

Empowered Communities – NPY Region
Submission to the Standing Committee on Employment,
Education and Training

INQUIRY into
EDUCATION IN REMOTE AND COMPLEX
ENVIRONMENTS

February, 2020



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Executive Summary

This submission describes a young person’s journey through the education system in the remote tri-state ‘NPY region’ of Central Australia – including the aspirations and barriers faced. In the context of complex historical, social, structural and geographic barriers, the education infrastructure and resourcing is outlined, along with available data on student outcomes. The submission goes on to describe four key enabling factors and a set of recommendations towards locally and culturally defined indicators for improved educational outcomes. We believe this can be achieved through:

- A culturally grounded education
- Improved access and quality of educational choices
- Complimentary wrap around youth support
- School-to-work transition support

The recommendations are informed by direct consultation and design from Aboriginal families and communities in the region. They are supported by research and co-design with stakeholders working in the sector. This submission seeks to inform the Standing Committee on Employment Education Training and serve as a call to action to decision-makers to do better for the educational outcomes of Aboriginal people in the remote communities of central Australia’s tri-state region.

1. Introduction

Whilst many young people throughout Australia are uncertain about their futures, for Aboriginal people (Anangu) in the remote desert communities of central Australia's tri-state Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) region, education, training and youth support options are far scarcer and the social, financial and practical barriers far greater.

Central Australia's NPY region comprises 25 remote Aboriginal communities and a population of around 4500 people. Educational outcomes and pathways into employment are extremely limited due to complex historical, geographic and structural barriers. However, the region is rich in cultural and social capital with strong links to land, language, law and family actively maintained by the Anangu people of the region.

Empowered Communities is strongly committed to improving life outcomes for young people – and see this as a critical path to increasing Anangu empowerment and agency in the region. This submission provides an insight into Anangu views of education – the challenges, aspirations, experiences and ideas of students and their families straddling the complexities of 'two worlds' – western and traditional paradigms. We seek to share the experience of Anangu in navigating the mainstream schooling system alongside their aspirations for a more place-based, culturally appropriate approach to education and learning. We also highlight the value of community-led, culturally appropriate solutions and propose new models for supporting an Anangu vision of education in this unique region of central Australia.

1.1 What is EC?

In 2013, Aboriginal leaders from across Australia came together with a common vision –

*"...for our children to have the same opportunities and choices other Australians expect for their children. We want them to succeed in mainstream Australia, achieving educational success, prospering in the economy and living long, safe and healthy lives. We want them to retain their distinct cultures, languages and identities as peoples and to be recognized as Indigenous Australians."*¹

From this vision, Empowered Communities was created – a national, Aboriginal designed and led initiative working to reform the historic 'top-down' approach to Indigenous affairs. Empowered Communities is working to create long-term, enduring change through Aboriginal people identifying priorities, making decisions, driving their own development and seeking solutions to local needs.

The Empowered Communities approach is built on the three pillars of **Empowerment, Development and Productivity**, to support closing the gap on social and economic disadvantage and enabling cultural recognition and self-determination. For more information on Empowered Communities, see (www.empoweredcommunities.org.au)

1.2 Overview of the NPY region and Anangu priorities

Central Australia's Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) region is one of nine Empowered Communities sites across Australia. The NPY region spans 350,000 square kilometres across the tri-state borders covering the southern parts of the Northern Territory, South Australia's APY Lands and Western Australia's Ngaanyatjarra Lands. The region is home to around 4500 Aboriginal people in 25 remote communities (see map below). According to 2016 census figures, half of the NPY population are below the age of 25 – thus the needs and concerns of young people are of significant importance in this region.

¹ Empowered Communities Design Report, 2015

Anangu (Aboriginal people from the NPY Region) maintain a strong connection to culture and traditional values, through *Tjukurpa* (Law), *Walytja* (Family), *Manta* (Country) and *Wangka* (Language). Anangu share language, cultural and family ties, and a history of unity and collaboration that transcends state borders.

With less than two people per 100km², the NPY region is one and a half times the size of Victoria and 100 times more sparsely populated than Mongolia - the most sparsely populated country on Earth.

Empowered Communities was formally established in the NPY Region in early 2014 as an alliance of local Aboriginal organisations. A backbone Secretariat supports the partnership under the direction of a regional Steering Committee representing:

- NPY Women’s Council,
- Regional Anangu Services Aboriginal Corporation (RASAC),
- Central Land Council,
- Mai Wiru Regional Stores council,
- Western Desert Dialysis (Purple House),
- APY Art Centre Collective,

With growing support from other regional Anangu organisations.



The 'NPY' Region of Central Australia

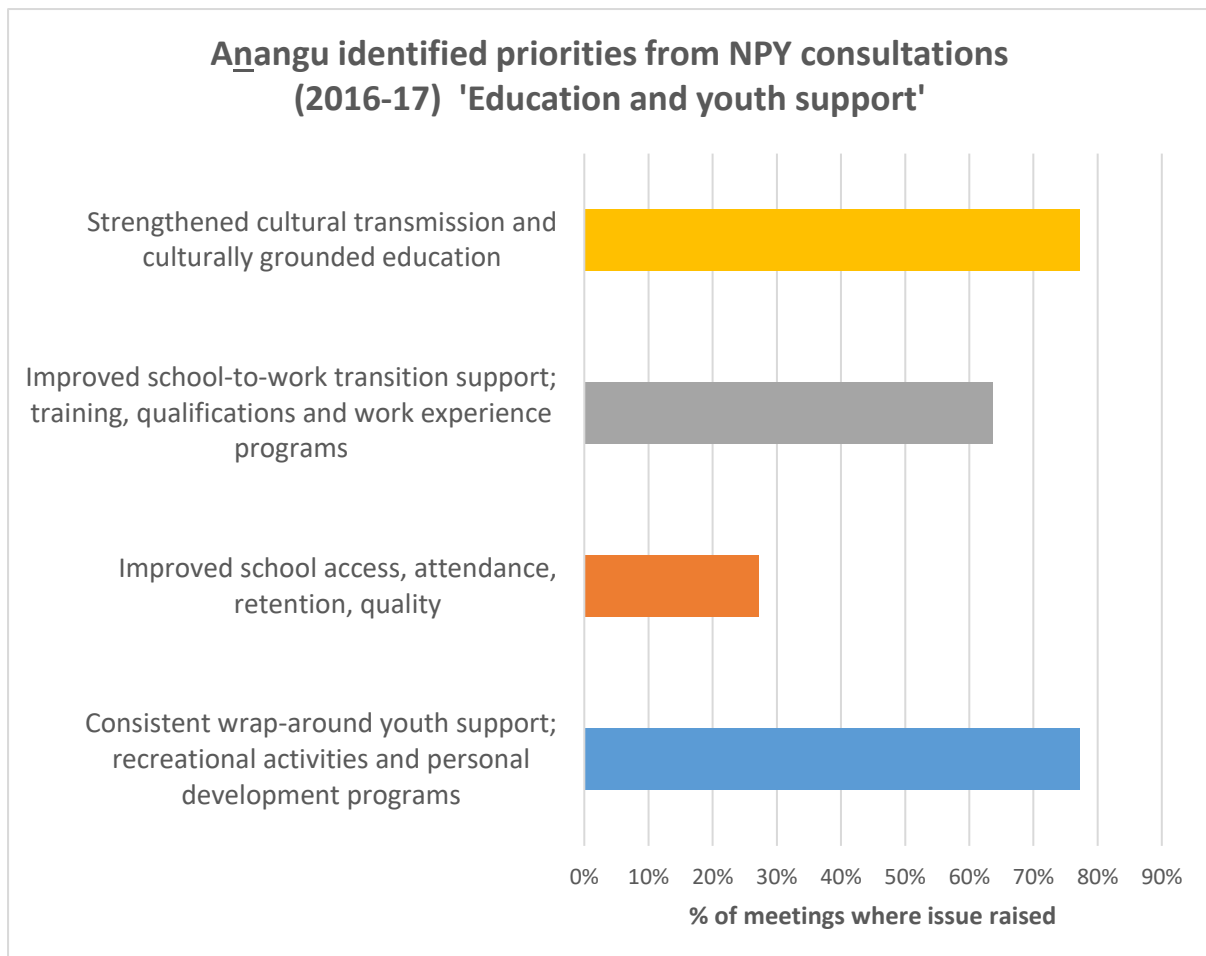
Empowered Communities has a unique understanding of the priorities and concerns facing Anangu in the region due to this strong partnership with local Aboriginal organisations and relationships with families and community leaders. Furthermore, throughout 2016 – 17, the NPY EC Secretariat undertook comprehensive consultation across all 25 communities to capture community priorities and concerns. Three priority areas have clearly emerged:

1. Education, culture and support for young people
2. Work, meaningful engagement and financial security
3. Anangu led decision making and community empowerment



It is significant to note that during this consultation period, concerns for young people were the most frequently raised issue. Anangu have spoken up strongly about their desire to see young people grow up with the skills, confidence and experience to enable them to succeed and prosper in two worlds (traditional and modern). Senior leaders, parents and young people alike spoke of their worries for adequate and appropriate education, cultural transmission and youth support – detailed below. Education is seen as key to future opportunity for Anangu; in their words they want their children to...

“Succeed in mainstream Australia, achieve educational success, prosper in the economy and live long healthy lives AND retain their distinct cultures, languages and identities as peoples and be recognized as Indigenous Australians”



2. A young person’s journey; The structure of service provision in the NPY Region

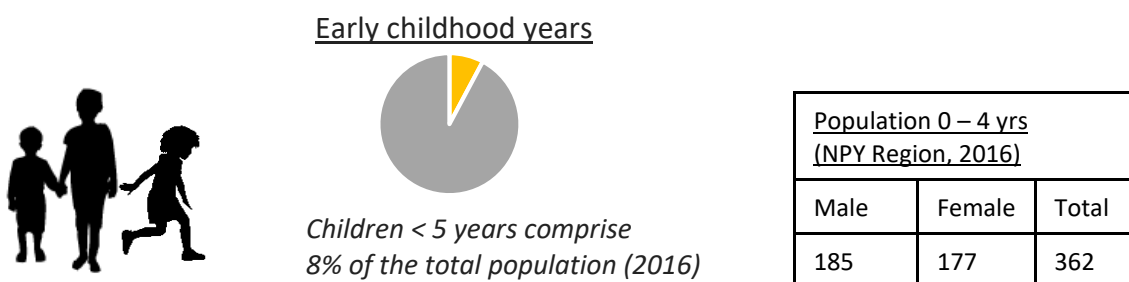
This section addresses the following points within the terms of reference of this inquiry:

- A child’s journey through early childhood, primary, secondary, vocational & tertiary education in remote communities, like the tri-border region of SA, WA & NT;

Education in the NPY Lands is complex, not just because of remoteness. School resourcing and accountability sits with four different jurisdictions (Federal, NT, SA and WA Education Departments) with a mix of both government and independent schools. Resourcing for education varies widely across jurisdictions and the region has no consistent strategy or coordinated approach amongst education providers across borders. In this chapter, we describe the structural arrangement for education service provision in the region and present the available data pertaining to student outcomes. A summary is contained Appendix 1 and recommendations are listed at the end of the chapter.

NPY Region – a snapshot

- 2 States; 1 Territory
- 25 communities;
Average size under 200 people
- Population appx 4500:
half under the age of 25 years
- 93% of Anangu speak local language at home², with English as second, third or fourth language
- 8 out of 10 adults are unemployed in the NPY Region and the average weekly income is \$300 - \$400 per adult³ - well below the national poverty line of \$433 per adult
- More than 85% of Aboriginal adults (in the NT) lack functional literacy – i.e.: have English reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy skills below the level needed for independence in the workplace⁴.



Access to early childhood programs are variable across the NPY region – with some communities having dedicated playgroup / pre-school facilities and regularly operating programs, some running a fly-in-fly-out or occasional service as an add-on to existing family wellbeing programs, and some communities with few or no programs at all. Where services exist, they are delivered by a mix of local government, Education Department and NGO providers.

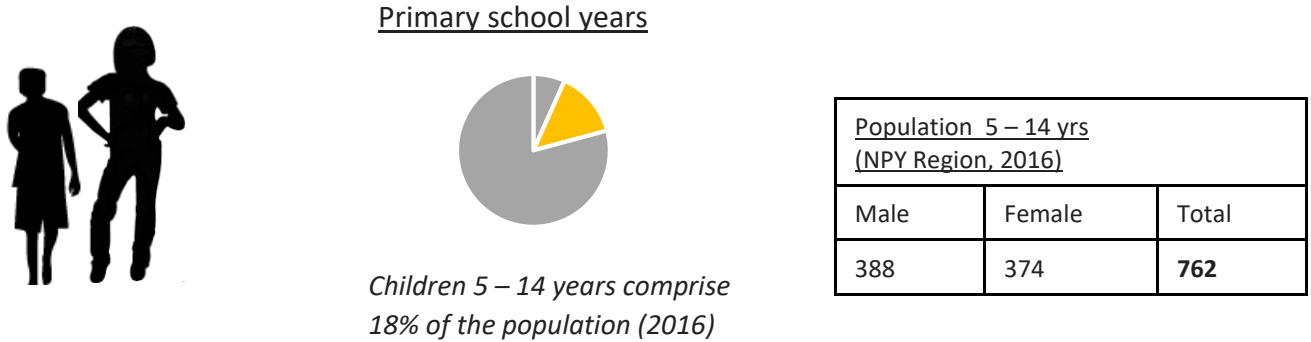
² Census, 2016

³ https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-08-09/aboriginal-communities-sue-federal-government-over-cdp/11267290?fbclid=IwAR3O_ggps0_RhV4V0Ah3zW0gqmhSVn9nMzGCot_VV3_QiVCluRHP8eOUoms

⁴ Shalley & Stewart 2017. *Aboriginal Adult English Language Literacy and Numeracy in the Northern Territory: A Statistical Overview*, Whole of Community Engagement Initiative, Charles Darwin University

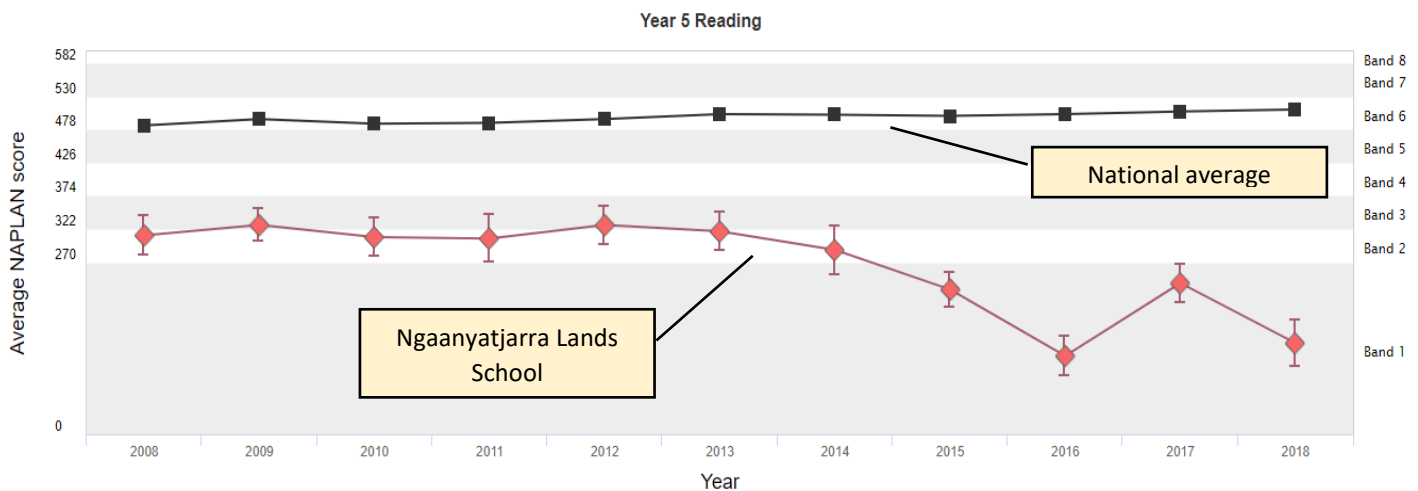
Reliable information on early childhood provision is unavailable for the region, however anecdotal evidence suggests that many communities receive **less than 15 hours per child per week** recommended under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education⁵.

According to the Australian Early Development Census (2015), **74% of children under 5 years from the NPY region are vulnerable in one or more domains**, (compared to 42% of Indigenous students nationally and 21% of non-Indigenous students nationally).



Government Primary schools are located in each NPY community (except 1 that is run by an independent (private) provider⁶). School attendance and attainment results give some indication of the many challenges within primary schools across the region (further analysis of the possible cause of these challenges is contained in Chapter 3 below). 2018 *My School* data records the **average annual school attendance⁷ rate at 56%** - with a range as low as 29% in NPY schools.

NAPLAN results in **reading, writing and numeracy levels amongst primary students are reported as ‘substantially below the national average’**. For example, the following graph shows declining NAPLAN reading results over time across 9 community campuses of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands schools (bottom line), as compared to the national average. This is consistent with NAPLAN results across the region, across all domains of reading, writing and numeracy, at all year levels.

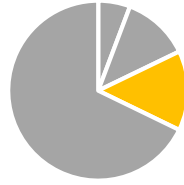


⁵ The National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education was endorsed by Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2008 and stated that by 2013 every child would have access to 15 hour a week of early childhood programs in the year before they commence primary school.

⁶ Docker River primary school in the NT is run by Nyangatjatjara College – a private school with secondary campuses across 3 communities in the southern NT.

⁷ Student attendance rate is defined as a number of actual full-time equivalent student days attended by full-time students in Years 1 – 10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student days attended.

Secondary school years



Young people aged 15 – 24 years
comprise 21% of the population (2016)

Population 15 – 25 yrs (NPY Region, 2016)		
Male	Female	Total
435	470	905

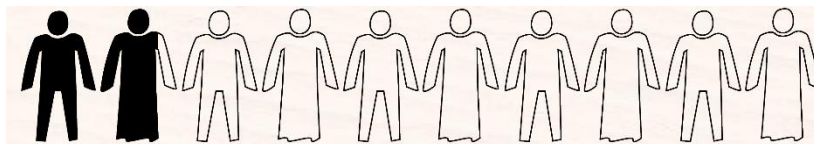
Secondary schooling in the NPY Region is delivered from the primary school facility within most communities. As such, there is **no publically available disaggregated enrolment and attendance data for secondary school students** available. This lack of data means it is difficult to provide any evidence-based account of secondary engagement or outcomes – as distinct from primary schooling – with all classes amalgamated within the same school data.

In Finke community (NT) there is no secondary provision at all. In this instance – students must attend boarding school in order to pursue secondary education⁸.

“Education is important – there is no secondary school in Aputula; Kids have to go away to secondary school, and are getting kicked out and sent home all the time”

(Aputula community member, 3 May 2017)

In most communities, the secondary class is taught by 1 or 2 secondary teachers (Y7-12); larger communities may have more teachers to deliver separate secondary boys/girls classes, or junior/senior secondary classes. As such, the range of subject on offer is extremely limited and scope for completing Year 12 certificates from Lands-based schools is only possible through supplementary VET courses outside of the schools. **A very small number of students from the region have completed Year 12** (18% of 20 – 24 year olds⁹).



18% of Anangu (aged 17–24 years) have completed Year 12 in the NPY Region (2016)

Overall student attendance and engagement with secondary school is very low across the region. Anecdotal evidence confirms that dropout rates amongst secondary students are high – particularly following initiation of teenage boys to become ‘men’. The Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program delivered in the APY Lands (only) provides an important alternative to secondary students disengaged from school. Access to the Umawa Trade Training Centre on the APY Lands also gives students from this jurisdiction (only) access to alternative learning pathways beyond the classroom. FLO and the Trade Training Centre are both valuable programs that supplement the secondary education system in the APY Lands and **there is considerable demand for equivalent facilities and support to be available for all students throughout the region.**

⁸ This has been a focus for strong community advocacy in Finke over recent years – as other communities of similar (and smaller) size have secondary education available for their children in community

⁹ ABS Census, 2016

Practical project learning approaches such as the **'Big Picture' pedagogy**, used in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands Schools also offers a promising alternative approach. This approach supports student learning based on their areas of interest and places a strong emphasis on practical, hands on learning and preparation for pathways beyond school. With disengagement from secondary school a significant issue on the region, innovative alternatives such as these must be explored and shared across the region.

"Secondary education opens future options to students. The quality of thought required to succeed in secondary schooling is the basis for citizenship, social participation and control over one's life. It provides access to jobs, training and further education. The lack of a complete secondary education is increasingly a barrier to life chances".¹⁰

Boarding school is an increasingly popular option for many young people and their families across the region, however there is only anecdotal data available **on numbers of students from the NPY lands attending boarding schools**.

The NT Education Department funded Transition Support Unit provides assistance for remote students in NT communities to apply for and be supported to attend boarding schools in regional and interstate centres. The NPY Women's Council has also responded to community demand for boarding school support – working in a limited number of communities to support families make informed choices and receive practical assistance to apply for and attend boarding school. **There is a high demand for this support to be extended across borders to all students in all communities in the NPY region.**

Post-secondary years



There is currently no systematic investment in formal transition programs, practical support or structured pathways for young people leaving school in NPY communities. Schools in the region do not receive funding for pathways brokers/ transition support roles – as elsewhere in the country. Opportunities for traineeships, apprenticeships and vocational training are limited. **60% of NPY communities have no access to vocational training in their communities at all**, and many face more than 1,000 kilometres of dirt roads to access their nearest TAFE or training provider.

There are few young people engaged in work or study post-school in the NPY Region; in 2016, only **13% of young people aged 17 – 24 years were participating in work or study**. Only 3% of this cohort had completed a Certificate III or above. There is **no publicly available data on numbers of students accessing TAFE or VET courses per annum**. Further details and recommendations on school-to-work initiatives are described in Chapter 3.4 below.



13% of young people in the NPY region are working or studying (2016)

*"My vision is to see kids from here get qualifications and jobs.
But to do this in the future we need to look at what is going on today".*

Makinti Minutjukur, Former Director,
Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC), Pukatja - 2018

¹⁰ Wilson, B. N.D, 2014. *A Share in the Future: Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*

Structural and Service Provision Recommendations:

Early childhood years:

- We recommend an increase in the provision of early childhood programs for children under 5 years to the suggested 15 hours per week (minimum).

Secondary school years:

- We recommend an extension of boarding school support programs to increase the choices available to families across the region.
- We recommend increased access to quality education options within communities – including access to FLO, VET and alternative curriculum pathways (such as Big Picture) that can support increased attendance and retention results.

Post secondary years:

- We recommend an urgent investment in increased access to vocational training and structured school-to-work transition activities – as described further in Chapter 3.4 below.

3. Barriers & enabling factors to young people's learning in the NPY Region

Anangu have spoken up strongly about their vision to raise children who are “... *confident, have a strong sense of identity and belonging, take up training and work opportunities, engage in both ways learning and contribute productively to the family*¹¹”.

Through extensive community consultation, research and collaborative co-design, Empowered Communities have sought to deeply understand the learning aspirations and barriers facing Anangu, and a way forward for education and youth support in the region. In the face of complex historical, social, cultural, geographic, economic disadvantage – we have adopted a strengths-based approach to this work. We have also sought to build upon the strong foundations of Anangu connection to *Tjukurpa* (law), *Walytja* (family), *Manta* (land) and *Wangka* (language) that define culture and identity. This approach also acknowledges the need to operate within ‘*piranpa*’ (western) norms, or – as Andrea Mason, former Co-Chair of NPY Empowered Communities, describes as the imperative to be able to ‘walk in two worlds’...

“Anangu who have the cultural dexterity to ‘kick on their right foot as well as their left’ are at an advantage.” (Andrea Mason, OAM)

This chapter describes the key enabling factors that Anangu have told us lead to educational success. Each is broken down into a number of key elements and recommendations are provided on how we believe these can best be achieved.

¹¹ Ninti One, 2017. *Centering Anangu Voices: A research project exploring how Nyangatjatjara College might better strengthen Anangu aspirations through education*

3.1 Culturally grounded education

This section addresses the following points within the terms of reference of this inquiry:

- The role of culture and country in a child's learning;
- Community & family structures that support a child's education and attendance at school

In almost 80% of all community consultations conducted by Empowered Communities, Anangu have identified the importance of raising young people with strong cultural foundations as a key priority for embedding a strong sense of identity. This view is confirmed in research conducted by Nyangatjatjara College in 2017¹² through a series of interviews with young people, their families and community leaders:

"A strong theme throughout interviews was the importance of cultural knowledge, connection to the land and language and the primacy of intergenerational engagement in Anangu communities.... Participants saw this as crucial in the context of a wide range of benefits, including identity and belonging, building student engagement, mentoring, strengthening the future of Anangu communities, language and knowledge"¹³.

In the education context – we believe this can be achieved in the following ways:

- **Family involvement and community engagement.**

Anangu have told us family and community support is an essential element for young people's success. Through our research and conversations, families with an active interest and participation in their children's education have higher expectations and encourage them towards greater outcomes than less engaged families.

"Kids succeed when they have strong families pushing them ..."¹⁴

Anangu want to see more regular opportunities for **intergenerational learning** supported in schools.

"Tjukurpa (culture) is important. We need support to take young people hunting, teaching kids about country, protecting sacred sites & working with Traditional Owners to keep culture strong."
(Aputula community member, 3 May 2017)

"We want more picnics and bush camps for culture sharing with old people and young people; talking and yarning around the camp fire, with visits to other communities to learn more stories."
(Imanpa community member, 31 May 2017)

Communities and parents want to see **schools as cultural hubs**, embedded in community life as an integrated resource. They would like to see schools extended to include playgroups and parenting support services and build on the concept of 'Parent as First Teachers' programs. The NT Government's 'Starting Early for a Better Future' implementation plan (2018 -22) recommends integrated Child and Family Centres as place-based hubs that encourage family participation in early childhood education and development. However, there are currently no Child and Family Centres, or integration of early and primary schools except in a handful of APY communities within the region.

¹² Ninti One, 2017. *Centering Anangu Voices: A research project exploring how Nyangatjatjara College might better strengthen Anangu aspirations through education*

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

- **First language literacy; bi-lingual education**

As described earlier, it is not uncommon for children commencing school in the NPY region to speak little or no English. As such, Anangu have raised the importance of supporting their children to be able to read, write and be assessed in their first language. There is a strong argument for this approach in light of evidence that shows that children have a far greater chance of becoming literate and numerate in English if they have a strong foundation in first language literacy¹⁵. This would allow for a more accurate assessment of skill and ability and prevent reinforcement of ‘failing’ in mainstream English literacy and numeracy assessment - such as NAPLAN tests.

A commitment to **bi-lingual education** in remote schools requires training, supporting and valuing the contribution of Anangu as classroom teachers (this is discussed further below under ‘Workforce composition and quality’). This also requires a consistent and shared approach to resource development and assessment rubrics across the region.

- **Culturally responsive ‘red dirt’ curriculum**

There is much research to support the importance of valuing language and culture within schools as a means of improving student and family engagement and improving student outcomes.^{16 17} However, Anangu want their children’s education to extend beyond just language and culture to include a locally relevant, contextual curriculum that values local history, politics and pathways to local opportunities equally alongside western knowledge systems.

As a result, we support the approach of the CRC -Remote Education Systems project, of a ‘red-dirt curriculum’. This describes an Anangu-led view of culturally appropriate, place-based education – designed and delivered by Anangu (within the parameters of the Australian Curriculum), whereby children learn locally relevant content in an integrated and contextual way. This means drawing on local examples, knowledge, stories and opportunities and combining an Anangu world view into everyday learning – rather than as isolated subjects or stand alone activities.

- **Strong Anangu governance and decision making**

By extension from the points above, strong representative Anangu governance is key to ensuring meaningful and relevant program design and delivery. Many Anangu throughout the region have told us they have little understanding of what goes on inside schools or involvement in the decisions that affect their children and their learning. Decisions about services and programs are often made externally with little or no local input. Strong local leadership and governance structures, active local school boards and participation of families in decision making will serve to strengthen a culturally grounded, place-based approach to education in the region.

The **Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC)** is one such example. As an incorporated Aboriginal organisation focusing on education across the APY Lands, the PYEC works alongside the mainstream government education system to ensure cultural accountability through local policy and operational approaches. There is no equivalent Anangu-led governance structures elsewhere in the region.

¹⁵ Wilson, B. et al, 2017. *The role of Aboriginal literacy in improving English literacy in remote Aboriginal communities: an empirical systems analysis with the Interplay Wellbeing Framework*

¹⁶ Collins, B, 1999. *Learning Lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the NT*. NT Dep’t of Employment, Education and Training.

¹⁷ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2012. *Our Land. Our Languages: Language learning in Indigenous communities*. The Parliament of Australia

Recommendations for culturally grounded education:

- Increased family and community involvement in schools through intergenerational and cultural teaching, and integration of schools as community hubs
- Commitment to a regional bi-lingual education, which includes local resource development and assessment in first languages.
- Regional commitment to developing a 'red-dirt curriculum', which adapts the national curriculum framework toward locally relevant and contextualized content.
- Strengthened Anangu leadership and governance structures for local decision making in the education sector across the region.

3.2 Improved access and quality of educational choices

This section addresses the following points within the terms of reference of this inquiry:

- Effective government initiatives, past and present, that support remote communities to enable greater educational outcomes, including those that have improved attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Innovative approaches to workforce, including recruitment, professional learning, retention and support, and lessons from communities that could be more generally applied;

School attendance and attainment data are routinely cited as the key indicators for educational progress in closing the gap. These measures have been the focus of numerous enquiries and reviews¹⁸, and are the focus on ongoing investment from Governments and service providers alike. However, whilst Anangu share these concerns – communities in the region have spoken up about the importance of focussing on **access to quality and engaging education options** as key contributors to improving school attendance and attainment results. In other words - without addressing the issues of access and quality – educational outcomes will not improve.

In the NPY region, we believe this can be achieved in the following ways.

- **Increased access to education options; Regional equity across jurisdictions**

As stated in Chapter 2 – there is significant disparity in the resourcing and provision of education and learning services across the region. Quite simply, improved access to consistent education options from early years through to vocational training is an essential element to improving educational outcomes for young people in the region. In summary, the key issues are:

- Lack of consistent early childhood programs – insufficient pre-school provision in the region
- Lack of secondary school provision in Aputula community
- Limited options for engaging and alternative secondary education options; limited scope for Year 12 attainment on the Lands.
- Limited assistance for families to understand and access boarding school options
- Lack of access to VET training – inconsistent service provision across the region (notably lacking in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands)

¹⁸ Wilson, B. N.D, 2014. *A Share in the Future: Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*; Collins, B. 1999. *Learning Lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*. House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. 2012. *Our Land. Our Languages: Language learning in Indigenous communities*. The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

- **Workforce quality, composition and capability**

Anangu are concerned about quality and composition of staff that work in schools across the Lands - in particular the extremely **high turnover of non-Aboriginal (outside) staff and relatively low levels of local (Aboriginal) employment**. Our research suggests from 2012-18, the APY Lands schools (8 community schools) saw approximately **40 different principals come and go** in the 6 year period. It is assumed that the turnover of teachers during this time was similar.

The transience of staff through remote community schools results in poor continuity for students – within a culture that values relationships as foundational to all interactions.

“The teachers come for a short time then leave and the kids miss out. The teachers come on short contracts then leave and a new one comes and has to start over. We want the teachers to stay and teach properly.”¹⁹

Teachers in the region are often new and inexperienced –taking up incentives for new teachers in remote postings – and lacking specialist skills required to support high-needs students. Furthermore, teachers in the region typically lack ESL training as per recommendation #8 from the 2017 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs Inquiry – which states that...

“As a matter of urgency - English as a Second Language (ESL) be a compulsory component for all teaching degrees; Mandatory ESL training provided to all teachers already working in schools (with substantial Indigenous students); and, opportunity be provided to teachers to undertake local language training.”²⁰

In 2018, Empowered Communities worked with a consultant from the Federal Department of Education on an issues paper titled ‘*Red Dirt – Red carpet; A new education path for Anangu in the NPY Lands*’. The challenge of workforce composition is addressed in detail in the paper and includes recommendations including:

- Require new teachers to have a minimum period of practicum/work experience in the region before they are considered for position.
- Select teachers based on their suitability to work in the unique environment of the NPY lands. (Teachers must) be able to form strong relationships with local educators, parents and students.
- Mandate ESL qualifications for all non-Aboriginal teachers
- Required cultural induction and awareness programs for all non-Aboriginal teachers.

In parallel, Anangu have expressed a desire for more **Anangu to be employed** in schools. Research shows that having local Aboriginal ancillary staff employed at a school, including but not limited to assistant teachers, improves not only school attendance, but also NAPLAN results²¹.

“There are not enough Anangu teachers working at the school; there should be more jobs in child care, teachers support etc. We have no Anangu pre-school teacher.”

(Aputula community member, 3 May 2017)

¹⁹ Ninti One, 2017. *Centering Anangu Voices: A research project exploring how Nyangatjatjara College might better strengthen Anangu aspirations through education*

²⁰ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, 2017. *The power of education: from surviving to thriving – Educational opportunities for ATSI students*

²¹ Guenther, J., & Disbray, S. 2015. *Why local staff matter in very remote schools. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education annual conference, Fremantle. 1 December 2015*

Anangu workforce development is a key recommendation of the 2018 'Red Dirt-Red carpet report'²², and suggests:

- Increasing the proportion and identifying specific roles for local people in schools – in both teaching and ancillary/non-teaching roles;
- Develop a strong and structured program for Anangu Education Workers (AEW's) with a structured training and support, career path and appropriate remuneration and conditions.

We believe that improvements to the retention and skills of all teachers across the region, and a commitment to increased Anangu employment will serve to improve the educational outcomes of students and the ongoing relationships with families and communities.

The closure of AnTEP; the demise of Anangu teacher training

AnTEP - the Anangu Teacher Education Program operated across the APY Lands from 1981 – 2016. During this period, AnTEP provided a unique and valuable service as the only avenue for Anangu to enter into and receive qualifications as classroom teachers in the APY Lands. AnTEP valued and celebrated Anangu language, knowledge and teaching pedagogy. It was a locally developed response to local needs that skilled and supported local people to be trained and employed as teachers in their own communities. AnTEP's demise began in the 1990's through government policy changes including the erosion of first-language instruction and changes to teacher accreditation processes. Federal funding to AnTEP ceased in 2008, after which local schools funded the program until its closure in 2016. Through AnTEP, Anangu were recruited, trained and supported and APY schools employed a steady pool of local workers. Since the closure of AnTEP, there is no longer any formal accredited training for Anangu education workers. Today, all professional development is standardised, and Anangu are required to travel to Adelaide, Alice Springs, Darwin to participate. These training are no longer place-based, in language or tailored to an Anangu specific context. Formal teacher qualifications are only available off the Lands and training for first language teachers non existent. For many, the closure of AnTEP was an irreversible backwards step that has changed the face of Anangu education in the region. For further information – see '*The death of the remote Aboriginal first language teacher: Reviving remote teacher training pathways in the International Year of Indigenous Languages*'. Presentation at AARE (Australian Association for Research in Education), December 2nd, 2019 Brisbane, Australia by S.Osborne

Recommendations for improved access and quality of education:

- As stated in Chapter 2 above, we recommend increased and consistent access to education options across the NPY region – at all life stages from pre-school to post-secondary/ vocational.
- We recommend structural changes to improve the retention and skills of non-Anangu teaching staff coming to the region, and upskilling with ESL and language training
- We recommend increased opportunities for supported Anangu employment and professional development in order to increase the Anangu workforce in NPY schools.

²² Empowered Communities, 2018. *Red Dirt – Red carpet: A new education path for Anangu in the NPY Lands*

3.3 Complimentary wrap-around youth support

This section addresses the following points within the terms of reference of this inquiry:

- Community and family structures that support a child's education and their attendance at school;
- Effective government initiatives, past and present that support remote communities to enable greater educational outcomes, including those that have improved attainment in literacy and numeracy.

A holistic approach to wrap-around, pastoral care is critical to young people's education success. Anangu understand that young people's engagement inside the school gate is critically dependent upon what is occurring outside the school gate. Communities in the region have consistently spoken up about their desire for **better-resourced recreation and diversion programs**, afterhours, weekends and in school holidays, and better **access to specialist case management and family response** support.

Research conducted in 2017 measured the impact of youth programs in Central Australia²³ and concluded that the estimated return on every \$1 invested in youth programs²⁴, \$4 of value was created²⁵. This research also found that a successful youth program must be based on the provision of regular and consistent diversionary activities. *'The success of these activities is reliant on stable and skilled youth workers, regular and consistent activities and community involvement in the design and delivery of the program.'*

However, there is currently no coordinated youth strategy for the NPY region or mechanism for coordination of service providers. An integrated approach to supporting young people both inside and outside the school gate must address the following:

- **Coordination and collective action**

There is considerable evidence to suggest that *how* services are delivered can be equally or more important than *what* services are delivered²⁶ when working with vulnerable individuals, families and communities. As stated, there is no regional approach to youth support, or education provision across the NPY Lands. Our research has suggested that there are more than 250 service providers operating in the region. Where Anangu are united in their worries and aspirations for young people, jurisdictional divides and siloed services across the 3 states runs the risk of fragmentation and duplication. Families, service providers, schools and government need to all work together on common, community-led goals to achieve the best outcomes for young people. Collective action is required to deliver a new way of working that can better support real change.

²³ CAYLUS & Nous Group, 2017. *Investing in the Future: The impact of youth programs in remote central Australia: a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis.*

²⁴ This study was not on programs in the NPY region, but it would be reasonable to conclude that the social return on investment would be comparable to these NT based programs.

²⁵ CAYLUS & Nous Group, 2017. *Investing in the Future: The impact of youth programs in remote central Australia: a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis.*

²⁶ Murdoch Children's Institute, 2011. *Review of the evidence base in relation to early childhood approaches to support children in highly disadvantaged communities for the Children's Ground Project*, Prepared for the Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations

School attendance strengthened through school holiday partnerships:

A newly emerging partnership between the PYEC and the NPYWC Youth Program is a promising example of coordination and collaborative action for the benefit of young people and the community as a whole. Under this partnership, local Anangu school attendance officers employed in the APY Lands will be engaged during school holiday periods to deliver and supervise school holiday programs alongside youth workers. This provides valuable work hours and income to the school attendance officers during a period where previously they had no work. It also gives extra relief to the busy youth workers during high needs holiday periods. Young people and their families experience a consistency in support and relationship from these workers – which provides them with not just meaningful engagement during holidays, but a better supported and more successful return to school at the commencement of each term.

- **Early intervention: programs for children under 10 years**

For children under 10 in the NPY region, **there is currently no funding for sports, recreation or diversion programs**. Early intervention, case management and crisis support for children under 10 is also inconsistent. Intensive Family Support Services for young children at risk of entering the child protection system are **only funded in 8 of the 25 communities in the NPY region** – with no services in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands at all. This type of wrap around care for the youngest, most vulnerable children directly affects their ability to engage in and succeed within the school setting.

- **Targeted youth services; wrap around case management and support**

Youth service provision across the region is variable. The NPY Women’s Council Youth Service takes referrals for individual case management and occasional emergency relief support for young people aged 10 – 25 years. They also provide early intervention and preventative drug and alcohol, mental health and other education through culturally appropriate camps and workshops on country.

This service works in conjunction with other NPY Women’s Council programs – including the Domestic and Family Violence Service and the Intensive Family Support (*Walytjapiti*) Service, plus Ngankari (traditional healers) employed by the organisation, in order to provide the most holistic coordinated support model for individuals and families.

However, this service is not funded consistently across all communities, and in some instances only a sport and recreation model is funded. Access to targeted youth mental health support is urgently needed across the region. There are currently no **specialized mental health or suicide response supports** available outside of APY communities – despite extremely high incidences of youth suicide in the region²⁷.

Finally, there is limited additional resourcing for high-needs school holiday periods, despite ongoing community demand. Anecdotal evidence suggests that regular, structured school holiday programs in the region of only reduce the incidence of ‘anti-social behaviour’ during holiday times, but they can increase the likelihood of students return and integrating back to school at the commencement of each term.

“We want kids holiday programs and new band equipment. We need to keep young people out of trouble and busy”
(Aputula community member, 3 May 2017)

²⁷ NPY Women’s Council internal data – reports more than 1 attempted suicide per month across the region.

Recommendations for Wrap-around Youth Support:

- We recommend that a coordinated youth strategy for the NPY region be developed that supports collaborative partnerships between organisations and more efficient, targeted service delivery.
- We recommend the provision of wrap around support services for children all under 10 years – including funding for recreation and diversion programs, plus intensive family support and case management services to be provided consistently across the region.
- We recommend an extension of wrap-around youth services across the region – including additional school holiday resourcing and specifically targeted mental health and case management support across all communities for young people aged 10 – 25 years.

3.4 School-to-work transition support

This section addresses the following points within the terms of reference of this inquiry:

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

A strong theme throughout Empowered Communities consultations in the NPY region has been the need to support young people to successfully transition out of school and onto a pathway towards work or further study.

The 2017 Closing the Gap report states - ‘Young people who do not successfully make the transition from education to work are at risk of long-term disadvantage’²⁸.

With only 13% of 17 – 24 year olds in the NPY region participating in work or study²⁹, and no formal pathways or transition support programs currently in place, the need for change in this area is critical. Young people throughout the region have spoken up about their experience of leaving school and feeling ‘lost’, ‘on a precipice’, and overwhelmed with a sense of ‘what next’. They have expressed a need for help ‘to find their way’ and support to navigate what to do next in the lives.

“We want more skills for kids when they leave school”

(Imanpa community member, 31 May 2017)

Consultation conducted on behalf of Nyangatjatjara College in the NT in 2017 found that:

“...training and work was by far the most significant priority identified for the College in supporting young people for the future... Anangu expectations of education are that it will lead to local employment opportunities and young people confidently transitioning into roles that support the family, the community, caring for country and the continuation of culture.”³⁰

There are currently many barriers to this happening. Opportunities for traineeships, apprenticeships and vocational training are limited– with no TAFE or VET campuses outside of the APY Lands. Opportunities for Anangu to develop work readiness skills are also extremely limited and even simple things such as securing a drivers licence, first aid training or other certificates required for employment (such as lifeguard certificates or White Cards) are extremely challenging due to lack of training providers and transition support in the region.

²⁸ Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2017. *Closing the Gap Prime Minister’s Report*

²⁹ Census, 2016

³⁰ Ninti One, 2017. *Centring Anangu Voices: A research project exploring how Nyangatjatjara College might better strengthen Anangu aspirations through education*

The **National Indigenous Training Academy** – which operates out of **Voyages** resort at Yulara offers significant potential, however engagement and employment of local Anangu at the Academy has been extremely low. We welcome recent new investment in the **school-to-work program** run by Voyages and hope to see this fulfil strong local demand for more employment and training opportunities at the Yulara resort.

The **Trade Training Centre (TTC) at Umawa** is a significant infrastructure facility used as a vocational training hub for APY schools. It is a valuable asset that provides the necessary vocational training to secondary students and contributes directly to their ability to attain 12 (SACE) qualifications. However since its construction in 2014, the numbers of school groups attending the TTC are in decline, and graduate numbers are decreasing. A review of schools support for the opportunities available at the TTC is recommend – particularly in light of the high staff turn-over in schools mentioned above and the lack of pathways/transition focus in the currently secondary curriculum.

In addition, there is no support provided to young people to transition and apply the skills gained at the TTC into local jobs and no monitoring or evaluation of the outcomes of graduates. There is an urgent need to build an evidence base for the effectiveness of the centre – including evaluation of the overall operations and management of the facility in order to ensure its sustainability and optimum potential is realized. .

Furthermore, there is high demand for cross-border access to the TTC from NT communities. For students from across the borders, access to training at the TTC is on a user-pays basis. There is a precedent for cross-border agreements for the use of TTC facilities in Mildura, and we would strongly advocate for a similar agreement to be developed in the NPY tri-state region. We also support the strong wishes of Ngaanyatjarra communities to have their own TTC in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

Case study: the tyranny of borders in the tri-state region.

The Umawa Trade Training Centre (TTC) provides subsidised access to VET training to students from South Australia’s APY Lands schools. However, due to jurisdictional boundaries – for students across the border in NT or WA schools, access to the TTC is on a user-pays basis. In 2019, Nyangatjatjara College sought training for its students to complete a certificate in hospitality as a vocational component towards school curriculum. The TTC being the closest, and the only available facility (Alice Springs providers were fully booked) – the College is charged on a full fee-paying basis of \$7500 to utilise the facility, plus \$160 per head per day for accommodation and. In 2019, 8 students attended 13 days of training at the College’s expense, in order to meet the training requirement. Students from APY schools access the same training for free.

3.4.1 NPY Transition Support Model

Empowered Communities has been actively working over the past 18 months to co-design a ‘place-based’ transition support model for the NPY Region. In August 2018, a Working Group was formed - regularly attended by around 16 different stakeholder groups including the National Indigenous Australian’s Agency (NIAA), all State and Territory Education Departments, local school leadership, Aboriginal organisations, TAFE SA and Uni SA. Since November 2018, 5 x co-design workshops have been held. Through these collaborative workshops, a regional model for supporting better outcomes for young people to succeed in their transition from school to work has been developed. Initial design of the initiative is now complete and we are embarking on implementation of a pilot approach. Some activities are already beginning and others need additional time and resourcing to implement. This requires commitment, investment and a fundamental systems change within the region.

The key elements for the proposed transition support are:

- Individual support for young people: The appointment of ‘brokers’ (in schools) to provide consistent individual support and transition planning for a minimum of 12 months post-school and to facilitate collaboration between schools, families and employers.
- Transition curriculum and school based training: Introduction and/or extension of a transition curriculum and structured work experience, consistent for all secondary students across the region.
- Commitments between schools and local employers to coordinated, structured and sequenced work exposure, work experience and pathways to employment for senior secondary students.
- Coordination and commitment to a long term, holistic, multiagency approach from all stakeholders – including schools, employers and families –including shared data and evaluation for action learning.

Case study: A recipe for success

Jacob (not his real name) is a young Pitjantjatjara man from the APY Lands. He was part of a small but successful cohort who graduated year 12 from his community school and has gone on to complete training and employment in a number of important roles within his community. What is the secret of his success? Jacob explains...

“ Firstly, I’d have to say my family are the most important influence in my life. They have always had high expectations and driven me to be the best I can. Aside from them, there have been a few other important things...When I started high school we had this special teacher. She said to us... “If you stay, so will I”. She essentially set down a challenge to our class – stick it out to the end, and I’ll stick by you – which was very unusual given that most teachers at the school usually left after a year or two.

During the years that she taught us, there was a really strong program at Voyages – the Ayers Rock resort – where we would regularly go for exposure, then work experience. That doesn’t happen so much anymore, but in my time - with each visit we would get more familiar with the place, and get more confidence and ideas about options available. After each visit, we would come back to school and do follow up training and the Trade Training Centre in Umawa – which kind of reinforced what we had done at Voyages. Our teacher took us on regular visits to the Trade Training Centre as part of our curriculum and this helped build points towards our SACE.

The year I finished Year 12 was the biggest number of graduates from a Lands school to have ever been recorded. That teacher stayed with us to the end. For our graduation, she arranged Jessica Mauboy to come to the celebration in community, but unfortunately, Jessica pulled out at the last minute because she had to go and accept an award somewhere! That special teacher has now left the school, and but since then I returned to Voyages to complete a Certificate in tourism and horticulture. I went back there because I had been exposed to it during my time at school. I now work with the FLO Program and am passionate about mentoring the next generation of young Anangu leaders.

NPY TRANSITION SUPPORT

A pathway from school to work or further study

empowered
COMMUNITIES

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
Planned bridging support towards work or further study; developed in conjunction with family, education and employment providers; practical assistance plus wrap-around support at each step.

WORKPLACE COMMITMENTS TO ANANGU EMPLOYMENT
Local employers actively building relationships with schools, setting targets for Anangu recruitment and investing in opportunities for school leavers.

IMPROVED ACCESS & EQUITY IN EDUCATION & TRAINING ACROSS REGION
Vocational training and work readiness

TRANSITION CURRICULUM and SCHOOL-BASED TRAINING
Bringing the world of work into the classroom to help prepare young people for work before they get there.

MENTORS & LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS
Inspiring role models, and initiatives to build confidence and aspirations of young people and communities.

RAISING ASPIRATIONS;
Forums and mechanisms for communicating job opportunities to community, plus info sharing & agreements between services.

COORDINATION & COMMITMENTS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

WORK EXPERIENCE & EXPOSURE TRIPS
Trying a variety of workplace experiences; placements with increasing length and responsibilities; excursions and exposure outside of community to broaden young people's horizons.

FAMILY AS THE FOUNDATION: Family support is key to ensuring the best outcome for young people. Family participation in all elements of the initiative ensures a locally led and culturally appropriate response, and embeds an approach of Anangu ownership and empowerment.

Recommendations for School to Work Transition Support:

- Review into the Umawa Trade Training Centre – re: cross-border access, strategies for increasing the use and outcomes for students at the centre and sustainable management structures.
- Analysis of and investment in Ngaanyatjarra Land vocational training including a Ngaanyatjarra Lands Trade Training Centre
- Support for implementation of the NPY Transition Support model – including resourcing for transition brokers in schools across the region, improved transition curriculum for secondary students and commitments from local employers to new graduates.

4. Conclusion

The NPY region is a unique environment that demands a unique place-based response to design, deliver and improve the education pathways for children and their families.

In this submission we have attempted to present factual information on the education infrastructure and resourcing across the tri-state region, and where available the data that pertains to student outcomes. This information presents a picture of disparity in services and underperformance relative to other indigenous data elsewhere in Australia, and far below national measures for closing the gap in relation to 'mainstream'.

We have also discussed 4 broad areas or 'enabling factors' for how to address these issues – based on direct feedback from Anangu community members, leaders and stakeholders working in the education and youth services across the NPY Lands. This strong community voice is validated through research and data (where available) to build the case for action around these critical areas.

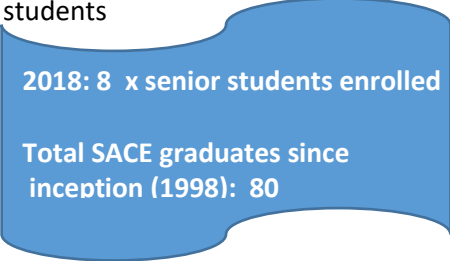


They are:

- A culturally grounded education
- Improved access and quality of educational choices
- Complimentary wrap around youth support
- School-to-work transition support

Recommendations within each of these areas present a unique opportunity to demonstrate how several governments can work together with Anangu to develop and agree an overarching framework and governance principles that will guide and develop regional capability. It will require a long term, sustained approach and commitment to valuing a culturally embedded education that incrementally builds community confidence and engagement in children's learning, provides culturally responsive learning contexts and creates local opportunities for meaningful engagement and work.

Appendix 1: Education and Training Service Providers – NPY Region 2016

	NT – Southern communities	SA – APY Lands	WA – Ngaanyatjarra Lands
Primary Schools 5-12 years' old	<p>In all communities</p> <p>Run by Nyangatjatjara College in Docker River.</p> <p>NT Education Department-run in Mutitjulu, Imanpa and Aputula.</p> <p>In 2016, 79 enrolled (Mutitjulu, Imanpa, Aputula)</p>	<p>In all communities</p> <p>Run by SA Education Department (Anangu Education Service) across 8 APY communities:</p> <p>Pipalyatjara, Murpurtja, Amata, Ernabella, Kenmore Park, Fregon, Mimili, Indulkana</p>	<p>In all communities</p> <p>Run by Ngaanyatjarra College – 9 campus' across all Ng communities</p> <p>Warburton, Wingellina, Blackstone, Jameson, Wanarn, Warakurna, Kiwirrkurra, Tjukurla, Tjirrkarli</p>
Secondary Schools 12 – 16 years old	<p>Stand-alone secondary schools in Imanpa, Yulara, Docker River</p> <p>Run by Nyangatjatjara College</p> <p>No secondary schooling available in Aputula</p> <p>In 2016, 122 enrolled (Docker primary + 3 x secondary)</p>	<p>Secondary classes in all communities.</p> <p>No stand-alone secondary - all linked to primary schools.</p> <p>PYEC – Anangu-led body for education governance and curriculum on APY Lands</p> <p>In 2016, 557 enrolled @ all 8 schools (primary + secondary)</p>	<p>Secondary classes in all communities.</p> <p>No stand-alone secondary - all linked to primary schools.</p> <p>Run by Ngaanyatjarra College</p> <p>In 2016, 296 enrolled (primary + secondary)</p>

	NT – Southern communities	SA – APY Lands	WA – Ngaanyatjarra Lands
Secondary Schools 12 – 16 years old		Wiltja – Annex in Adelaide - direct boarding option for all APY secondary students  2018: 8 x senior students enrolled Total SACE graduates since inception (1998): 80	
Vocational Programs 16 – 20+ years old	Nyangatjatjara College providing some vocational training (Certificate 1 Community Services) to senior students, provided by Redpath Education).  In 2016, 3 students completed Cert 1 Community Services	Umuwa Trade training centre: vocational training programs accessed by all community schools. Agency-led adult education also available.	Ngaanyatjarra College – recently started offering small vocational training program in Warburton only, appx 10 – 15 students.  10 – 15 students currently engaged No vocational training currently available in Wingellina, Blackstone, Jameson, Wanarn, Warakurna, Kiwirrkurra, Tjukurla, Tjirrkarli

	NT – Southern communities	SA – APY Lands	WA – Ngaanyatjarra Lands
Vocational Programs 16 – 20+ years old	<p>National Indigenous Training Academy (NITA) @ Yulara. Certificate training in hospitality, horticulture, tourism for students aged 18+</p> <p>Oct 2016, 6% of Resort staff are Anangu</p> <p>Limited visiting program delivery from CDU & Batchelor to NT communities</p>	<p>TAFE SA – Learning centres staffed in Amata, Fregon, Ernabella, Indulkana, Mimili and Pipalyatjara, plus collaboration with Trade Training Centre.</p> <p>*Preparing for work (in partnership with local employers) *Literacy and numeracy *Learner driver education and licence support</p> <p>163 Certificates achieved since commencement (2013-16)</p> <p>Flexible Learning Options (FLO) Program initiated in 2016. Currently only operating in Mimili and Indulkana.</p>	
Transition support	<p>NT Government Transition Support Unit: since 2015 – established to support remote students to access boarding schools.</p> <p>NPYWC Youth Program (case management) in all communities</p> <p>Alice Based programs available include: Batchelor 'Preparation for Tertiary Success', must have completed Year 10 to be eligible. Little engagement from students in NPY communities to date.</p>	<p>NPYWC Youth Program (case management) in all communities.</p> <p>In 2018, NPYWC Youth Program commenced boarding school support program in Docker River, Pukatja and Amata.</p>	<p>NPYWC Youth Program (case management) – Wingellina & Kiwirrkurra only.</p> <p>No case management for young people in Warburton Blackstone, Jameson, Wanarn, Warakurna, Kiwirrkurra, Tjukurla, Tjirrkarli</p>

	NT – Southern communities	SA – APY Lands	WA – Ngaanyatjarra Lands
CDP and ‘Transition to Work’ providers	Ngurra Tjuta (Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Docker River); Catholic Care (Aputula)	RASAC – all APY communities	Ngaanyatjarra Council - all Ng communities
Leadership Programs	NT Government ‘First Circles’ (indigenous leadership) Program. No participants from NPY communities to date.	Dept of Education SA offering leadership programs (Future Leaders and Aspiring Leaders) through community schools for students and staff.	No known programs
	EC Pilot Emerging Leaders Program commenced 2018 for participants 25 – 40 years Kungka Career Conference – Tri-state leadership program for young women aged 12 – 20 years not run since 2012. No equivalent program for young men.		