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Senate Select Committee on Regional and
Remote Indigenous Communities

Dear Senator Scullion

Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities

Several weeks ago Laynhapuy Homelands Association was given the opportunity to present to the Committee at the public hearing held in Darwin.

At the hearing, I offered to take a number of questions 'on notice' or to provide further information.

In response to a question by Senator Siewart regarding the adequacy of 'follow up' to the NTER Child Health Checks, I attach a copy of summary report prepared by the Manager and General Practitioner of the Laynhapuy Health Service (Attachment A).

In response to a question by Senator Adams about perceived inadequacies in how the Patient's Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) operates in relation to clients from homelands, I attach a short report from the Manager of Laynhapuy Health Service (Attachment B).

In response to a question by yourself about the secondary schooling project at Garrthalala homeland run through Yirrkala Homeland School, I offered to provide additional detail about how the school operates. Please find attached a copy of the draft report about the Secondary Homelands Education Program (SHEP) that has recently been completed by the NT Department of Education (Attachment C). I am sure this particular project and information would be of interest to all Committee members.

I apologise for the delay in providing this information, but hope that it will still assist the Committee to understand the concerns of homeland residents.

Please contact me on 0429-864-561 should you have any further questions in relation to these matters.

Yours sincerely

Ric Norton
General Manager

Follow-up of NTER Child Health Checks

Laynhapuy Health Service (LHS) conducted 151 child health checks during Phase I of the Intervention. These checks were done in 8 Homeland centres over a period of 2 months. This time period was necessary due the travel distances and the need to maintain regular health services to the region. There were 20-25 children who had already had a MBS708 done in the previous six months who did not have another check done. There have been a further 12 child health checks done since the end of Phase I.

Of the 151 child health checks the following referrals were generated:

- **Dental** - 151 (100%)
- **Ear, Nose and Throat** - 22 (15%)
- **Audiology** - 43 (29%)
- **Paediatrics** - 6 (4%)
- **Local Health Service** - 56 (37%)

In Phase II we have been asked to perform chart audits to report how many of these referrals have been completed. Of our 151 forms sent in to NTER we received 122 chart audit requests which were completed and sent back prior to 30 Jun 08. The following referrals have been attended:

- **Dental** – unable to comment, no records from dentists, but estimated <20%
- **Ear, Nose and Throat** – 2/22 (9%)
- **Audiology** – 13/43 (30%) (plus 9 children who had not been referred)
- **Paediatrics** – 1/6 (17%)
- **Local Health Service** – 50/56 (89%)

Local health service reviews have been completed through targeted and opportunistic reviews by all LHS staff. Those children not yet followed up by LHS are on our current recall lists.

All referrals to ENT, audiology, paediatrics and dentists were sent to the NTER referral service in Darwin. We have had a follow up phone call in the last 6 weeks informing us that these referrals have now been forwarded onto our local hospital for follow up. We have not had contact from Gove District Hospital or the local DHCS audiologist that these referrals have been received, or that any appointments have been made.

The 2 children who have been reviewed by the ENT clinic had previously been referred for treatment.

In January some of the referrals generated were accidentally sent to Specialist Clinics at GDH, these referrals were sent back to us, and the CNC informed us that the Hospital was not responsible for the Intervention referrals.

DHCS does not employ a full-time dentist in this region. LHS is organizing their own dentist to deliver a service to the Homelands as it does not look like DHCS will be providing any dental service, including Intervention follow up for this region.

The Intervention has provided LHS with an opportunity to do a “blitz” on child health checks, but the outcomes from the process were largely already known.

Both LHS and Yirrkala CHC already had programs targeted at performing child health checks on the children of the region. I make mention of Yirrkala CHC as the populations of Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands are closely related and we estimate that there is a 40-50% population crossover. In the 6 months prior to the Intervention Yirrkala CHC had claimed ~120 MBS 708, and LHS had claimed ~50 MBS 708. Laynhapuy Health provides GP, chronic disease and nursing services to Yirrkala CHC.

The Intervention also provided the means to provide more timely follow up than we would sometimes be able to achieve.

The Intervention was supposed to provide, through local DHCS services, the other referred follow up – especially ENT, audiology and dental services. Clearly this has not been the case.

As mentioned, LHS is in the process of putting together a dental program to provide dental services to all residents of the Homelands, not just the children. This was seen as necessary as there appeared to be no plans by DHCS to provide either a follow up service for the Intervention child health checks, or a regular dental service for all residents of this region.

There has not been any indication from DHCS that there will be an increase in the ENT or paediatric services to this region. These services are provided through Gove District Hospital by Specialists visiting from Royal Darwin Hospital. As far as LHS is aware there are no extra planned visits to respond to the referrals made from the Homelands, or from any other health service in this region.

LHS has not been advised that we should be making our referrals through the usual channels, although this will likely be the outcome. This will require all of the referrals to be re-written onto official DHCS paperwork as the specialist clinic at GDH have advised that they will not be accepting referrals directly from the Intervention.

Since Phase II began in July of this year a team of 2 audiologists has been allocated to this region. They spent 4 days in the Homelands, the other days were spent at Yirrkala, Miwatj and Galiwinku.

These 4 days of audiology – 13 referred consultations, and 9 un-referred consultations - is the grand total of external services that LHS clients have been provided with through the Intervention in Phase II.

During Phase I there were several serious issues that were raised during the data collection Phase. These issues were detailed in a community report that was supplied to the NTER with the “weekly report sheet”. To date, we have received no feedback on these reports.

The community issues highlighted in the reports related to living conditions in the Homelands. They included details such as:

- unreliable water and electricity supplies
- most home toilets are pit not flushing toilets
- most toilets and showers were external to the residences

- most houses are a series of bedrooms – there are no internal kitchens, bathrooms or living rooms – in most cases a family will have 1 bedroom to live, sleep and store their belongings

Of most concern to us was the fact that there are no shops or outlets to purchase food in the Homelands. Residents travel up to 210 kilometers, paying up to \$1400 for a return trip to town to buy groceries. Taking into account that most people on CDEP and Centrelink benefits earn considerably less than \$20,000 pa, and that grocery prices in Nhulunbuy have recently been reported as much as 25% above those in Darwin, it is a wonder that children get fed at all! That workers from Centrelink would be sent out to homelands to sign people up for income quarantine programs under these conditions is beyond belief.

It has taken approximately 4 hours of medical staff time to compile this report. Much of this time was spent compiling the statistics reported above. ALL of our information was supplied to the NTER centre in Canberra and the follow up sent on to the AIHW as requested. Every CHC and follow-up audit sheet included an individual HRN and a unique community code. The Senate Select Committee and NTER Review Committee previously should have had access to this information. The NTER should have been able to compile this information on an individual health service basis so that the referrals which have yet to be followed up could be identified and dealt with in a systematic and coordinated manner.

At the end of the day, Laynhapuy Health Service was provided with a sum of money to perform child health checks, refer appropriately and to oversee that the requested follow-up was completed. Only by employing our own audiologist, ENT surgeon and Paediatrician would this task have been possible within a timely manner.

LHS believes that we have held up to our end of the bargain in having provided almost 90% of the required local health service follow up. In comparison, less than 30% of other follow up services have been provided by the NTER and DHCS.

This lack of follow up has put extra pressure on this health service (ie. LHS), as parents who consented to the CHC's had an expectation that any health issues would be attended to, and LHS continues to be unable to advise parents when, and indeed if, any follow up will occur.

(Advice provided by Jeff Cook, Manager, and Dr Sarah Chalmers, General Practitioner - Laynhapuy Health Service, 25 May 2009)

Addendum

NTER phoned LHS in week of 18 May while the Manager was away to ask if they could do some work in the homelands the following week. NTER had apparently initially contacted Laynha Homelands School, who unfortunately did not pass on the information.

NTER wanted to do audiology clinics and send an ENT surgeon at some stage within the next month. Dr Chalmers, LHS, advised NTER that audiology and ENT is not helpful without any follow-up planned, as happened in the previous round. NTER subsequently advised that they would come out the following week (25/5/09) and have put aside an operating day for children from the Homelands for a few weeks time.

Patients' Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS)

- Only three of the Laynhapuy Homelands are eligible for PATS because they are more than 200 kilometres from Gove District Hospital (GDH).

Although our other homelands fall below the distance threshold, access to GHDS remains a significant logistical and cost burden for access to appropriate medical care. Few homeland residents have reliable vehicles, fuel is expensive and only available in Nhulunbuy, road conditions are not good, some homelands are seasonally isolated, there is no affordable public transport, private 'bush taxis' and air charters are prohibitively expensive for individuals on low incomes. From a client perspective there is little difference between 80km and 200km – both are too far to walk if you are unwell!

- Decisions about PATS usage seem to be made by the PATS clerks or the x-ray department on a fairly discretionary basis, and often in conflict with the recommendation of Dr Sara Chalmers, the LHS General Practitioner.
- PATS usage decisions seem to reflect cost factors rather than patient needs, and current policy is that a plane will not be sent to collect a patient for an x-ray referral, for example, if there is only one person to be transported.

To overcome this situation LHS has had to organise group charter flights directly and then charge PATS on a 'per seat' proportion. This is only possible because of the very close organisational relationship between LHS and Laynhapuy Aviation Pty Ltd., but still imposes a significant transport administration burden on LHS for which it is not funded.

- The PATS scheme appears to have no structured system of governance or accountability. The implementation of the scheme appears subject to local interpretation of the PATS policy document. At GDH the scheme is managed by the Medical Superintendent. (position currently vacant).
- When Health Promotion activities such as Mammograms are offered to the area, these activities are based in Nhulunbuy. The cost of getting clients to this service is worn by LHS. This type of service is much needed and places LHS in a position where considerable travel associated costs are incurred at the expense of core health services.
- Recently the PATS scheme was extended to cover clients not in the three eligible Homelands but only if they needed to travel to Darwin (ie. not to GDS). Clients who have appointments in Darwin are assisted with travel from their Homeland to Gove and then out on Qantas, paid by PATS.

After only a short period of time, however, the Medical Superintendent at GDS decided this was not an appropriate interpretation of the policy and cancelled this arrangement. After lobbying and support from the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the NT (AMSANT) the arrangement was reinstated.

LHS is concerned that this access to PATS remains tenuous and subject to local discretion rather than an entitlement.

- At a general level, the problem is that LHS expends a considerable amount of its primary health care funding (ie. OATSIH) on transporting clients to access Specialist services which

are not an LHS responsibility, at the cost of delivering our own primary health care and health promotion services.

- PATS pays for very few patient escorts.¹ In most cases Yolngu patients require or want escorts. Consequently LHS pays for a significant number of escorts (ie. transport and accommodation) from its primary health care funds.
- Based on our Communicare PIRS system, in less than 8 months from 1/10/08 to 22/05/09 LHS transported **286** clients from non PATS-eligible Homelands to Gove for medical treatment. Demand for an extended PATS eligibility is therefore not insignificant, and as indicated above imposes a significant financial burden on our primary health care budget.

(Advice provided by Jeff Cook, Manager, Laynhapuy Health Service, 25 May 2009)

¹ Note: It should be noted that assistance with patient travel and particularly funding of patient escorts off-budget was one of the 'casualties' of the decision of the Australian Government to ban the legal sale of kava. This was one of the areas of activity LHAI previously funded from kava proceeds.

ATTACHMENT C

Secondary Homelands Education Project (SHEP)
(Garrthalala Homelands Secondary Boarding School)



Report on the Yirrkala Secondary Homelands Education Project (SHEP)





Contents:

	Page
Introduction	3
The Environment	6
The Beginning	9
The Present	11
The Principles of SHEP	11
The Students	13
The Curriculum	15
The Teaching Staff	19
The Professional Development of Teaching Staff	21
The Buildings	22
The Resources	24
The Boarding Facility	26
The Money	27



INTRODUCTION

The delivery of senior secondary education programs to Indigenous students living in very remote Homeland Centres or Outstations in the Northern Territory is arguably the most challenging scenario for the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training.

Often referred to as 'Outstations', Homeland Communities typically consist of a group of families that have chosen to live on the land with which they have a profound historical and cultural association.

The nature of Homeland Communities varies greatly and ranges from large stable populations to small transient groups. Homeland Communities are generally serviced and supported by the nearest 'hub' community. The hub community houses government service centres such as health, education, police and a Homeland Resource Association which is funded to provide infrastructure support and maintenance to the communities in their jurisdiction.

The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (NTDET) is committed to the provision of education for Indigenous students in the Northern Territory. Its commitment includes the provision of quality education programs that are relevant and accessible for all Indigenous students and lead to further opportunities in education, training and employment.

Until recently, it has been the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training policy that '*all secondary compulsory school-age children must undertake Northern Territory Board of Studies (NTBOS) approved courses, delivered by approved secondary school course providers*' (NTDET, 1999). This has meant that remote Schools and Homeland Learning Centres were not providing approved secondary programs because they were not endorsed as secondary providers. The Indigenous education policy on education for secondary aged students is currently under review.

The development of the NTDET *Indigenous Education Strategic Plan 2006 – 2009* and changes in policy and funding at both the federal and Territory levels has resulted in policy shifts which now allow for delivery of secondary education programs in some remote schools and Homeland Learning Centres and using the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC) as the approved secondary education provider.

An NTDET expectation of the *Indigenous Education Strategic Plan 2006 – 2009* is for 'increased access to a full range of educational programs for all Indigenous Territorians', and an expansion of the delivery of the relevant and accessible secondary education.

The 2003 *Report on Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory*, calls for Governments to:



‘ provide the necessary policy framework and resources, for the Department of Education and Training [sic] to provide leadership, drive and support for the proposed changes, and for the schools and their communities to focus on young people in new ways that they can achieve effective, sustainable lives’ (p. ix).

The Report makes the recommendation that NTDET:

‘together with schools and learning precincts, develop a strategic plan for infrastructure utilisation, maintenance, and remodelling for remote areas, and for the staged rollout of new secondary education service delivery for Indigenous young people in remote areas based on the size of the student cohort, and on community commitment to and the readiness for secondary education, informed by current student attendance and MAP data’ (Recommendation 33).

The Secondary Homelands Education Project or SHEP, operating as part of the Yirrkala Homelands School is the first of its type in the Northern Territory and breaks new ground in the provision of accredited senior secondary education to very remote Indigenous secondary aged students.

The commitment and dedication of teachers, students and parents, and the collaboration and support received from the ‘hub’ school and the regional resource centre in Yirrkala has resulted in a record number of remote Indigenous students receiving a Northern Territory Certificate of Education in 2008—7 of the 39 remote Northern Territory Indigenous student graduates were enrolled in the Secondary Homelands Education Project (SHEP).

The SHEP is a recent (since 2003) initiative in senior secondary education provision which includes a regional boarding facility and employs a dual enrolment arrangement by enrolling all senior secondary students in courses offered through the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC) and Darwin based Registered Training Organisations for Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses.

This model of senior secondary education delivery demonstrates a responsiveness to building upon cohesive language, kin and affiliation networks of the student population and the incorporation of mechanisms for close family support and gender separated classes where needed.

The success of the SHEP model of senior secondary education delivery is due not only to the dedication of the Yirrkala Homelands School staff and the commitment of the

Homelands community members, students and Elders, and donations from Rotary in Geelong, Victoria for the boarding facility, but also due to the stability of the Garrthlala community where the SHEP is located; its central location to surrounding communities and access to them and to Yirrkala; and to the commitment of the Laynhapuy Resource



Association to the development of appropriate community infrastructure that supports a stable and growing population of young Indigenous people.



2008 Graduation Ceremony at Garrthalala

THE ENVIRONMENT

“We were asking for this for a long time. It’s a positive program suitable for Homelands kids. It’s away from the bigger communities—away from Nhulunbuy and Yirrkala. Homelands is an environment where kids can enjoy themselves and learn about the environment. It’s easier for them to learn out there rather than here (Yirrkala). It’s important that students can see where they are heading and know what is the purpose of learning at Garrthalala. The students are really enjoying themselves— they are growing up with strong Yolngu knowledge and can see the two world views. They identify as Yolngu and are interested in the wider society—the ‘napagi’ world.”



I really want SHEP to continue because it is successful. We hope one day the students will take up leadership roles in their own community”.

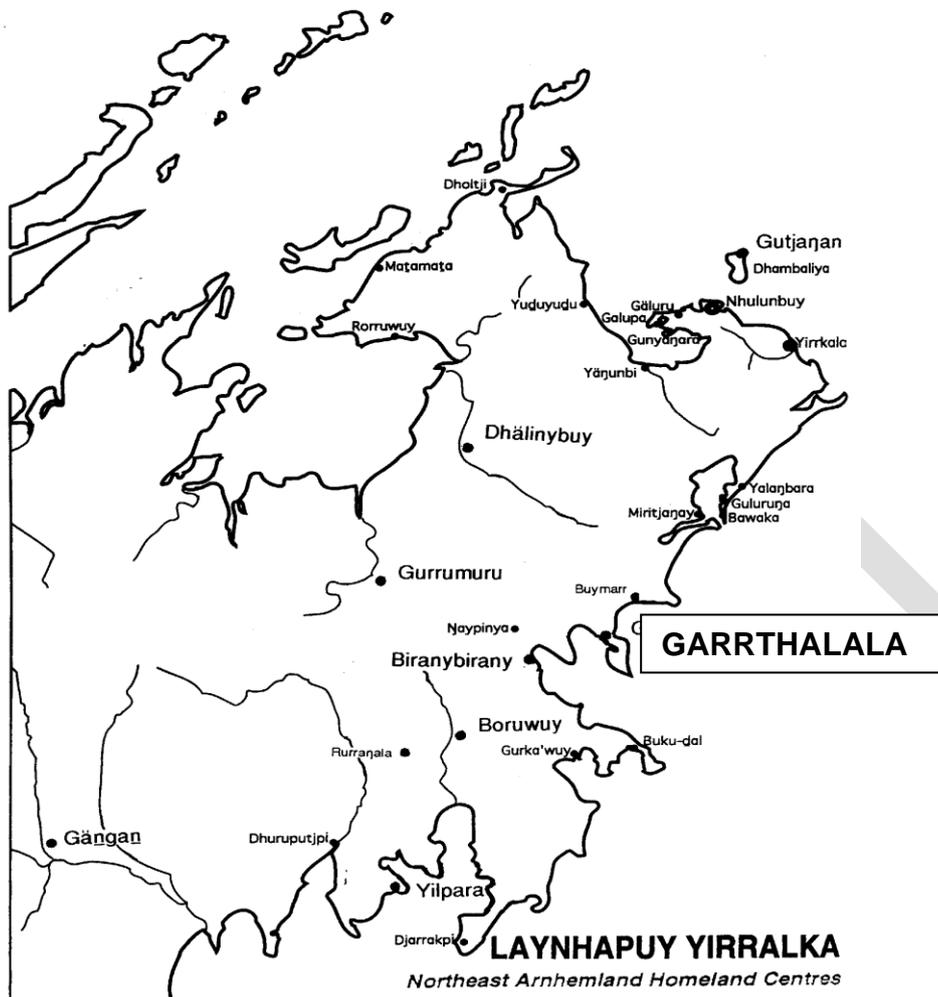
Nalwarri Ngurruwutthun, Senior Cultural Education Advisor with Yirrkala Homelands School.

The Laynhapuy Region of Arnhem Land consists of up to 20 outstations or homelands across a region of almost 6500km² in extent. Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands are in the most easterly area of the Yolngu- speaking region. The 2006 Census recorded just under 6,300 Indigenous people in the discrete Indigenous communities of the Yolngu region of northeast Arnhem Land, and the Laynhapuy region comprises around 800 of that total number (www.epress.anu.edu.au/caepr_series/no_29).

The Secondary Homelands Education Project (SHEP), managed by the Yirrkala Homelands School, has been developed in accordance with the wishes of the parents and communities of the Laynhapuy region, and supported by the Yirrkala Homelands School staff. Elders and community members had repeatedly requested this service prior to its implementation as a trial project in 2003. There is strong student motivation to enrol and complete studies to the NTCE level.

Anecdotal evidence shows that since the beginning of the SHEP in 2003 there has been increased involvement of parents and community in decision making around educational issues. Teachers agree that there is a greater ease of reporting, follow up and general communication with parents of students enrolled in the SHEP.

Community involvement and support for the program has also been demonstrated by the involvement of the Laynhapuy Homelands Association in providing services and support to the Garrthalala community and school—in 2007 the Association paid for and constructed a basketball court, and installed a new community generator and water tanks.



The region serviced by the Laynhapuy Homelands Association consists of a group of homeland settlements interlinked with each other and with the people of the wider region, including Yirrkalā, through a complex web of kinship, ceremonial and political interests.

Although Yirrkalā is the 'hub', it is not the 'hub' of socio-political relationships for many Laynhapuy homelands dwellers ((www.epress.anu.edu.au/caepr_series/no_29).

Homeland Learning Centres in the Laynhapuy region are serviced by the Yirrkalā Homelands School, managed by the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training and supported by the Yambirra Schools Council which is the registered school council for the combined schools of Yirrkalā and the Homelands School.



Members of the Garrthalala community have expressed their pride and support for the senior secondary program through their involvement in educational programs such as the Horticulture program and the maintenance of a community garden and through significant contributions to educational activities such as interstate excursions.

“My daughter is in Year 12. I am very happy that she is going to school here (at Garrthalala)’. Birritpirrit (Rosita) Burarrwanga, Garrthalala Preschool Teacher.



The senior secondary classroom at Garrthalala



THE BEGINNING

The Secondary Homelands Education Project (SHEP) began at the Yirrkala Homelands School as a trial on-site program in 2003, and is a response to Yambirrupa School Council, community and student requests for on-site senior secondary education. The program was delivered as a pilot project for 3 years with federal funding through the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP).

A chosen group of 18 students from seven (7) homeland communities serviced by Yirrkala Homelands School (YHS), and who previously had no access to on-site secondary education, were flown to a central homeland—Garrthalala, for three (3) days per fortnight of intensive junior and senior secondary workshops and study coordinated through the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC).

The fact that the community of Garrthalala is in a location central to the Laynhapuy Region and is accessible from Yirrkala for most of the year; that there was classroom space available; and that the community and its Elders were highly supportive of the project, meant that it was the most appropriate site for the trial project. The stability and dedication of the trained Indigenous Teacher for the primary school at Garrthalala was also a factor in site choice.

At this stage the classroom acted as the boarding facility at night and teachers and students were required to pack up and store all classroom furniture at the end of each day to allow room for sleeping. After school activities were coordinated by YHS Visiting Teachers and the resident Assistant Teachers.

In 2004, the SHEP attendance rate was recorded as 90% and students, for the first time, undertook significant components of senior secondary studies. Seventeen (17) students completed a Stage One unit in Integrated Studies. They also completed half a Mathematics Unit. In 2005 the attendance rate dropped to 89%. However, 13 students completed a Mathematics Unit, an Integrated Studies Unit, an Art Unit and a Physical Education Unit from Stage One. This was the first time in the Northern Territory that Indigenous secondary aged students were undertaking and completing secondary studies through a Homeland Learning Centre.

In 2007 the Secondary Homelands Education Project became a senior secondary education program with a purpose built boarding facility provided by Rotary in Geelong, Victoria. Situated at the Homeland Community of Garrthalala, the project is designed to provide senior secondary education to students living in the Laynhapuy Homelands of Yilpara, Biranybirany, Boruwuy, Dhalinybuy, Gangan, Garrthalala, Gunyangara, Gurrumurru, Gutjangan and Rurrangala.



The Rotary Club of Geelong continues to maintain contact with the people of Garrthalala and plans to visit the community in August of 2009 to make additions to the boarding facility including a ramp for disabled access and some additional shade areas. It is a commitment to the people of Garrthalala and surrounding Homelands to assist with the growth of community leadership through education that was the catalyst for involvement by Rotary in Geelong.

“Education is the only way to go—to provide leaders—in Homelands away from the distractions of towns such as Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy. Education will help to provide community leaders and help community members live good lives”. (Roger Haebich, Rotary Geelong)

In 2008, the junior secondary component of the program became part of a middle years model delivered through various Homeland Learning Centres. Of the senior secondary students enrolled in SHEP, seven (7) students completed the Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE). There were 39 remote Indigenous students in Northern Territory Schools who achieved an NTCE that year.



Garrthalala School – senior secondary students working on the school verandah.

THE PRESENT



The essential component of the Secondary Homelands Education Project is the provision of an on-site senior secondary educational program to students from surrounding homelands. Senior years students living in the Laynhapuy Homelands are enrolled with Yirrkala Homelands School and transported to the Homeland Learning Centre of Garrthalala each week, on Tuesday mornings, for a three day intensive residential program. Both Stage 1 and Stage 2 students travel every week to Garrthalala for 3 days of study, with flexibility for Stage 2 students to undertake workshops for extended periods if necessary.

Yirrkala Homelands School submitted a Secondary Homelands Education Project (SHEP) budget proposal for Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) funding to the amount of \$648,442 for the period 2006 – 2008 in the category of System Wide Significance. In 2008 the SHEP received \$149,662.70 which excluded the senior teacher salary and in 2009, \$250,000 in (unspent) IESIP funding was allocated for continuation of the project till the end of the year.

The principles of the Secondary Homelands Education Project marry those expressed in the Remote Learning Partnership Agreement between Yambirrp Schools Council and the Northern Territory of Australia, represented by the Department of Education and Training. The Agreement was signed by the then Chief Minister in 2007. The Yambirrp Schools Council is the registered School Council for the Yirrkala School and the Yirrkala Homelands School.

These principles, for guiding a working together partnership between DET and The Yambirrp Schools Council, are linked to the major outcomes identified in the DET *Indigenous Education Strategic Plan 2006-2009*. They are:

1. Valuing School—improved school and community partnerships. Parent education, increased engagement and positive perceptions of education and training in the community
2. Coming to School —increased enrolments and attendance.
3. Learning and Achieving at School—improved achievement at all levels of schooling. Having 'ralpa' (self-motivated) students who accept 'raypirri' (self-discipline) as members of their Yolngu community.
4. Staying at School—increased retention of Indigenous students through the critical stages of schooling, resulting in more students completing the NTCE.
5. Choosing opportunities after school—more opportunities for Indigenous students after leaving school.



6. Accessing effective training and employment—increased number of Indigenous adults engaged in further education and training. Increased number of Indigenous adults employed in the community.

Students attending the senior secondary program make the following comments:

“We feel good because we are learning good things. We like to be together and the food is good”.

“The excursion to Melbourne and Sydney was good. We did surf life saving in Melbourne”.

“We go fishing sometimes, watch DVDs and play music—after school”.

“We like it here. We like the music and the food. We like learning and being together”.



2008 Graduation Ceremony at Garrthalala



THE STUDENTS

Students attending the Secondary Homelands Education Project (SHEP) are from the surrounding Homelands in the Laynhapuy Region of north east Arnhem Land who previously had no access to on-site secondary education.

In 2009 there are 27 Indigenous students enrolled in the SHEP, ranging in age from 15 years old to 20 years old. This is the highest senior secondary enrolment for almost ten (10) years and enrolments continue to rise. The SHEP doesn't cater for all the secondary aged students enrolled in the Yirrkala Homelands School—in 2009, 35 Indigenous senior secondary aged students attending other Yirrkala Homelands Schools are not studying accredited senior secondary programs.

Students qualify for entry into the SHEP on the basis of their attendance record, parental support, motivation and demonstrated willingness to participate, and their academic achievement level in English as a Second Language (ESL) and Mathematics which are measured by the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC) for NTOEC courses through placement activities specifically designed by that institution.

Senior secondary students enrolled in the SHEP travel to Garrthalala by plane each week to participate in three days of course workshops. They are able to continue with studies when they are in their respective Homeland.

An Assistant Teacher position is designated from the general Homelands School allocation to undertake catering for the boarding aspect of the program and to coordinate after hours activities for those boarding at Garrthalala. This position supports the boarding facility in a caring capacity, but 'duty of care' remains the responsibility of the Visiting Teachers as determined by Department of Education and Training policy.

Students are covered by insurance while travelling with Laynhapuy Aviation and by the Department of Education and Training as they would if participating in a school excursion.

Under the 'Back to School Grant' all Yirrkala Homelands School students receive at the beginning of each school year, a uniform and pencil case with pencils.

An additional school shirt and tracksuit which students wear when going on interstate excursions at the end of the school year are provided by local organisation donations. In recent years donations have been made by the local mining companies of Alcan and Rio Tinto.





The senior secondary class of 2008 on an excursion to Melbourne

DR



THE CURRICULUM

The education programs of SHEP are provided through face to face instruction at Garrthalala by the Visiting Teachers and supported by the Assistant Teacher. Instruction is also provided by officers of Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Taminmin High School for Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs and by teachers of the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC) under the dual enrolment arrangement acknowledged by the Department of Education and Training.

When students are not attending schooling at Garrthalala, or preparing for travel, they can continue their studies in their respective Homeland, supported by that particular Homeland's teacher and Visiting Teacher. For students older than 17 years, continuation of studies in the student's Homeland is not mandated by Yirkala Homelands School. However, many of these students choose to continue with their studies when at home.



Senior secondary students in the classroom at Garrthalala

The NTOEC offers educational programs for Northern Territory students who wish to undertake secondary studies but are unable to attend regular classes. Students enrolled in the SHEP are enrolled at the NTOEC on a subject by subject basis with Personal Learning Plans developed in order to achieve a Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE).

Teachers at the NTOEC are responsible for the development and submission of Assessment Plans to the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Board. They are also required to visit their respective students at least once a semester for the purpose of supporting students and teachers. The type of support provided to teachers can include a co-teaching role.



In Semester 1, 2009, SHEP students enrolled through the NTOEC are completing the following Stage 1 and Stage 2 subjects:

- English as a Second Language 1A
- Integrated Learning-Multi Media 1
- Money and Measurement 1
- Music Experience (Communities) 1
- Music 1
- Aboriginal Studies Stage 2
- Technology and The Community – Yirrkala Homelands 2

The South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Board requires that development and submission of Assessment Plans for enrolled subjects is the responsibility of the teachers in schools with a SACE board number. In the case of the SHEP, this is the responsibility of teachers at the NTOEC.

The NTOEC has designated Regional Learning Agents (RLA) who are responsible for the facilitation of relationships between the community schools and the NTOEC. These officers visit community schools on a regular basis to foster relationships with remote communities and provide teachers with advice on the Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE), learning pathways for students, appropriate NTOEC courses and associated teaching and learning requirements.

All students are required by the NTOEC to complete ESL and Mathematics placement activities prior to enrolment, and the SACE BOARD requires ESL eligibility forms to be completed for each student. The NTOEC offers assistance with completion of these forms and with placement activities. (As a result of students' low literacy and numeracy levels, ESL Stage 1 and Maths Stage 1 were not offered in 2008).

From 2010 changes to the future SACE will mean that students will need to achieve a pass (C grade or above) in English (ESL), Mathematics and their Personal Learning Plan (PLP) in order to receive a Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE).

In 2009, the Regional Learning Agents attached to the NTOEC are negotiating Service Level Agreements with each community school in order to provide a clear understanding of the facilities and resources of NTOEC and the needs and expectations of the communities serviced.

Additional support for students is provided through the NTOEC residential programs which occur in Term 2 and Term 3 of each year. Because of perceived complications with travel and organisation, SHEP students have not attended this program to date.



Senior secondary students undertaking VET studies at Garrthalala

VETiS

The Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) program is provided through Charles Darwin University (CDU) as the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) for VET Tourism and Taminmin High School as the RTO for VET Horticulture.

VET instructors visit Garrthalala according to needs identified by the study timetable and instructors deliver in blocks of one or two weeks.

A yearly excursion is also part of the SHEP. This is either to a major centre in the Northern Territory or to an interstate location and is usually linked to one or two VET units which students are undertaking.



Senior secondary students undertaking VET studies at Garrthalala



THE TEACHING STAFF

In 2009 the Secondary Homeland Education Project (SHEP) has adequate staffing for the first time since the project began in 2003. It is supported by a Senior Teacher/Coordinator position, two Visiting Teachers and an Assistant Teacher. The Assistant Principal of the Yirrkala Homelands School supports the program by organising all teacher and student travel and the school receptionist coordinates the catering for the boarding facility.

Staffing of the SHEP includes an allocation of the additional Assistant Teacher position generated from the primary enrolments to act as catering manager for the boarding facility and the Senior Teacher position which has been funded through the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) grant until the end of 2009.

The Senior Teacher of the SHEP is the liaison officer between the program and the NTOEC and VET providers and is an above establishment position. The Distance Learning staffing formula for senior secondary students enrolled in the NTOEC is currently at approximately one teacher for every 160 subjects enrolled. Through the dual enrolment arrangement, a teacher is allocated from the NTOEC for each unit or subject enrolment per student. In 2009, SHEP students are enrolled in 6 separate subjects through the NTOEC.

The Visiting Teachers from the Yirrkala Homelands School drive to Garrthalala each week—travelling on Tuesday mornings and returning on Thursdays—supported by weekly visits from the Senior Teacher. Beyond 2009, and dependent on infrastructure, funding and staffing allocations, the Yirrkala Homelands School is hoping to extend face-to-face teaching time and may require teachers to travel on Mondays and Fridays. In the absence of a specific policy or position on residential schooling, the Visiting Teachers are the NTDET officers responsible for ensuring 'duty of care' for the duration of the school week.

Prior to 2009 community members were engaged as tutors under the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS). In 2009 there are no officers employed under the Scheme. However, in the future, the Yirrkala Homelands School hopes to engage tutors to support the Music programs.



Students planning to open a community store at Garrthalala as part of their 2008 senior secondary studies



THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING STAFF

The South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Board meets with teachers and the NTOEC coordinators in Darwin twice a year for the purpose of professional development and course moderation. Schools that do not have a SACE Board number do not qualify for this professional development provided through the SACE Board.

Schools can make application to attend the SACE Board professional development program through the Division of Teaching, Learning and Standards and the SACE Board number it holds. Teachers of the SHEP have not attended these professional development activities to date.

In 2009 the NTOEC secured funding for SHEP teachers to attend the Remote Schools Conference which included SACE Board professional development. However, this is not secured ongoing funding, and participation is shared with teachers from NTOEC.

Professional development programs facilitated by the Department of Education and Training are accessed by SHEP teachers where relevant and approved.

The Assistant Teachers in the SHEP are enrolled in the national Australian Government Quality Teacher Package – Skilling Remote School Staff which aims to up-skill remote school staff working in a school located in one of the Northern Territory Emergency Response communities with a particular focus on developing Indigenous staff.



THE BUILDINGS

In June 2006, through a philanthropic gesture and in collaboration with Yirrkala Homelands School and Rotary in Nhulunbuy, Geelong Rotary supplied and built what is now the SHEP classroom at Garrthalala. This classroom was an extension to the existing primary school block and allowed for the separation of primary and secondary classes for appropriate program delivery.

As well as having a designated senior secondary room, the Pre School room of the same building is used for afternoon instruction sessions when required.

In 2007, the jointly funded boarding facility consisting of a residential building and ablutions block for approximately 25 students was built at Garrthalala. Funding from the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC) and donated to Yirrkala Homelands School by participating parents, provided the building materials for the boarding facility. The ablutions block was provided through DET funding. Unfortunately, this building has no lighting for safe night use.

The boarding facility consist of 5 rooms, 2 of which serve as separate sleeping quarters for boys and girls with a small music classroom (also used for storage) and kitchen separating the two. This facility is also used as a classroom during the day. The kitchen is small and while it allows for adequate preparation of food, a bar-be-que was purchased to help with catering requirements. There is no separate teacher accommodation.

In 2007 the Laynhapuy Homelands Association constructed a concrete basketball court between the school building and the boarding facility. This has proved a valuable asset to after school activities.



Main classrooms



Ablutions Block



The Yirrkala Homelands School janitor supports all Homeland Learning Centres as required, and a cleaner is employed for one hour per day using general Yirrkala Homelands School funds with responsibility primarily for the ablutions block.

Through the *Building the Education Revolution* initiative of the Government's economic stimulus package, funding has been approved for the construction of a multi-purpose building in 2010 at Garrthalala. This building will consist of an additional classroom for the school, a training facility which will be used jointly with the Laynhapuy Homelands Association, and a four bedroom visitor's quarters, two rooms of which will be allocated to the Garrthalala Visiting Teachers. This is a significant addition to the school and community for the delivery of a variety of educational programs.



Whole school view



THE RESOURCES

The Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) funded a satellite dish at Garrthalala which became operational in Term 2, 2006. This provides students with internet access and is vital to their studies.

The Parents School Partnership Initiative (PSPI) funds provided a diesel generator and wiring for the Garrthalala school classrooms. A new community generator provided by Laynhapuy Homelands Association in 2008 now provides permanent power to the classrooms and boarding facility.

As the participating Homelands are up to 120kms from Garrthalala the most convenient mode for transporting the students to the school is by air and Laynhapuy Aviation is the preferred carrier. However, the airline does not operate on the dirt airstrip if it is too wet. The roads are also impassable after heavy rains.

Yirrkala Homelands School funds purchased a SHEP vehicle in 2006 to transport teachers and resources to Garrthalala on a weekly basis. Maintenance of the vehicle is covered by IESIP funding to the end of 2009. This has been calculated at \$6,000 per year.

The NTOEC provides the necessary documents for all course work enrolled through that institution. A refundable deposit of \$40 is required for each student per subject enrolled and bar-coded resources are returned to NTOEC on completion of a course or unit. A component of IESIP funding includes school fees which covers these material costs.

The students have access to lap top computers which were initially funded through IESIP, but due to general wear and tear, these 14 Dell computers have since been stored in the classroom cupboard and replaced. The computers are carried to and from the school each week in secure cases by the visiting teachers. Students also have access to several Mac Book Pro computers which are also transported to and from Yirrkala each week.

A satellite dish connected through STAR technology to the school will provide the link to distance learning programs as required. This technology is yet to be commissioned, so the senior secondary program has not engaged in virtual learning or interactive learning technologies and programs through the Distance Learning Services of DET.



Senior secondary students studying at Garrthalala

Yirrkala Homelands Schools and consequently SHEP has access to the Yambirrpaa Schools AO5 Training and Employment Coordinator. This position was initially created as an AO3 VET coordinator for Yirrkala School through a 'trade-off' arrangement within DET. In 207, through negotiations as part of the Remote Learning Partnership Agreement (RLPA), the position was upgraded to the AO5 Training and Employment Coordinator and became part of the Yambirrpaa Youth Development Unit to work with both the Yirrkala School and the Yirrkala Homelands School. A Careers Advisor position does not appear in the current staffing allocation for Yirrkala Homelands School.

DRAFT



THE BOARDING FACILITY

The boarding facility of the SHEP has capacity for 30 senior secondary students. There is a separate ablutions block for student and teacher use close to the sleeping quarters.

While the ablutions block has a solar panel for hot water, there is no lighting for safe night use.

There are two acting 'House Parents' or '*djaka*' attached to the boarding facility. An Assistant Teacher position and a transitional Community Development and Employment Project (CDEP) Officer are allocated through Yirrkala Homelands School staffing formula to support the boarding aspect of SHEP. This allows for employment of a male and female 'house parent' as part of the boarding facility. These officers also attend to the cooking and catering for the students. The Visiting Teachers continue to have responsibility for ensuring 'duty of care'.

Catering costs for the students has been included in IESIP funding to the value of \$5,400 each year. However, it is expected that this will significantly increase following compliance with the new NTDET Canteen, Nutrition and Healthy Eating Policy of April 2009.



The boarding facility



The boarding facility kitchen



THE MONEY

The Secondary Homelands Education Project has received Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) funding until the end of 2009 under the Projects of System Wide Significance category. (The 2009 allocation of \$275,000 including GST was provided by redirecting 2006-2008 unspent funding). This is comprised of \$179,850 for operational costs including catering for the boarding facility, stationary and consumables, motor vehicle running costs and maintenance, and student fees paid to the NTOEC.

The end of year interstate excursion as part of the SHEP has been funded in previous years through various grants including the Parents School Partnership Initiative (PSPI) and supplemented by a significant contribution from parents.

Student travel expenses to and from their respective Homeland to Garrthalala on a weekly basis—up to 40 trips per year—has been estimated at \$138,000 for 2009, and is currently IESIP funded. This is possibly the most significant aspect of the program's success, complying with parent and student wishes and allowing students to return home at the end of each school week.

School fees, estimated at \$2,400 per year, are generally paid to the NTOEC, to cover a refundable resource deposit of \$40.00 per subject per student for semester subjects and \$80.00 per subject per student for year long subjects. This resource deposit is refunded on completion of study and when resources are returned to the NTOEC in good order.

There are also VET fees of \$40.00 per subject per student to be paid to the respective Registered Training Organisation.

All students enrolled in the SHEP are receiving ABSTUDY payments of various types, including a Living Allowance and a Remote Area Allowance—part of which is currently under 'income management' through the Northern Territory Intervention. These payments act as an incentive for students to continue their studies, especially in cases where parents expect their children to be earning a wage. At present no part of the ABSTUDY allowance is paid to Yirrkala Homelands School as a contribution to educational expenses.

Because the SHEP is not recognised as a 'standard component of the mainstream NTDET education program' students do not qualify for ABSTUDY boarding and travel assistance. Contact has been made with the Director, Student Payments Program Management Section of DEEWR seeking clarification around ABSTUDY funding to



those students who attend the SHEP. Any policy adjustments in favour of the SHEP will impact on the delivery of senior secondary programs throughout very remote Northern Territory.

Students receiving ABSTUDY do not qualify for additional funding through the Northern Territory Government Student Assistance Schemes.

Catering costs of \$5,400 each year for the SHEP was funded through IESIP for the period 2006 – 2008, and extended for 2009.



Senior secondary students assisting with food preparation



Travelling home

Funding for 10 Lap Top computers and a satellite dish to the value of \$22,000 was also provided through the IESIP grant. Ongoing costs for running and maintaining the satellite dish estimated at \$480 per year has also been funded until the end of 2009.

The cost of transporting students to and from Garrthalala on a weekly basis is the most expensive component of the SHEP, with the exception of teacher salaries. If the Secondary Homelands Education Project is to continue beyond 2009 the costs of the program would have to be incorporated into core funding or alternative funding sources secured, for example ABSTUDY could contribute to travel expenses and boarding fees if the project was recognised by NTDET as a 'standard component of the mainstream education program'.

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