



Submission of the
Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council

To the House of Representatives Inquiry into Education in Remote and Complex Environments



Jane Barnes and Shantaya Barnes
Secondary school graduation 2019

“Education is the key. Young people can become leaders and teach other people. Young people need to respect the culture and ensure two-way learning. We need to keep two ways culture, don't let it go because of education, you've got to still have your culture”.

Daisy Ward 2012 (Former NPY Women's Council Director).

**NPY Women's Council would like to acknowledge the contribution from NPY Empowered Communities Secretariat – NPY Region into this submission.

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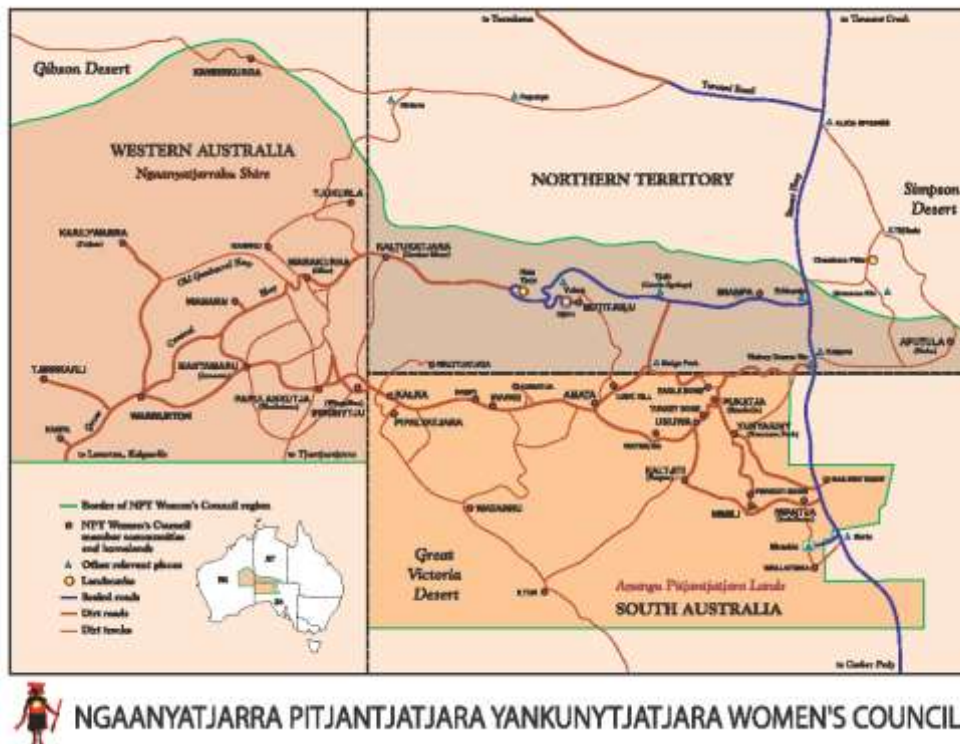
NPY Women's Council - History and overview

Our purpose is to support all Anangu, especially women and children, to have a good life, guided by culture and sound governance, through the collective agency of women.

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council is led by women's law, authority and culture to deliver health, social and cultural services for all Anangu.

NPY Women's Council nurtures strong Anangu voices and solutions for the region to provide better outcomes for future generations. We are advocates, capacity builders and service providers. The way we work is innovative and unique, and places our people and culture at the heart of what we do.

NPYWC is governed and directed by Anangu (Aboriginal) women across 26 desert communities in the remote cross-border regions of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory (See map below).



NPY Women's Council deliver the following services:

- Youth Services
- Children & Family Well-being Services
- Tjungu Aged & Disability Services
- Domestic & Family Violence Services
- Tjanpi Desert Weavers Social Enterprise
- Ngangkari Traditional Healing

For more information re: NPYWC services - <https://www.npywc.org.au/what-we-do/>

NPYWC key achievements - <https://www.npywc.org.au/about/key-achievements/>

NPY Women's Council Youth Service

The NPY Women's Council Youth Service was established 1999, in response to the devastating impact of petrol sniffing amongst young people in the region and the subsequent incidence of morbidity and youth suicide. Today, the Youth Service employs over 60 people and provides remote-based community youth programs to 13 remote communities, as well as specialised project support for early intervention, education, research and cultural maintenance activities.

The Youth Service works to encourage and support all young people in the NPY region, especially those who are at risk, facing problems or looking to make changes in their lives. The Youth Service offers a range of programs to support young people to lead safe and healthy lives. The service offers fun, safe, culturally relevant activities that support the development of young people and their communities.



Youth program bush trip - Pukatja, South Australia

The Youth Service helps young people achieve their goals and thrive. We achieve this by offering:

Case Management: we offer family-oriented case management support. We work collaboratively with families, key community members, specialists and other NPY Women's Council Services to provide support, care and resources. We take referrals from family, friends and service providers and from young people themselves.

Recreation and Diversion: we offer fun, safe, culturally relevant activities that support the development of young people and their communities. We also offer targeted activities such as camps, bush trips, and young women's and young men's programs.

Education and Leadership: We nurture future leaders through education and leadership programs as well as individual support. To help young people in the NPY region dream big and overcome challenges, we support them to access education, training, and employment opportunities. This includes helping young people access boarding and community schools, and leadership programs. We also prioritise development of local staff to deliver the youth programs.

Advocacy and Collaboration: we are a voice for young people in the NPY region on many issues including; youth justice, substance abuse prevention, youth development, mental health, service provision and education. We work with government, communities and other service providers to support good change for young people.

Specialist project areas include:

- Community research in partnership with the University of NSW
- Kulintja Palyaringkunyjtaku – education and early intervention
- Boarding School Program
- Education Advocacy
- Young women’s teaching camps

Response to the Parliamentary Inquiry Terms of Reference

It is the intention of this submission to highlight key areas that relate specifically to the experience of young people and their families regarding education and employment from a remote Aboriginal community perspective. After 39 years (inclusive of 20 years Youth Service delivery), the NPY Women's Council believes it is well placed to provide input across the tristate cross border region of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Education in Remote and Complex Environments for consideration.

NPY Women's Council members, Directors and other key community members, including young people consistently raise their concerns with us about a lack of educational outcomes and employment opportunities. We hear this through our AGM's, community meetings, case management activities, and interagency meetings as well as by young people themselves through the course of our day-to-day work. Remote Aboriginal (Anangu) youth need a voice. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar AO states;

"When our voices are absent from the frameworks made for us, it undermines us"¹.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are identified as one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of people in Australia. There are endless reports that recognise the status of Indigenous Australians and the poor social determinants they face. Recently the Prime Minister, Honorable Scott Morrison MP stated in his Closing the Gap address to the Federal Parliament;

"Last year, I opened this address with what I believe is a national truth and a national shame: that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia today do not have the same opportunities as all other children growing up in Australia. They never have in Australia. Never".²

Mr Morrison goes on to state that alongside employment and feeling safe at home, generational change occurs by *"Ensuring young children are healthy, in school and well educated to realise their potential"*³. Our members and Directors agree, however they recognise and advocate that mainstream schooling is not the panacea to achieving these outcomes. Critical to a child's education, health and sense of identity and potential is opportunities for two-way learning; learning Aboriginal culture as well as having a good mainstream education. If embraced, these can be complimentary to one another, not in opposition.

It is within this context that NPY Women's Council seeks to highlight the need for substantial changes to educational opportunities for young Anangu to develop themselves. If we continue on the current path, young people's future education and employment prospects will continue to be poor.

¹ June Oscar, Key note speech, NPY Women's Council Symposium, February 2020

² Scott Morrison, Closing the Gap speech to Parliament, February 2020

³ Ibid

Table #1 - Relevant data for the NPY region

5,276 Anangu live in the NPY region (ABS Census Data, 2016) half are under the age of 25

93% of Anangu speak their local language at home, English as a second, third or fourth language (ABS Census Data, 2016)

There are 250+ employers on the NPY Lands (Empowered Communities, NPY Service audit 2018)

Only 56% of young Anangu in the region annually attend remote schools every day (the lowest range was 29%) compared to 70% Indigenous students and 91% non-Indigenous students across the Northern Territory (NPYWC internal audit, 2016 & My Schools data)

Only 18% of young people aged 17 – 24 have finished year 12 in the NPY region (ABS Census data, 2016)

In 2016, 13% of young people (<25 years) in the NPY Region were working or studying, and 63% of people aged 20-64 are on Centrelink benefits (ABS Census data 2016)

35% Aboriginal people living 'very remotely' are employed vs. 85% non-Aboriginal (Report on CDP by the Parliament of Australia, 2017)

Of 50 young people recently surveyed by Empowered Communities in 2018, 74% stated that they want a job after school, and identified the need for better support to realise these ambitions

According to Mission Australia's Youth Survey, 2016, almost 1 in 4 young people in regional and remote Australia has a probable serious mental illness.

Terms of Reference (TOR)

TOR - Key barriers to the education journey, including the effects of environment

The previous relevant data in Table #1 provides some contextual information regarding education and employment in the NPY region. Whilst we have this data, there remains a significant gap in timely and relevant information of what is occurring currently. Data collections are inconsistent across the state and territory borders. In the absence of quality data, we have gathered anecdotal information and evidence from young people, their families and our Youth Workers, who live in these remote communities, about the lack of education and employment support and opportunities for young people to reach their potential.

This evidence identifies a range of complexities that influence remote school attendance including, but not limited to:

- Bullying
- Greater need for mental health support
- 2 States, 1 Territory = 3 different education systems and the inequity of resources
- Lack of structured pathways to higher education and employment
- Experienced teaching staff with community development skills

Bullying

One in four young people across Australia experience bullying every few weeks or more⁴. Our experience working with young people in the NPY region suggests that bullying is one of the top reasons for non-attendance at school. This is inclusive of bullying on line, peer-to-peer and outside the school gates. Young people continually inform us through our case management support and referrals for boarding school, that bullying in all forms remains a key concern and barrier to their education. NPY Women's Council have committed to responding to this feedback by researching this further and exploring effective models to tackle bullying. However, this is not enough. Mission Australia recommend that "whole of school strategies are needed to prevent and respond to bullying, including classroom work on building empathy and inclusiveness, restorative practices and building resilience. Strategies should be co-designed and elaborated with students and parents"⁵. Education bodies need to take the lead in developing this, supported by key agencies and communities.

Greater need for mental health support

Whilst this inquiry is about education in remote and complex environments and not specifically mental health, it is relevant to draw attention to the fact that without good social, emotional and mental health support, young people will struggle to be ready to learn, thus affecting their school attendance. Every year the incidence of young Australians experiencing psychological distress continues to rise, with more than 75% of mental health issues developing before the age of 25. For young people who were surveyed between the ages of 15 – 19 years;

- 1 in 4 experienced psychological distress = 24.2%

⁴ Mission Australia, 7 Year Mental Health Report 2012-2018

⁵ Ibid

- Young women were twice as likely to experience psychological distress = 30%
- This statistic was higher again for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people experiencing psychological distress totaling 31.9% (8.5% higher compared with their non-Indigenous peers)⁶

Research by the University of Western Australia, found a correlation between poor mental health and lowered school attendance. The research concluded that, “Improving prevention, early intervention, treatment and management of mental disorders may lead to significant improvements in school attendance”⁷.

There remains significant gaps in mental health support for remote youth. There is no dedicated youth mental health service across the NPY region except for the Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in the APY South Australian lands, which is tremendously under resourced. Young people and families need better support. They currently have minimal to no options available to them. Families are dealing with this in isolation.

NPY Women’s Council supports Mission Australia’s recommendation that initiatives such as early intervention support for families, e-mental health services and a universal prevention platform to address mental health support, preferably delivered by schools would be beneficial in addressing this issue.

2 States, 1 Territory = 3 different education systems and the inequity of resourcing

As the major provider of youth services across the tri state region, we understand first hand that there is great disparity between the available resources across the three states and territory, resulting in educational opportunities for young people differing significantly. For example, in South Australia APY lands there are vocational providers, connection with the Wiltja Anangu boarding school in Adelaide and the Umuwa Trade Training Centre, as well as flexible learning options (FLO) program. This is in addition to the primary and secondary schooling available. Apart from primary and secondary schooling, these additional resources just mentioned do not exist in the Ngaanyatjarra lands and the Southern NT remote communities that are within the NPY region.

Anangu do not traditionally identify via the standard geographical boundaries imposed on their environment. They relate to one another via language groups, tjurkurpa (story) and inma (dancing and singing). Consequently, Anangu youth do not conveniently stick to the mainstream tristate borders. We acknowledge the difficulties this presents for teaching staff in this environment. However, as young people move through these borders, they encounter different curricula, methods of teaching and variable support structures. If we are to achieve better outcomes for young people in this region, then there needs to be a flexible and consistent approach across the tristate region. This is not currently the case; consequently, there are often significant gaps in young people’s education

⁶ Mission Australia 7 Year Mental Health Report 2012-2018

⁷ J. Reid, “Mental health impacting student outcomes, study shows”, The Educator, 21 December 201, <https://www.theeducatoronline.com/k12/news/mental-health-impacting-student-outcomes-study-shows/245005> (accessed March 10, 2020)

due to moving between South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory e.g. once enrolled in one state or territory students are then unable to access alternate education in another.

Lack of structured pathways to higher education and employment

The incentives to remain at school for the majority of young Australians is not the same for Anangu youth in our region. Many young people have told us that they believe there is nothing for them beyond school. The data outlined in Table #1 reinforces this experience, as there is great disparity between # of people employed vs. # of employers throughout the NPY lands. In 2016, only 13% of young people under the age of 25 were working or studying and yet in 2018 we know that there were approximately 250+ employers on the lands.

Given we know that young people want to work and/or explore further study, we have to ask ourselves why there is significantly low rates of employment and accessing of higher education. One reason that is obvious to those who support young people is that there is limited (if any) support during the transition from school to work / higher education. This issue will be explored further in the following TOR “Successful pathways to ensure students have the knowledge and skills they need to enter further education and the workforce” (Pg. 14).

Experienced teaching staff with community development skills

Government incentives currently favour new graduates with limited experience to come and teach in remote communities. Of course, these teachers have a lot to offer, however there needs to be experienced teachers to promote innovate models to engage young people. Experienced staff are required to have the confidence and skills to build relationships with parents and the broader community, acknowledging that in this environment, teacher’s roles are not limited to the classroom setting.

Anangu teachers and staff are essential to support the retention of Anangu youth in schools. We know that having positive role models is highly beneficial to assisting young people to aspire to reach their goals and potential. This is explored further in the need for bi-lingual learning and in the next TOR - the role of culture and country in a child’s learning. The remote education setting needs to be more community orientated, generating positive engagement and experience for young people, families and the broader community.

Recommendations:

- Education providers lead the research, co-design and implementation of anti-bullying initiatives that are evidence based, culturally appropriate and relevant to each community setting. Local service providers to commit to supporting these initiatives.
- The provision of place based mental health services for young people in remote communities needs to be fully resourced, along with a review of how currently funded services can provide better on the ground presence and support for teachers, young people and families.
- E-mental health resource developed for young people in the NPY region in local languages to allow for greater accessibility and relevance.
- A firm commitment from government for structured transition from school to work pathways and better resourcing for vocational pathways for young people across the tri state region.
- Develop a partnership with NT, SA and WA Departments of Education to pilot a cross boarder educational agreement
- Fund brokers in each region to support transition pathways from school to work / higher learning
- Better incentives for experienced teaching staff to work within a community development model to develop education curriculum in a way that is responsive to community needs and learning styles.
- Secondment opportunities should be made available for experienced teachers to undertake remote placements, and improve the quality of education delivered

TOR - The role of culture and country in a child's learning

Former Director and current School Improvement Coordinator of the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC) on South Australia's APY Lands, Katrina Tjitayi, tells us that traditional learning is passed from families to children and that children can't 'find their future' without family. Furthermore, only families can help children to feel secure and open to learning. She argues that current schooling systems do not involve families in their children's learning. This further reduces schools' capacity to be culturally accessible and is creating a gap in children's spirits. Connection to family, land, language and culture is the foundation for all Anangu learning.⁸

Therefore, the role of culture and country through a commitment to bi-lingual learning is essential to young people's learning and development. This along with relevant role models are key to supporting young people's successful journey through education.

Bi-lingual learning

The recent documentary, 'In My Blood It Runs', features the life of Arrrente/Garrwa child, Djujan Hoosan and his family, set in Alice Springs. It highlights the failings of the current education system for First Nations children. He went on to become the youngest ever person ever to address the United Nations Human Rights Council speaking on the rights of First Nations children. In his statement to the United Nations, Djujan spoke of his people's dreams, hopes and rights, and the need for Indigenous youth to learn their history, language and culture from their elders. The documentary was filmed over three years, with Djujan's grandmother Carol, speaking to the film's key issue, education. It features scenes where she takes Djujan and the other children to her Mpweringke Anapipe, Sandy Bore homelands, and insists they speak in Arrrente language. She wants Indigenous kids to grow up learning both ways; ***"White people educate our kids in the way they want them to be educated. But we need them to speak their language so they can carry on their language. We want our kids to grow up learning both ways"***.

The prioritisation of a Western-model of education is a key barrier for children and young people to learn. UNESCO International evidence states, "When taught first in their own languages, children learn better, are more self-confident and transfer their literacy and numeracy skills to additional languages. Children who start formal education in a second or foreign language are much more likely to experience frustration and failure, resulting in higher dropout rates for these children."⁹

When students are not learning in their first language, they are not able to engage as successfully in learning. This is reinforced by research undertaken by the Global Partnership for Education, who found that *"some children do succeed, but there is the risk of negative effects whereby children fail to become linguistically competent members of their families and communities and lose the ability to connect with their cultural heritage"*¹⁰.

Young Anangu in the NPY region grow up with English as a second, third or sometimes fourth language. Bi-lingual education is not valued highly enough by governments and policy makers across the country.

⁸ Empowered Communities, 2018. Red Dirt- Red carpet: A new education path for Anangu in the NPY Lands

⁹ UNESCO 2012

¹⁰ Global Partnership for Education, 'Children Learn Better In Their Mother Tongue' (accessed March 3, 2020)

Consequently, students and families often have to navigate these systems in English, which is their second and/or third languages. As a result, organisations like NPY Women's Council experiences a high demand for support to assist families with advocacy in all aspects of education.

Role models

We all know that relevant role models are important to provide children and young people with a vision and hope for their future. In Australia, media promotion of relevant role modelling for Indigenous Youth is often limited to sports and recreation. With the right investment, we have seen firsthand the positive impacts that local role models have on young people's engagement in education and employment via our Anangu employment program.

Currently, the NPY Women's Council Youth Service have 58% Anangu employment, which is increasing each year at a steady rate. Young people often feed back to us that they aspire to be youth workers just like the Anangu Youth Workers employed. An example of this is Lydia Ward and Tanella West, currently employed as Anangu Youth Workers in the remote community of Kiwirrkurra. When asked what she really liked about being a Youth Worker, Lydia responded with;

“Working with kids, learning new things, we remember what it was like to be young and having other Anangu staff to help us”.

She further describes how this helps the kids she works with now:

“Because we are local, we understand our community - our culture and language (Pintupi) so this helps with the kids....we have also been in their shoes and grown up just like them so that is something that makes our relationship with the kids strong already”.

See the article about Lydia and Tanella's story below.



From Kiwirrkurra Community to boarding school and back

From one Australia's most remote and isolated communities to the bustling city, Lydia Ward and Tanella West made a brave and giant leap that has inspired them to support youth in their home community of Kiwirrkurra.

Located in the Gibson Desert, Kiwirrkurra is home to the Pintupi people, including the Pintupi 9, Australia's last family of nomadic Aboriginal people who only made contact with white settlement in 1984. Lydia Ward is the daughter of one of the Pintupi 9.

Both Lydia and Tanella were encouraged by their family to attend boarding school. For some Anangu youth, boarding school is a good education option providing a wide range of learning and social experiences. NPY Women's Council's Youth Service's Boarding School Program supports interested young people and their families to access boarding school programs.

Starting at boarding school was a big adjustment; Lydia's first day at La Salle College was **"the scariest moment of my life"**.

"When I got there I was feeling shy around them other white fella students but then the next day they taught me to be brave and happy." Lydia said.

Last year, Lydia completed year 12 at La Salle College in Perth. Completing year 12 is a massive achievement for remote community students who may have to overcome significant cultural and language barriers to engage with the school system. The NPY Women's Council Boarding School program supports students in their journey ensuring they are equipped practically and emotionally to engage with their new school setting.

On returning home to Kiwirrkurra, both Tanella and Lydia approached the NPY Women's Council Youth Service about a job. Lydia and Tanella are now employed as Anangu Youth Workers with NPY Women's Council Youth Service. They facilitate programs that support the development of young people in their community.

Finally, they both reflect on the importance of their role as Anangu Youth Workers and how they have become role models for the next generation.

"Because we are local, we understand our community, our culture and language, this helps with the kids, we have also been in their shoes and grown up just like them so that is something that makes our relationship with the kids strong already."

Recommendations

- Bilingual learning to be part of the core curriculum.
- Commitment to meaningfully employ Anangu staff as role models in schools.
- Provide opportunities for learning on country, outside of the traditional classroom setting. Anangu teachers and staff to be given the role of facilitating this learning that meets both needs.

TOR - Successful pathways to ensure students have the knowledge and skills they need to enter further education and the workforce

TOR - Innovative approaches to workforce, including recruitment, professional learning, retention and support, and lessons from communities that could be more generally applied

Whilst it is often hard to gauge the exact issues that affect young people in each community, there is anecdotal and informal pathways in which feedback gathered provides a clear understanding of what works and what needs improvement. Young people tell us that access to meaningful opportunities to gain on the job learning and work experience are lacking.

In 2018/2019, NPY Empowered Communities Secretariat embarked on an informal survey of young people regarding barriers and enablers to accessing employment (See Empowered Communities submission to this inquiry for further details). Information gathered from young people identified the following:

- A lack of work readiness and life skills i.e. confidence to manage oneself in the workplace, communications with supervisors / colleagues, attendance at meetings and how to conduct yourself in a different language
- Lack of professional development, including training and support opportunities
- Family issues, particularly for young women experiencing domestic and family violence
- A need for greater ongoing support and mentoring in the workplace
- Geographic isolation and lack of opportunities for employment in remote areas
- Financial literacy

There are currently limited pathways available to young people to further their education and enter the workforce across the NPY tri state region, and yet there are over 250+ employers on the lands. The only pathway current that NPY Women's Council are aware of is with the Ngaanyatjarra Lands Schools who have converted a teaching position into a school-to-work transition support or 'pathways' role. This teacher works across all nine campuses of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands schools; organising work

exposure trips to Yulara, Kalgoorlie and Perth for the secondary students. They are also developing partnerships with local employers in the remote communities for work experience opportunities.

There are other innovative approaches designed and implemented in regards to connecting with educational opportunities and employment. Such initiatives as those of the NPY Women's Council, NPY Empowered Communities Secretariat, Regional Anangu Service Aboriginal Corporation (RASAC), Central Land Council (CLC) to name a few. It is important to highlight that these are Aboriginal organisations and/or organisations working closely with Aboriginal leaders to develop targeted, place-based programs that support the needs and interests of Anangu in this region.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

NPY Women's Council - Kungka Career Conference (KCC)

The Kungka Career Conference is an initiative of NPY Women's Council. There have been nine conferences since 1997, bringing together 100+ young women each conference to participate in a locally designed and delivered, culturally relevant program led by local leaders and senior community members. The aim of each conference is to better equip young Indigenous women to make informed decisions about their future by promoting education, training and employment opportunities, and culturally appropriate leadership and life-skills.

Over the 3-day conference, participants hear from Indigenous role models, local education and training providers, and participate in hands-on workshops aimed at building resilience, leadership and life skills. Supported by schools, service providers and community leaders, it nurtures ongoing pathways through education, training and employment. Many participants have gone on to work in their communities, some in management positions and others in the caring industry.



Kungka Career Conference participants

NPY Women's Council Boarding School Program

If you looked at the data regarding school attendance and listen to the rhetoric, you might assume that remote Indigenous communities do not value education. We know firsthand however, that this is not the case. Traditional owners in our region have prioritised education as one of their eight priority areas, and made available funds through the Uluru Kata Tjuta Rent money scheme for NPY Women's Council Youth Service to establish this program. The pilot project commenced in July 2018, to support

young people and their families who were interested in attending Boarding School, and since then we have supported 23 young people from the three remote communities and have a further 43 on the waiting list.

We provide case management support, advice, as well as practical and financial assistance, coordinating logistics and assist families to maintain contact with their children while at boarding school. We have been able to streamline processes between scholarship providers, boarding schools and Abstudy and advocate with young people and their families to make access easier. Our service has also developed a boarding school resource, which has been widely used by varying agencies and education departments to support young people and their families when making decisions about boarding school. We are also working at a strategic level to influence policy reform such as the development of boarding school standards for remote youth as well as advocating for equitable access to education with a strong focus on boarding school as a practical choice for young people.

The Case study below provides a real life story from one of our boarding school students, highlighting the level of resourcing that is required from NPY Women’s Council and the family to support a young person attending boarding school:



A grandmother, Mary*, from an NPY Women’s Council community approached staff (Project officer and youth worker) to enquire about boarding school for her 16-year-old grandchild, Millie*. Mary told staff that Millie was a smart girl, but she had missed two years of school, and was in a relationship with a young man who had a history of domestic violence. She was very engaged in our general youth program, and often took a lead with young children attending programs. The principal at the local school felt that boarding school was a good option for her, and it would benefit her educational opportunities.

We assisted Millie and Mary to apply for the chosen boarding school. The first challenge was getting ABSTUDY approved. Mary was working and needed to prove her income. This required a tax return and our team worked closely with Money Mob in the APY Lands to assist. Mary was also partnered

with Paul who lived in another community. He also needed to provide proof of income. We had to liaise with offices in other communities to get paperwork completed. Once processed, there were further issues with ABSTUDY as Millie was applying for an interstate boarding school and the interstate travel wasn't approved. We worked with Indigenous Support staff at Centrelink to appeal the decision eventually got approval. Consequently, Millie missed the orientation at boarding school and was not able to start until late in term. When Millie and Mary were finally able to travel to the boarding school, a car in Alice Springs hit Mary as they were travelling through. Mary ended up in hospital and NPY Women's Council took responsibility for Millie's care, organising emergency accommodation and after hours support.

Millie finally made her way to start boarding school later than planned, however she was excited to be embarking on her new journey. Throughout the year, Millie had close family members pass away, but was determined to complete Year 12. Late 2019, Millie graduated, having attained a Certificate II in Leadership and addressed her entire school during the graduation celebrations. Mary and her Uncle were there to see her graduate. They were so proud of her. Millie now resides back with her family, and has started working at the aged care and nursing facility in her home community.

(*Names changed for confidentiality purposes).

NPY Women's Council education support - University of Adelaide – Marni Wingku Program

In November 2019, NPY Women's Council Youth Service undertook a University Exposure visit for 11 young people from 3 communities across the NPY region. The purpose of the visit was to provide an opportunity for students from remote communities to see what University life is like and what it is like to study there. The visit was coordinated with the University of Adelaide who run an annual university experience for Indigenous students called Marni Wingku.

Students travelled from the remote communities of Irrunytju, Amata and Pukatja into Alice Springs before flying altogether to Adelaide. For some young people this was their first time in a plane and in a capital city. There were three Anangu Youth Workers travelling with the students. It was a great opportunity for them to support the young people and to learn about university for themselves.

The trip began with a warm welcome at the Adelaide airport by Adelaide University staff who took us to the accommodation near the beach. Here we met other students who had travelled from other regional areas. After settling in, there was a presentation from university staff about what to expect at university and all the support that is available.

The next day was at Wirrtu Yarl'u, the Aboriginal Education Unit at the university, with sessions across the different faculties that showcased those areas of study. This included science, physics, engineering and arts, among many others. The final day was a tour of Adelaide oval where the students felt what it was like to be an AFL player running out onto the oval. It was a fitting end to a big week.

The trip was not only beneficial to the young people who attended but also to the Anangu staff who were able to learn about university. This was a great trip and something NPYWC Youth Service wants to continue to develop and run in the coming years.



Young people and NPY Women's Council Youth Staff at University of Adelaide 2019

NPY Women's Council Youth Service and Rekindle Youth Program, Bangarra Dance Company

In 2014, 2017 and 2018 NPY Women's Council Youth Service worked with Bangarra Dance Company's Rekindle Youth Program. Rekindling's vision is to inspire pride, kinship and a sense of strength in young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders through a series of dance residencies with secondary school-aged students. These workshops were well attended with forty-eight young people from nine remote communities coming together to learn contemporary and traditional dancing and singing. The workshops were supported by nine senior women, as well as eighteen Bangarra Dancers. NPY Women's Council linked the young people in with the National Indigenous Training Academy to support their exposure to local employment initiatives.



Young Aboriginal men and Bangarra dancers learning contemporary and traditional dancing



Senior women and NPY Women’s Council Director, Rene Kulitja teaching traditional inma (dance) to Bangarra dancers and local young women.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO EMPLOYMENT

Regional Anangu Services Aboriginal Corporation (RASAC)

RASAC have two main areas of employment for Anangu, which are (1) Municipal Services and (2) Community Night Patrols. RASAC teams work with a pool of local workers in each community. Workers can be flexible and cover for each other. Teams can sometimes cover for other communities’ teams, for example during sorry business. RASAC incorporates accredited training for Anangu where possible to align with work requirements and improve future employment opportunities, including

- Literacy & Numeracy support, provided through TAFE SA Community Lecturers. Workers attend in work time to get literacy and numeracy coaching, working with RASAC workplace forms and requirements, and WHS training presentations in Pitjantjatjara
- On the Job Training for RASAC Core Business areas – engaging Anangu in a broad range of work tasks to build their foundation work skills and experience
- Work Health & Safety (WHS) and Community Patrol training translated into Pitjantjatjara with spoken word narrations
- WHS risk assessments and other workplace forms - modified using symbols and pictures to enable Anangu with low English literacy to complete their work responsibilities
- Provision of support staff for RASAC training – e.g., providing interpreter and classroom assistance for Anangu undertaking TAFE Workshops for Certificate II in Community Services.

Central Land Council (CLC)

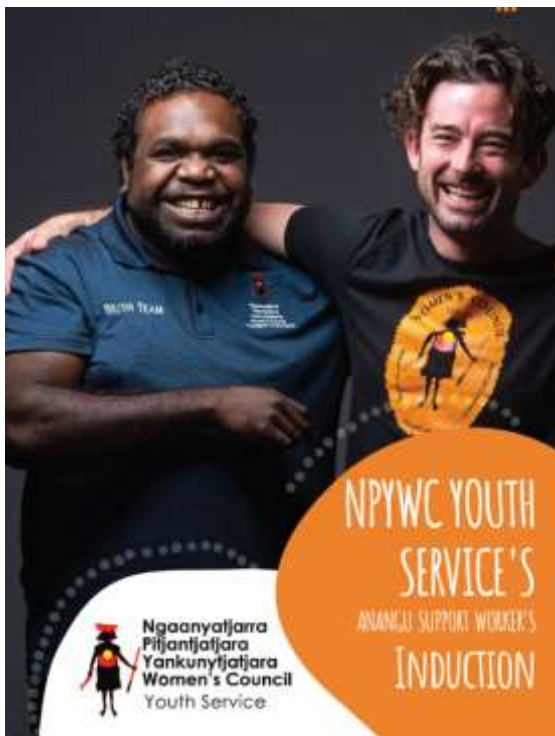
The CLC employs Regional Workplace Mentors whose key function is to contribute to employment outcomes of community-based rangers through workplace mentoring. The CLC has four mentors across the whole ranger program, all of whom are Indigenous. Workplace Mentors sit outside the line of management and are specifically there for the worker. It is a support role with responsibilities including negotiating ranger work expectations, job readiness, guidance, mediation and building

conflict resolution skills. Mentors also support workers to further their career pathways through coaching, developing and maintaining mentoring plans and referrals to appropriate support services. They also advocate and provide advice and resources to assist Supervisors and project staff in resolving personal barriers. Mentors are part of the new ranger induction process so that supervisors and workers understand the mentor's role.

NPY Empowered Communities Secretariat – transition from school to work

Empowered Communities (auspiced by NPYWC) is leading a significant piece of work regarding school to work transition. They are also undertaking the development of a model / framework for Anangu workforce development, which is locally co-designed. The NPY Women's Council Youth Service staff are active members of these reference groups – participating in the design and implementation of these initiatives.

NPY Women's Council Anangu employment model



Critical to NPY Women's Council success is the 'Malparara Way' of working which relies on staff working together to develop and deliver effective support and services for Anangu across the NPY lands. Malparara means a person together with a friend or a companion. In the context of the NPYWC programs, Malparara means two employees working together on a program, one of whom is an Anangu woman or man and the other, who is the partner employee's member, employed for his/her specific professional skills. This way of working ensures that the program remains culturally appropriate and gain continuous feedback from local staff and local community members.

NPY Women's Council Youth Service have developed a working model to achieve and maintain 58% Anangu employment, using a strong community consultation approach, with education and employment a key focus. Anangu staff deliver services and support to young people, as well as participate in the continuous

improvement of youth programs and advocacy.

By employing a specialised project officer to focus on Anangu employment, we have addressed a number of the barriers Anangu face to gain employment; we have been able to increase staff numbers, transition from casual to permanent roles, promote staff to higher duties and establish a greater consistency of service delivery. Our current retention rates favour Anangu staff over non-Aboriginal staff.

Youth Anangu Advisory Group (YAAG)



YAAG members at 2019 workshop

In keeping with the organisations commitment to good governance, we have identified a group of Anangu leaders within the NPY Women’s Council Youth Service to participate in the YAAG. This group are working together to create opportunities for a stronger Anangu voice in the organisation. They support each other and provide a direct support to the Youth Service leadership team. Three of the Anangu staff organised this initial workshop, developed the agenda and facilitated the group discussions. This workshop was delivered in the Pitjantjatjara language, one of the 3 local languages in our region. YAAG supports opportunities for men and women to participate in the workforce by building their capacity and developing their leadership skills.

A recent example of the role that YAAG played in continuous improvement was through their contribution to the review of a project within the team. They made recommendations to change the structure of the project, which would result in more Anangu employment with a focus on increased service delivery in the remote communities.

Exploring partnerships and collaboration

NPY Women’s Council Youth Service is currently exploring alternative ways to improve service delivery and consistency of support for young people on the lands. We are hoping to achieve this by negotiating an MOU with the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC) to utilise their staff after school and during school holiday periods. This would benefit our individual programs and the young people who access them.

Our service is also negotiating with the National Indigenous Australian’s Agency (NIAA) to source funding for youth Indigenous traineeships / internships that will support young school leavers and those disengaged from school. It will give young people opportunities to learn on the job skills, and be mentored in entry-level positions within their communities. This is an important step towards helping young people on a pathway to achieve their aspirations beyond the schoolyard.

Recommendations

- A firm commitment from government to resource the structured transition from school to work pathways and better resourcing for vocational education for young people across the tri state region is required. (I.e. remote based education, employment and training (EET) staff who facilitate opportunities for work experience, work readiness and further learning.
- NYP Women's Council Anangu employment model (along with other examples provided), to be further developed to share learnings across other organisations as a best practice model.
- Resourcing for the NPY Women's Council Boarding School project at current funding level for 5 years with provisions to extend this project beyond the current service sites, across the NPY region, as per our members and Directors request.
- Resourcing of the NPY Women's Council Kungka Career Conference, as a key forum for young women that brings the communities and youth services together to discuss their programs, and present real EET opportunities for young people of remote regions.

Conclusion

There are a very clear and distinct set of challenges to accessing education for remote Anangu youth and their families. We believe that today's youth are tomorrow's leaders and as such, there needs to be a significant investment in their development and ability to have a voice to secure good leadership for the future.

Throughout this submission, we have provided practice wisdom and knowledge, as well as research and relevant data. We have also drawn your attention to live examples of initiatives that are being delivered and are having positive impacts for Anangu youth and their communities.

We acknowledge the efforts of the government to support attendance in secondary and boarding school through the initiatives like the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program and financial assistance provided by Abstudy. In addition to this, the recent Transition Support Unit, which Northern Territory Government has introduced, has been an important initiative to better support young people in the Northern Territory to access boarding schools.

It is also important to recognise that teachers in remote communities are doing their best, but given what we know about the barriers identified by young people in achieving their education and work goals, it is obvious that more supports are required to address these challenges.

NPY Women's Council advocate for greater collaboration across the region through a tristate agreement to achieve greater consistency and adequate resource distribution in meeting the educational, training and employment needs and the health and well-being needs of young people.

Anangu have been saying for many years that young people in this region need options; they need curriculum that supports bi-lingual learning and provides mentoring to young people embarking on one of the most significant stages in their development. They need both community options, and education options abroad.

We wholeheartedly endorse the need for culture and country to play a key role for young people's learning and development. This should sit alongside mainstream education so that young people in the NPY region can realise their goals, achieve their dreams and overcome these challenges.

We have asked ourselves the hard questions as to why one of the most vulnerable groups in our society is not receiving the best of what we have to offer. There are solutions. These solutions require governments to be brave and to see these challenges as opportunities for positive change, and to work with local communities, services providers and educators to reform the system that is currently not working for all Anangu youth.

"We are always told we need to have our kids ready for school – but when are schools going to be ready for our children?"¹¹

(MK Turner, Great Grandmother, Djujan Hoosan)

¹¹ Media Release, In My Blood It Runs, February 21, 2020 (Accessed March 9, 2020)