland Cooperative (NFP) and their associated New Community journal have long been, and continues to be, a friend and supporter of Community Workers Australia and the Australian Journal of Community Work (AJCW).

Not only does Borderlands identify needs, develop and deliver social and ecological justice projects, but they also present a regular radio program that explores and analysis's many important issues – including '**Think Again**'.

Think Again

https://www.3cr.org.au/thinkagain

Friday 10:00am to 10:30am
(repeated: Monday 6:30am to 7:00 am)

Photo by Kit on Unsplash.

Think Again (presented by the Borderlands Cooperative) offers weekly Conversations and reflections about current events, trends and public pronouncements on contemporary and emerging issues.

The show moves beyond what we read and hear via the public and 'social' media, to invite alternative possibilities to guide our thinking, living and organising.

All past programs are accessible via podcast apps, or the 3CR website.

Independent, community-owned media is unique, precious and a necessary element of an effective, functioning community.

Where else can you hear Palestinian viewpoints, anti-nuclear issues, fascist analysis and the amazing raft of music and voices present on 3CR?

Borderlands Coop,
30A Pickett Street Footscray (Vic) 3011
Ph: 03 9819 3239
Mob: 0466 123 766

Call for articles for the next AJCW, Vol.5, 2026

Thank you for accessing this current issue of the Australian Journal of Community Work. We are now accepting articles for the next edition in the following areas:

Peer-Reviewed - Community Work

- Academic papers, for double-blind peer-review- up to 6,000 words.

Non Peer-Reviewed - From the Field

- Practitioner's/organisational - stories relating to community work experiences, employment, activities, pathways etc. – great way to start writing for journal publications - from 1,000 to 4,000 words.

Non Peer-Reviewed - From the Study Desk

- Current student's stories of their study, activities, placements, career paths etc. – another great way to gain experience writing for publications - from 1,000 to 3,000 words.

Book Reviews

- Honest/analytical reviews of books expressing your insights, making comparisons etc. - up to 1,000 words.

*This **First Call** for articles for the next edition is now open for submission until the 1st April, 2025 and, based on response, a Second Call may be called to close by the 31st July 2025.*

Examples of relevant topics can include:
Definitions of community work; social justice; ethical practice; grassroots approaches to community work; professional development; burnout; evaluation; education; rural and remote divide; for profit and not-for-profit service provision, and the impact of public policy on practice.

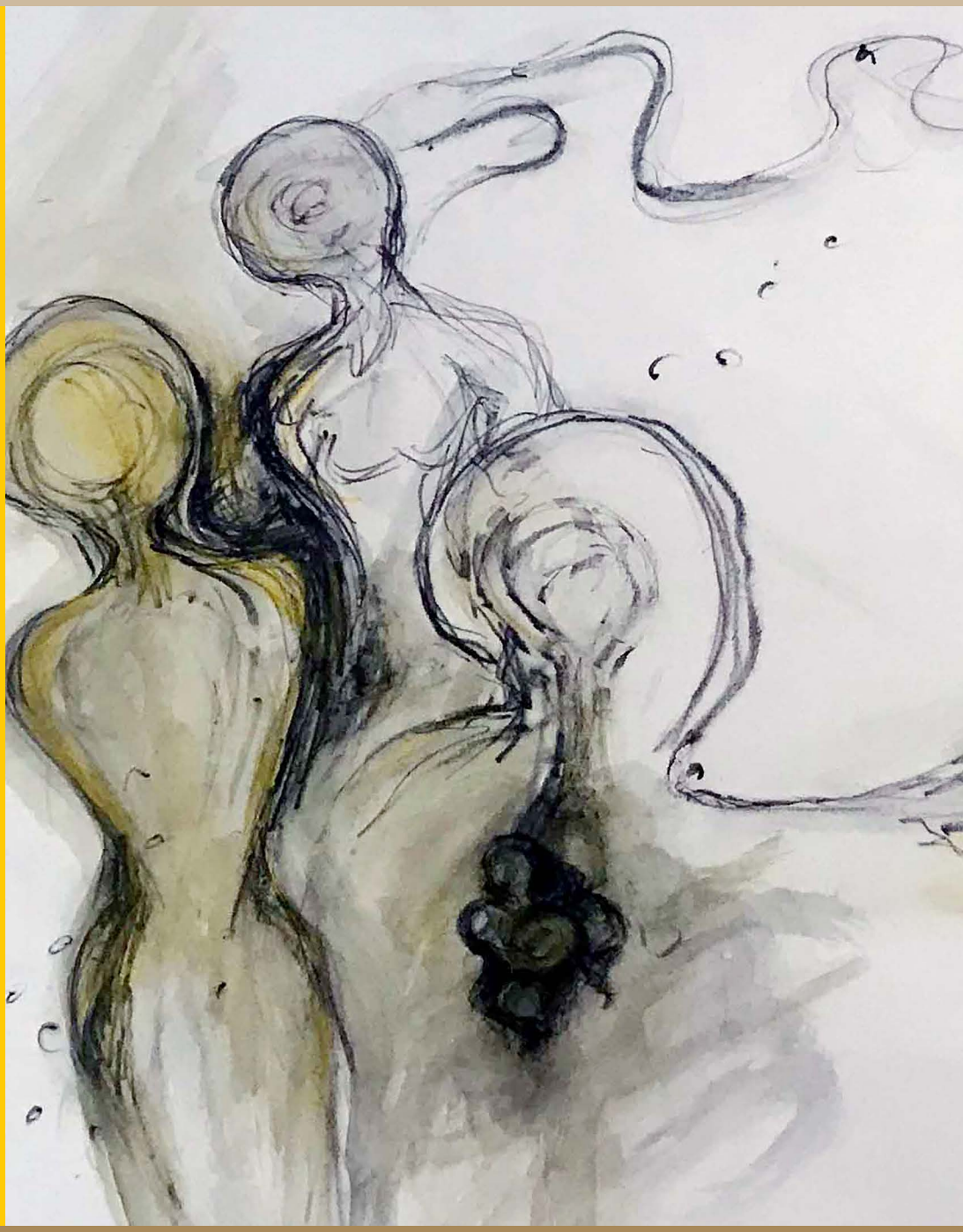
Examples of relevant service fields can include:
Community development; youth work; volunteering; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, migrant and refugee specific services; aged care; disability services; mental health; alcohol and other drugs; housing and homelessness; family and children's services, and domestic and family violence.

Further information:
https://communitywork.org.au/ajcw

Enquiries: Dr Anne Jennings (Editor):
ajcw@communitywork.org.au

communitywork.org.au/ajcw

All correspondence to be emailed to **The Editor** at:
ajcw@communitywork.org.au



AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY WORK

THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY WORK STIMULATES DISCUSSION, DEBATE, AND RESEARCH ON ALL ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY WORK.

AJCW is currently published annually, however we are moving towards publishing semi-annually. Submitted articles to be posted on the AJCW/COMMUNITY WORK AUSTRALIA website once they have been finalised, prior to publication of the full edition.

Community Work Australia