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**House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal & Torres Strait
Islander Affairs inquiry into the high levels of involvement of Indigenous
juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system**

**Submission by Gregory Andrews, CEO, Indigenous Community Volunteers,
22 December 2009**

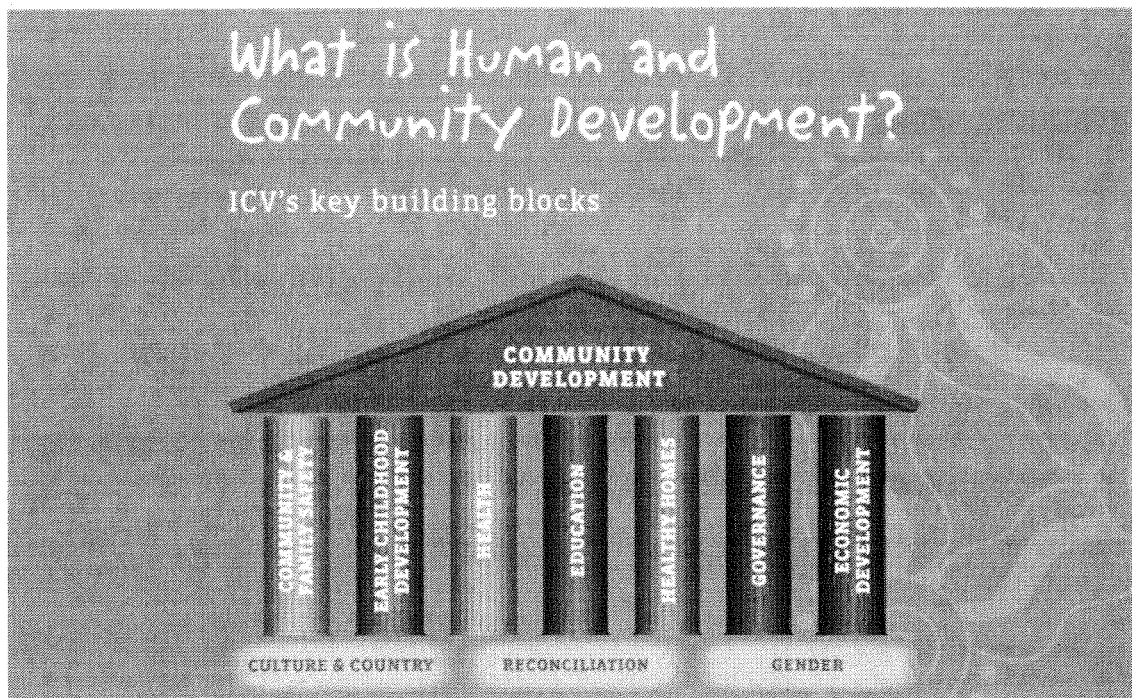
Community Development and Early Intervention are essential



Children at Murrin Bridge Community in Western NSW benefiting from an ICV project there

Indigenous Community Volunteers (ICV) is an independent, non-government community and development organisation that works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. We are a registered charity. We work according to the principle of 'invitation'. This means we do things *with*, not *to* or *for* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We pursue a community-driven and owned development approach.

We focus our program on the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) building blocks for addressing Indigenous disadvantage. We have reinforced these with three important evidence-based foundations - culture and country, reconciliation, and gender.



We are turning Indigenous disadvantage into advantage. We are also reconciliation in action. In 2008-09 we facilitated 440 volunteer assignments with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - from Canberra to the Kimberley. The average length of an ICV project was nine weeks. The shortest project lasted a day. The longest project lasted the entire year.

Our program had a direct impact on over 25,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives. We are growing strongly and aim to double our impact in 2008-09. We are on track to facilitate over 880 volunteer assignments in 2009-10. Information about the impacts that we are achieving is contained in our Annual Impact Analysis 2008-09 at [Attachment A](#).

ICV is engaged in best-practice diversion from the criminal justice system of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth by:

- Creating enabling environments in communities through broad-based community development projects that harness Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's assets to overcome disadvantage and dysfunction, and
- Through a range of projects that directly target youth investment, youth diversion and early intervention.

More information is at www.icv.com.au. And our evidence-based community development approach is explained at <http://www.icv.com.au/about-icv/community-development/>.

Causes of Indigenous juvenile involvement in the criminal justice system

The causes of the high levels of involvement in the criminal justice system of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are difficult to unravel neatly. Despite the complexity, evidence does exist. There is thus no need for this submission to repeat it all in detail.

From 2003 to 2006, I worked in the Northern Territory (NT) with communities in the Top End and Central Deserts regions. In 2005 I gave evidence to the NT coroner during an inquiry he held into the deaths of two youth who had died sniffing petrol at Mutitjulu Community at Uluru. The coroner asked me to explain what was causing petrol sniffing and to offer solutions. My submission explained that the petrol sniffing was a manifestation of a deeper and more complex problem. I gave the coroner an explanation to this broader problem and suggested solutions to it.

Youth involvement in the criminal justice system is a symptom of the same complex problems of Indigenous disadvantage and dysfunction. My submission to the coroner is at [Attachment B](#). I invite Committee members to read the submission for more detail. Its analysis is relevant to this inquiry. In summary, the key causes involve:

- Social and economic disadvantage.
- The transgenerational nature of disadvantage and dysfunction.
- The effects of passive welfare and environments when alcohol and drugs use are in epidemic proportions.
- A lack of law and order in many Indigenous communities.
- Weak capacity and governance in many Indigenous communities.
- Perverse impacts from the well-meaning policies of self-determination that have led to buck-passing or disengagement by the state (until the recent positive changes, the policies of separatism in the Town Camps in Alice Springs provide an example).
- Ad hoc and reactive policy and program responses from governments.
- A culture of permissive drug and alcohol use among many non-Indigenous and Indigenous people working with youth and communities.
- Mainstream ignorance and detachment.



Titjikala women working as ICV volunteers with Canberra/Queanbeyan Koori kids

Solutions to Indigenous juvenile involvement in the criminal justice system

There is no silver bullet to solving the complex challenges facing Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – including juvenile involvement in the criminal justice system. A comprehensive and committed approach is required from all levels - individual, community, government and non-government.

In 2005, I wrote a paper about an evidence-based approach to recovery from dysfunction for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It linked international experience in dealing with fragile states to what was occurring at Mutitjulu in the Northern Territory. The paper demonstrated that sustainable change requires:

- Robust analysis.
- Acceptance of transgenerational solution timeframes.
- Realistic objectives and acceptance of higher risks.
- Investments to bring law and order up to the same level that mainstream communities in Australia take for granted.
- Building local ownership and participation in the development process (this is a key area where ICV is making a difference through our community-driven and Asset-Based Community Development approach - see next section of this submission).
- Focusing on gender.
- Ensuring that the incentive frameworks are right – particularly, welfare and other government policies that influence human and social behaviours.
- Working together – with so many stakeholders engaged in Indigenous communities, it is essential that their efforts harmonise.
- Employing and retaining the right people.
- Maintaining basic services and meeting humanitarian needs while the long-term development process occurs – this is why simple programs such as school breakfast programs and primary health care initiatives are essential.

More information about each of these important ingredients to resolving disadvantage and dysfunction and reducing Indigenous youth involvement in the criminal justice system is contained in my paper at [Attachment C](#).

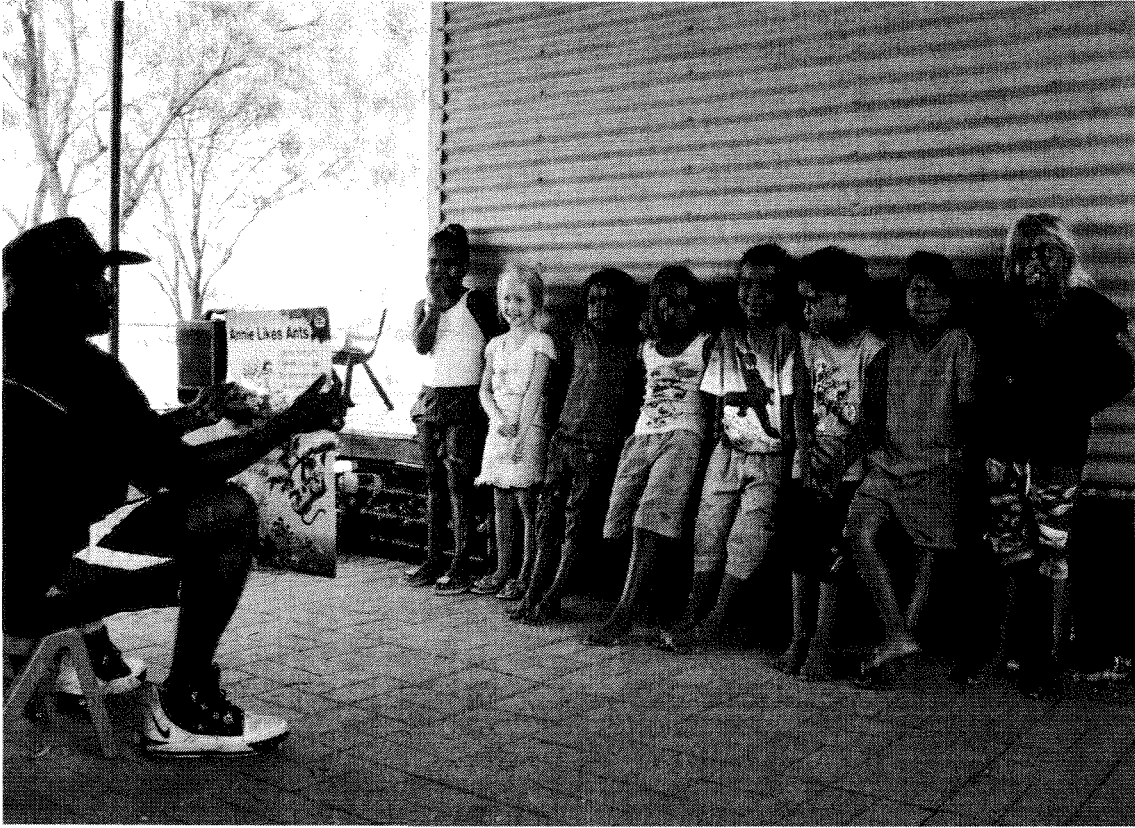
Early intervention

The evidence is clear that along with the principles above, early intervention with children and youth at risk is critical to ensuring that they achieve their full human potential and make a positive contribution to society. Importantly, the evidence also shows that good quality early intervention programs with youth at risk represent a very cost-effective investment of public monies. In a nutshell, prevention through early intervention pays. For example:

- Early childhood education programs for three and four year old children of low-income families can generate a return of \$2.40 per dollar invested.
- Family-based therapy programs for juvenile offenders produce returns of around \$8.70 per dollar invested.
- Effective youth substance abuse programs return as much as \$70 per dollar invested.¹

¹ Source: S. Aos, R. Lied, J. Mayfield, M. Miller, A. Pennucci, (2004) Benefits and Costs of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs for Youth. Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

From an Asset-Based Community Development perspective, young people are a rich asset. They have much to offer because they are at the beginning of their lives and they have plenty of energy. They can thus be a powerful ingredient for positive and lasting change. But they can be equally powerful in enabling and continuing dysfunction. The difference depends on how their energies are targeted. The earlier families, communities and the state intervene to keep young people on the right track, the greater the benefits and the lower the costs associated with their future possible involvement in the criminal justice system.



Indigenous Children benefiting from an ICV early childhood education intervention



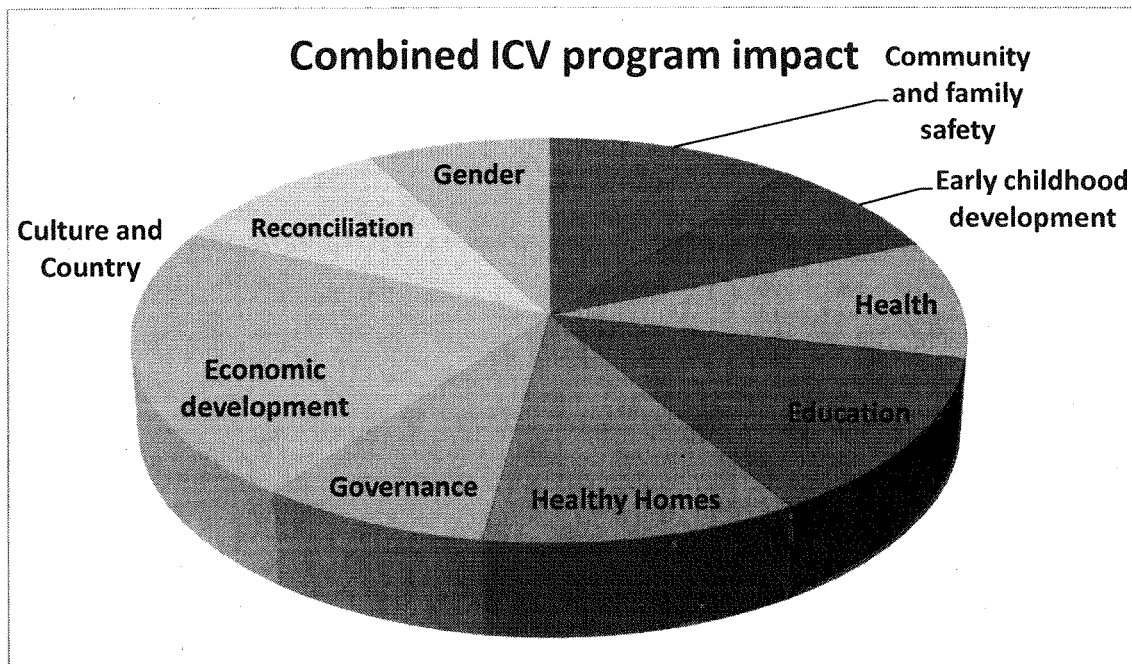
Children at Fitzroy Crossing WA benefiting from an ICV early Intervention Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder Project

ICV's impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth

Our Community Development impact

ICV's grass-roots Asset-Based Community Development approach empowers communities from the bottom up. Our community development partnerships are building enabling environments in communities. We are helping to create resilient communities and growing the opportunities that are necessary for youth to have positive and meaningful lives and avoid involvement in the criminal justice system. The story below about Burrunju Aboriginal Corporation which is working with ICV is an example of how our broad and evidence-based program helps build enabling local environments that can overcome disadvantage.

We are directly fostering local ownership and participation in the community development process by adhering to our evidence-based approach of doing things *with* not *to* or *for* people. Focusing on the building blocks for community and human development builds strong communities that can divert their children from self-destructive and anti-social behaviours before they start. The chart below indicates the spread of impacts across ICV's building blocks that we achieved in 2008-09.



Our Impact Analysis ([Attachment A](#)) gives a detailed overview of the nature of the grass-roots community empowerment we are fostering and how broad these community driven initiatives can be.

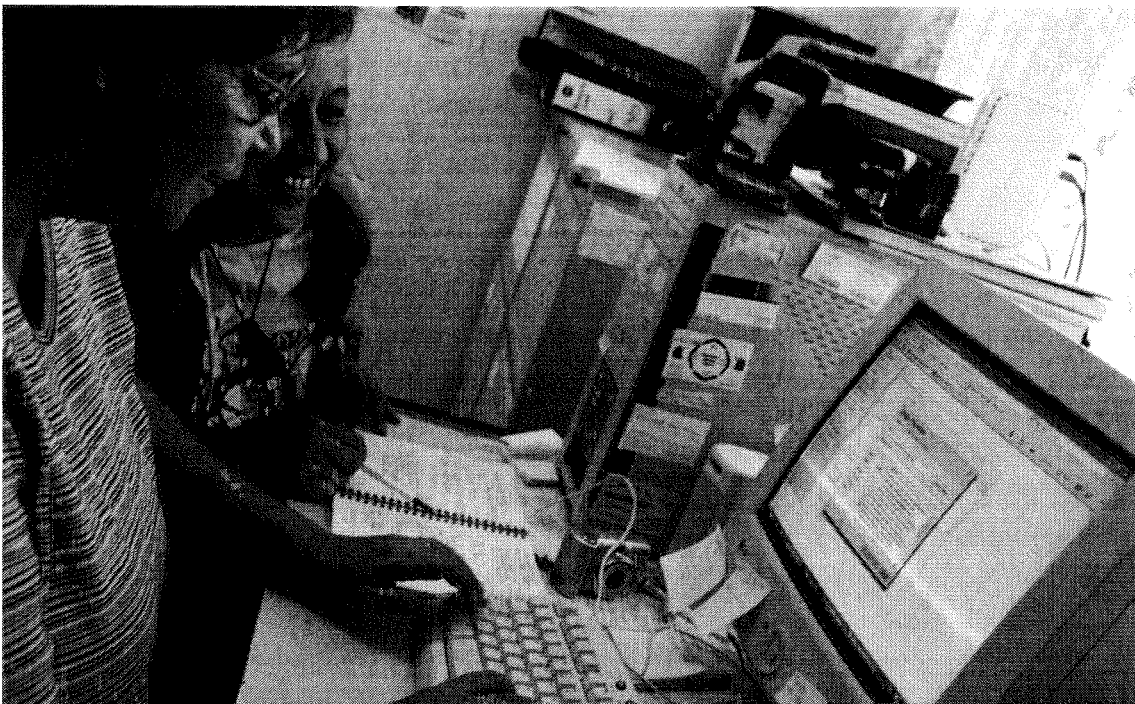
ICV's 440 volunteer assignments in 2008-09 enabled the equivalent of 128 years of human service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's development. Over two-fifths of this *gratis* work was invested by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities themselves. Ninety four per cent of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients advised us that they were satisfied with ICV as a way of building their community. Ninety seven per cent advised that they would invite us back again. Ten per cent of all ICV projects involved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people volunteering for other people outside of their own communities. This is clear evidence of the outcomes and value that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities see in ICV's work.

Burrnju Aboriginal Corporation: An example of how *from little things, big things grow* with ICV

Burrnju Aboriginal Corporation in Canberra is an example of how ICV is helping to build strong and resilient communities that can take responsibility for their futures and the futures of their children. In 2008, Aunty Meg Huddleston, a respected Elder in Canberra, approached ICV and asked us for assistance. Aunty Meg had established a respite carers' support group for around 40 Aboriginal Nannas, as we fondly and respectfully refer to them, in Canberra who are caring for their sick men. The Nannas were going to aqua-aerobics at the suburban swimming pool. Aunty Meg asked on behalf of the Nannas for assistance in applying for a \$5,000 grant to purchase a plastic table and some tea cups to have a 'yarn up' after their weekly swim. The Nanna's had established themselves out of Aunty Meg's kitchen.

Now some 18 months later, the Nannas are one of the key social service providers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Canberra and Queanbeyan Region. They are incorporated as Burrnju Aboriginal Corporation. They have an office in Queanbeyan and provide an internet drop-in service for people who cannot afford to have internet access at home. They run a range of social support services for vulnerable Aboriginal and people and carers.

The Nannas have moved from a small support group to a major force of social change in the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. They have engaged with a community in Melbourne to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Koori Food-Bank in Canberra, and they recently worked in partnership with some senior traditional women from Titjikala who came to Canberra as ICV volunteers to run an art and culture workshop in partnership with the Nannas for Canberra's Koori children. The women shared their art techniques and stories and instilled these in their grandchildren. The Nannas also run a website to sell their children's art.



Aunty Meg Huddleston with ICV volunteer Kamera Raharaha

Direct ICV investments in youth

Apart from the broad-based ICV approach to building strong communities that are empowered to grow their children up effectively, a significant proportion of ICV's program is directly targeted at investing in youth. The projects outlined below are an example of some of these initiatives that we are working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.

Maningrida Youth Development Program, NT

In September 2009, ICV and the Aboriginal people of Maningrida identified the need for a systematic approach to youth engagement and development - particularly in education, employment and youth diversion and intervention. The community identified significant concerns about school attendance and the quality of schooling; the need for a youth strategy, and the need for strategies to encourage sustainable employment.

As a result of this, ICV and the people at Maningrida agreed to establish the *Maningrida Youth Development Program*. The Program is a joint partnership with AusAID. Under an agreement with ICV, AusAID releases its staff to work as ICV volunteers on strategic community and human development projects with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Youth Development Project partnership involves working with all stakeholders in Maningrida to develop a Youth Development Strategy in two stages.

- Scoping and planning a Youth Development Program (YDP) to support the activities of the Maningrida Community Education Centre, the Maningrida Police Youth Diversion Scheme and the Maningrida Youth Services. The YDP will support around 20 young Maningrida residents who are considered to be 'at risk' or vulnerable. The initial project scoping is underway and includes an audit of available community resources and asset shortfalls.
- Provision of support services in establishing and implementing a sustainable and effective YDP in Maningrida. This is likely to result in around 20 ICV volunteer assignments over the next year. They will be supervised and 'project managed' by the ICV-AusAID volunteer.

The project began in December 2009, around one month after its inception. An initial activity that has been identified by the community and the AusAID-ICV volunteer is mentoring for Maningrida's existing local youth workers. Another initiative is fine-tuning Maningrida's existing Sport and Recreation Program to be more inclusive of girls and to encourage greater youth participation in healthy activities. For young men who have already been in trouble with the criminal justice system and have mandated hours of community service in Maningrida, the project will include working with local police to identify activities that will skill-up and train the youth so that their service is also an investment in themselves and their self-reliance.

Maningrida Wet Season School Project, NT

Maningrida Community School approached ICV for volunteer teachers skilled in Physical Education and Literacy and Numeracy to help conduct their Wet Season School Program to run from 4 January to 27 January 2010. Maningrida Community School has students from preschool to Year 12. So a wide range of ICV volunteer teachers will work with the students at the school over this wet season.



ICV's National Program Manager Stephanie Harvey and Board member Bernard Valadian with Maningrida residents Helen Williams and Deene Hereen

Many of the students in Maningrida, over the course of the school year, have had cultural obligations that they have needed to attend to during school periods. In the process of fulfilling their cultural obligations which are also part of their Indigenous 'education', they have missed required attendance at school and need to catch up before starting the new year. The wet season school is a way of enabling strong culture and education. Needless to say, both are essential for resilient Aboriginal youth who can live and work in both worlds.

Tiwi College House Parents Project, Melville Island NT

At Melville Island, ICV is working with the Tiwi College which is an independent Indigenous-owned residential school located at Pickertaramoor about 80 kms north of Darwin on a house parenting project that is helping to promote the resilience and education of Tiwi youth.

Some of the students are from broken homes and have been in trouble with the law. These circumstances, along with the community's desire to improve educational outcomes and ensure sustainable employment for the students when they graduate, are why the Tiwi College was established.

Students are accommodated during the school week in homes staffed by house parents. These homes provide a safe and orderly environment where students learn a lot about living and working as a team and in a family environment. Living skills are taught as a natural part of students taking responsibility for cooking, cleaning and household maintenance.

ICV has been working with Tiwi College by providing volunteers to



Tiwi College House Parent home

act as House Parents.

Coen Local Justice Group Research and Development Project, Far North Queensland

In 2008 an ICV volunteer worked over a number of months with Coen community in Far North Queensland on a study and to develop a report and make policy recommendations about the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the Coen Local Justice Group. Ross Allen completed a cost-benefit analysis of the Coen Local Justice Group, measured and reported on the Group's effectiveness, and made recommendations on how it could improve and assure its future, including through increased funding.

The project report also collated and disseminated to the community and other stakeholders valuable evidence about the benefits of community justice initiatives and their cost-effectiveness compared to mainstream criminal justice processes in remote Indigenous communities such as Coen. Some of the key policy findings of the report included:

- The community justice approach in Coen resulted in a significant reduction in the number of charges laid in the Children's Court.
- Community-based alternatives to prison can save up to \$58,000 per annum per prisoner.
- The age structure of the Indigenous population in Queensland represents a 'time bomb' in terms of the implications for adult and youth juvenile corrections if the trend of over-representation is not resolved.

A copy of the ICV volunteer's report is at [Attachment D](#).

Danila Dilba Youth Gardening Project, Darwin NT

Danila Dilba's is a community-owned and operated service provider for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in suburban Darwin. ICV has been working with its Indigenous Emotional and Social Wellbeing Centre which operates a Youth Drop-in Centre for young people in Darwin. The drop in centre is a comfort zone for many homeless youth, school drop-outs and unemployed teenagers aged from 10-23 years old. The centre offers supervisors, counsellor referrals, computer games, pool tables and recreational activities.

Danila Dilba has teamed up with an ICV volunteer to develop a business plan and access business support. Local youth have shown interest in gardening. Danila Dilba is in the process of starting a not-for profit general gardening service with ICV's support. It is available for the local neighbourhood, allowing interested youth to gain work experience and learn new skills. The community decided that those who commit their time are rewarded with non-monetary benefits. These include clothing, food vouchers, payment of court fines, purchase of work or study equipment, admission to movie theatres and so forth. Danila Dilba is also exploring the idea of teaching personal financial management and banking skills to the participants. It is likely that ICV will support this project too.

Many of the youth are struggling with finding work due to not having work experience and, for many, returning to school or TAFE is not a suitable option. So for these people, choices are very limited. Without any intervention, this would increase the risk that they become involved in substance abuse and theft. The gardening service is primarily designed to divert youth from crime and substance abuse, provide them with a fun activity and give them the chance to learn new skills and a good work ethic. It also encourages social and community responsibility and economic inclusion with the broader society.

AFLNT Wadeye Football Case Study and Funding Proposal Project, NT

Wadeye, also known as Port Keats, is located 270km south west of Darwin in the Daly River reserve at the mouth of the Fitzmaurice River in the NT. In 1934 a Catholic Mission was founded at Port Keats and for decades the Church acted as the main service provider for education and health. Current population estimates for Wadeye range from 1,930 to 2,856 people. It is one of the largest discrete Aboriginal communities in Australia.

The purpose of AFLNT Wadeye Football Program Case Study Project was to report on the social impacts of the AFLNT's football program in Wadeye. An ICV volunteer visited the community and conducted this study. The final report found significant benefits accrued from the program. It was submitted to AFLNT and forwarded to FaHCSIA with a funding proposal for consideration. Final approval for funding is unlikely to be known until April 2010.



Football can play a significant role with youth diversion and can help build self esteem. If the submission is successful, Wadeye community and AFLNT believe that the next step of the project will assist with 'closing the gap' issues and the ICV building blocks of Health, Healthy Homes, Education, Community and Family Safety, Gender and Reconciliation.

Young-fellas playing AFL at Wadeye

Yirrkala Healing Centre Project, Arnhem Land NT

Under the umbrella of a broader ICV Healing Centre project at Yirrkala in the NT, stems several smaller projects with the community. Yirrkala youth are taking ownership for their contribution to the Healing Centre. In particular, they are engaged in a market garden project with ICV. The market garden includes hundreds of plants and seedlings that are being maintained and operated voluntarily by community youth and adults every day. Also, construction of a temporary healing centre is being managed independently by a small group of young community men with the assistance of ICV. They have taken the initiative to source natural stringy-bark wood to strip and sand back for the main structure, soft sand for the ground and a canopy of paperbark for the roof. ICV volunteer Gareth Wise says he leaves the shelter up to the boys, "I don't do anything there, it's their baby". Prior to these projects, there was minimal activity for local youth. No one is paid or forced to participate in the initiatives, the youth simply enjoy themselves together by engaging in something positive for their community. Several of those participating are on good behaviour bonds by the courts, and the 'work' has kept them busy and "out of trouble".



ICV Volunteer Garth Wise working with some of the boys

One 13-year-old boy speaks of how he has not sniffed petrol or smoked marijuana since he has been “hanging around the healing centre everyday”. There are other stories like his.

These projects were not designed primarily as diversionary initiatives. But they have acted that way due to the pride and ownership instilled in the youth of Yirrkala.

Meenah Mieene Arts Based Diversion Projects, Launceston, Tasmania

Through arts-based mentoring, Meenah Mieene (‘My Dream’) fosters confident cultural and community connections and better emotional health and wellbeing for young Aboriginal people at risk of or in contact with the criminal justice system. A community-initiated project, Meenah Mieene operates from a Launceston shopfront premises and through outreach at high schools and the Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC). Spanning a range of cultural and artistic media, the project matches Aboriginal artists and young people in mentor and buddy relationships. Group mentoring and workshops are offered, in addition to training for mentors.

The project provides assisted pathways for young Aboriginal people to education and employment. It also refers youth to other services. Meenah Mieene is a space for community members to model good leadership and raises the profile of Aboriginal arts and culture. Some of outcomes of the initiative have included:

- enhanced arts and cultural skills-base amongst young Aboriginal people,
- a welcoming community space for youth,
- improved self-esteem, communication skills, willingness to participate in decision-making, and planning for the future,
- positive relationships with older people in the community and enhanced sense of belonging for young people,
- supportive networks within the community including young people, mentors, community people and service providers, and
- improved perception by mentors of their personal value and place in the community

ICV began working with Meenah Mieene in December 2009. We currently have six projects with the organisation. These projects include developing and implementing a marketing and communications plan and facilitating cultural exchange programs with other Indigenous communities in the north of Australia. Given the crucial youth diversion role that Meenah Mieene plays with Tasmania’s Aboriginal youth, an ICV volunteer also assisted it to develop a submission to this inquiry.

Ipswich ‘Sista Camp’ Project, Ipswich Queensland

In March 2009 ICV worked with local Aboriginal people, Red Bank Plains State High School and Bundamba State Secondary College to facilitate a ‘Sista Camp’. The main purpose of the camp was to build a supporting relationship between the students and a significant female member of their family or local Aboriginal community (Sista) who could act as a mentor. During the camp, the girls participated in a range of activities with their mentor. The eight girls who attended the camp built their self esteem and personal development. This project is an example of how indirect youth activities that can build confidence and self belief and hence enable young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make positive choices about their lives and stay out of the criminal justice system. As one girl said, “this weekend away helped me by teaching me to be confident and love myself”. Another girl said after the camp, “my goals are to finish my schooling with great marks, go to university and study to be a preschool teacher or a flight attendant”.

Youth Suicide Blank Page Summit Project, Billard WA

In July 2009 ICV assisted Billard Aboriginal community in the Kimberley to organise and host a blank page summit on youth suicide. The community was concerned about alarmingly high levels of youth suicide and wanted to develop an action plan to tackle this problem. Billard community contacted ICV and advised that it had minimal resources and needed ICV's assistance to make it happen.

ICV sent 17 volunteers to Billard to assist with the event management, medical care, media, facilitation and other activities. Around 130 people attended the event. The summit's outcomes can be found at <http://www.blankpagesummit.com.au>.



Billard Blank Page Youth Suicide Summit

Post-Prisoner Program, Brisbane Queensland

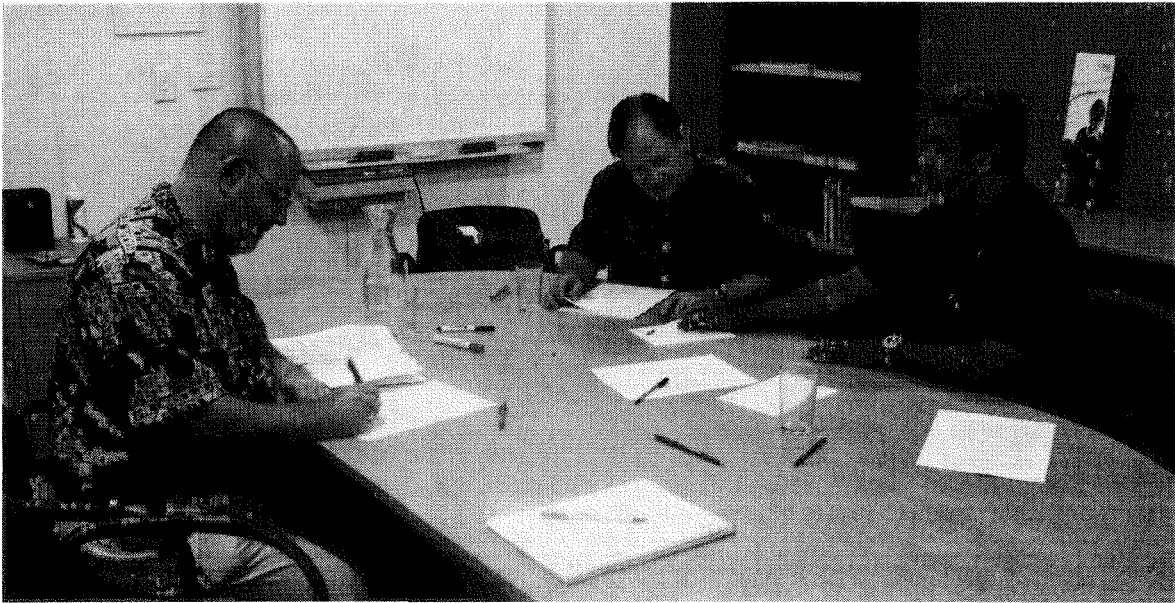
ICV works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the end as well as the beginning of the criminal justice cycle. Ian Appo is an Indigenous man who was released from prison after serving a life sentence for murder. Mr Appo has given ICV permission to tell his story. He experienced a great deal of difficulty as he tried to rejoin his community. While there are many services which provide a variety of post release assistance, Mr Appo exhibited signs of institutionalism due to his term of sentence and found he did not know of services available, nor did he feel he had the skills to access them.

Mr Appo successfully moved on with his life and is now a government employee with the Department of Main Roads, Queensland. He is passionate about helping long term Indigenous prisoners upon their release as a result of the difficulty he faced re-entering the community. Mr Appo recognises that a smooth reintegration into the community, with appropriate support, reduces the likelihood of reoffending and re-entering the criminal justice system. A recent statistic shows that the rate of people who reoffend is around 73 per cent for Indigenous people compared with 50 per cent for non-Indigenous people.

Mr Appo's vision is to develop a program that links, connects and supports released prisoners to access the services that they need in a holistic way. There isn't a program in Queensland that currently does this nor one that specifically targets long term Indigenous prisoners.

ICV has matched volunteer Ross Allen and ICV employee Derrick Vale, to work with Mr Appo and prepare a submission to the government to secure funding for his initiative. The aim of the project is to develop a 12 month program for released prisoners. It will include an operational manual to support delivery. The submission is near completion and will be submitted to the government soon.

This program has the potential to provide enormous support to long term Indigenous prisoners who are released into the community and to break the cycle of recidivism. The program also has the potential to widen its target group to assist all released Indigenous prisoners (not just those who have completed lengthy sentences) and to be implemented Queensland wide.



Ross Allen (ICV volunteer), George Zukiwskyj (Support Officer) and Ian Appo working on the project in Brisbane

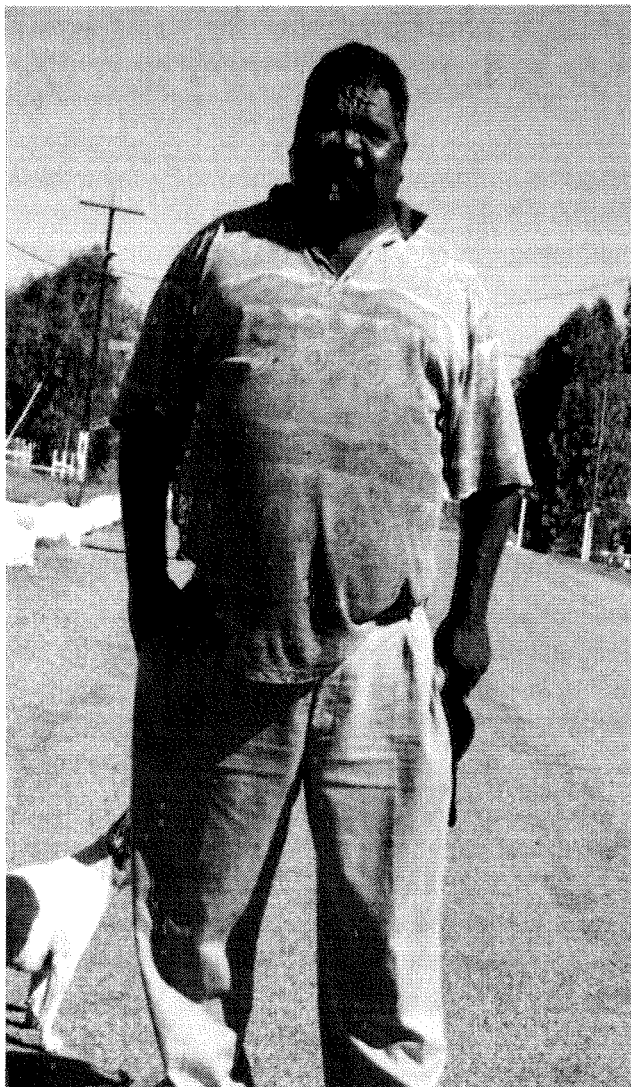
Koori Youth Mentoring Project, Dubbo and Wreck Bay NSW and Canberra ACT

In 2009, ICV brought a senior traditional man from Central Australia to meet, mentor and engage as a positive role model with Koori youth in the south east of NSW and in Canberra. Kevin Moneymoon is a Luritja and Pitjantjatjara man from Central Australia who has fought and overcome his own personal battles. Kevin is currently the Team Leader for the local Night Patrol service in his remote community of Titjikala in the NT. In 2009, Kevin was actively involved in participating as a mentor for a number of community-based and government-run organisations in NSW and in the ACT. Kevin was able to impart his cultural and personal wisdom to a number of young Aboriginal boys and girls. Kevin's initial visit in 2009 subsequently resulted in numerous community-driven requests to bring him back to work on longer term projects with different groups. Kevin has what he calls a "chequered past", but due to his strong culture and belief in himself, he has "been able to rise above the tides that were against him". This experience, and his good nature and passion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth will keep him very busy with ICV in the year ahead working with and "leading Koori kids in the southeast down the right track".

South Coast Youth Numeracy and Mentoring Project, Moruya NSW

In January 2010 ICV will commence working in partnership with Moruya High School to embark upon an innovative youth project. According to our Regional Manager for the Southeast, Lee Willis, "we have no idea where it will lead, but we know that it will achieve results for young kids down that way". The project will involve working with Aboriginal people in the Moruya district on the South coast of NSW to develop and train adults to work within the school system as volunteer tutors. It is targeted at building relationships with local Indigenous youth who have had difficulties picking up on reading and writing and are at risk of "going down the wrong track".

The Moruya community has identified that the retention rates for local Aboriginal students are unacceptable. The ramifications of these kids leaving school early without a decent education is "more often than not a stint in a juvenile detention centre". With that in mind, ICV and the community see this initiative of working with the local state government high school as an excellent opportunity to try and curb this alarming trend.



Kevin Moneymoon from Titjikala

Papunya Internet Café Project, NT

ICV was contacted by CAYLUS (Central Australia Youth Link Up Services) in July 2009 to work together on an Internet Café program at Papunya. CAYLUS works with communities to find solutions to stop young people from sniffing or using drugs.

ICV engaged with Macquarie University and MacDonnell Shire to develop relations between all organisations involved in the project. Macquarie University is interested in releasing its students as ICV volunteers. MacDonnell Shire is providing additional support on the ground for youth workers and enabling the internet café to be open on a regular basis. The Australian Government Business Manager (GBM) at Papunya community has also been supportive and can see the positive impacts this project is having on youth.

ICV volunteers have been constantly involved with the Papunya Internet café since early August 2009. Volunteers are currently in the field until at least the end of February 2010. ICV volunteers have been instrumental in maintaining strong connections with youth who

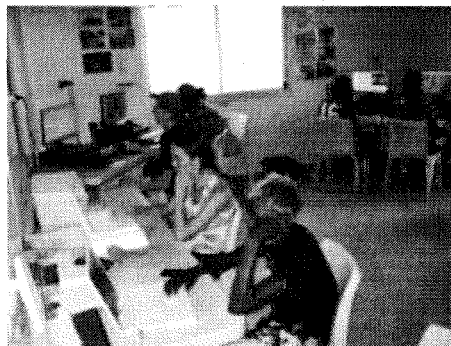
leave Papunya to attend Kormilda College, a boarding school in Darwin. This year 18 young Papunya residents travelled far from home to continue their education at Kormilda. With the internet café being open and accessible to all in the community, the ICV volunteers along with CAYLUS introduced Skype, keeping family and friends in contact with the Kormilda students, reducing anxiety of homesickness and school absentee.

Other positive impacts have been engagement with education, learning new skills from basic computer skills, Photoshop for graphic design or fixing/altering photo's, posters and photo collages, scanning, printing and laminating photos to A4 and A3, downloading and uploading music to and from MP3 players and CD's, video editing and burning DVD's, Skype calls, email, electronic banking, games and other online administration.

Volunteers Renee Stephens and Anthony Radford have been involved with the Papunya Internet Café since August and are continuing to work on this project. Anthony Radford said "people have become quite tech savvy when it comes to the manipulation of audio files. Renee and I have shown many people how to upload and download music to the LAN and how to burn CD's. At first most people required help to create playlists for MP3 players and burn lists for CD's. But now this all goes on pretty much without our direct involvement and the manipulation of Audio files is one of the most popular activities."

One of the local youth workers JJ, with some assistance from ICV volunteers, has been manipulating video sound and still pictures to create burnable DVD's which are very popular. JJ created a Papunya slide show which was projected behind Papunya's own Tjupi Band at the Alice Springs Desert Festival. That was a proud moment for all.

This project has proven to be highly successful and a much wanted community resource, the constant stream of people accessing the café resulted in it exceeding the internet limit due to its popularity. Limited resources are available for this project to continue. Funding is being actively sought via CAYLUS and ongoing support from the GBM. Without ICV volunteers, the internet café would not be where it is today. The immediate future is reliant on ICV volunteers and success in securing future ongoing funding. Local MLA Karl Hampton has also supported this project and the importance of implementing more internet cafes in remote communities as a means of engaging positively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.



Papunya internet cafe

Conclusion

The causes of Indigenous juvenile involvement in the criminal justice system are complex. The solutions are too. But they are not insurmountable.

ICV is making a difference to the lives of many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth through our grass-roots community and human development programs across Australia. In 2008-09, we had a direct impact on over 25,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives. Our program is contributing to the positive futures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

ICV's evidence-based community development approach is creating enabling environments in communities that allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take control of their lives and to secure better futures. Stronger and resilient communities are better able to steer their youth in the right direction. Apart from our broad-based community development impacts, many of ICV's projects are also directly investing in youth.

From Canberra and Launceston in Australia's south east, to Maningrida and Coen in the Top End, ICV is working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to invest in youth and divert them from self-destructive and anti-social behaviours.

We are experiencing very strong growth in demand for our services. In 2008-09 we completed 440 volunteer assignments with communities across Australia. Our reach is likely to double in 2009-10 to around 880 projects. As we grow, our impact will increase and the positive impacts we achieve with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth will intensify.



