

STORIES FROM OUR  
**DREAM IT  
FORWARD**  
PROGRAM  
2014-2015

AN INNOVATIVE SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM  
FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER  
COMMUNITIES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA



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“Dream it Forward is a unique program, designed to engage community and those working on the ground and at the forefront of Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing within community, an opportunity to identify what is needed and what can have meaningful impact. The program affords community leaders the freedom to put local solutions and local ideas into practice, and provides Aboriginal and TSI communities in WA, a voice in directing their own healing.”

Shaun Nannup – Nyoongar advocate and *Dream it Forward* partner



#### Thank You:

The Mental Health Commission’s Steve Scanlon, Senior Contracts Officer and Michael Lenney, Senior Policy Officer Planning, Policy and Strategy for their vision and support.

The Nyoongar people of the southwest region of WA, and the Karrajari, Nyangamarta, Yulparija, Juwaliny, Mangala, Baardi, Nyulnyul, Jabirrabirr, Nimanburru, Ngumbarl, and Yawuru people of the West Kimberley.

Shaun Nannup (WISDOM in Your Life) for sharing his knowledge and teachings on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders cultural traditions.

ConnectGroups Support Groups Association WA Inc.

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE DREAM IT FORWARD PROGRAM

ConnectGroups and the Mental Health Commission WA have been in partnership since 2011 providing accessible funding to Self Help and Support Groups across Western Australia and working towards achieving measurable outcomes as a means of contributing to WA's Mental Health 2020 Reform. In 2014, ConnectGroups launched a pilot small grants program aimed toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (TSI) communities – the Dream it Forward project.

Dream It Forward (DIF) focused on addressing the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families, and their communities based on needs identified by the community for the community. Set up as an innovative pilot project and as a specialised response to addressing the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people and their communities as outlined in the Mental Health Commission's Mental Health 2020: Making it personal and everybody's business. Dream It Forward has had a strong bottom-up grassroots approach and endeavoured to empower community participation and co-production simultaneously to achieve meaningful outcomes. Critical to the project was the recognition that the Aboriginal and TSI communities have a holistic, whole-of-life approach to mental health, health, and culture. This knowledge underpinned the program and drove its methodology.

Successful grant projects covered a wide variety of tools, methodologies, and services to engage communities and address intergenerational trauma affecting youth, the stolen generation, women, men, new fathers, disengaged communities, and communities struggling to cope with AOD-related issues. All projects included an element of yarning, critical to the holistic approach to healing. In some cases, DIF directly seed-funded new initiatives and in others it added value to the delivery of existing programs or services.

### SUMMARY

1. 26 submissions received in one round
2. 14 grants approved
3. \$314,487 total amount requested from 26 submissions
4. \$82,685.67 funds allocated across 14 grants representing 26% of total funds requested
5. Regional distribution:

Region	Metro	Kimberley	Great Southern	Armadale	Southwest
<b>Submitted</b>	27%	15%	31%	15%	12%
<b>Awarded</b>	29%	21%	29%	7%	14%

Grant submissions needed to demonstrate specific mental health outcomes, as reflected in the Mental Health 2020 Strategic Policy's three key reform directions:

#### 1. Person Centred Support and Services

Provide support to those with mental health problems and/or mental illness; increase the choice, flexibility and control of the services they receive; emphasise the important role of family, carers and friends in supporting people.

#### 2. A Connected Approach

Between public and private mental health services and the range of formal and informal supports, services, and community organisations to ensure better support for people.

#### 3. A Balanced Investment

Across the mental health system to increasingly provide a full range of support and services from promotion, prevention and Early Intervention to treatment and recovery.

ConnectGroups worked closely with stakeholders to translate community ideas and initiatives into program applications, and ensured that projects addressed the program objectives to be:

- Community-driven
- To assist Aboriginal people with increasing access to social and emotional wellbeing resources and supports
- To improve governance
- To ensure that every project identified clear mental health outcomes

Engagement included building an understanding of the grants process to many stakeholders working at a grassroots level, and whom, likely, would not otherwise have accessed public funding. This innovative concept of a grassroots approach, community co-production, and project support through the entire process, unique to Dream It Forward, was embraced by our stakeholders.

The Dream It Forward program has contributed to the priorities of The Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services 2015–2025 Plan to expand the availability of a range of high quality, effective and efficient specialised state-wide Services to meet demand.

These are just some of their stories:

# STORY 1

## Milliya Rumurra Aboriginal Corporation: On-Country Oongkalkada Wilderness Camp

**Region:** Broome, West Kimberley

**Impact:** Recovery and Hope, Connection to Country, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing

Milliya Rumurra Aboriginal Corporation operates as an Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) residential rehabilitation facility, and has been in operation since 1978. Milliya Rumurra, which means 'brand new day' in the local Yawuru language, was established to provide a range of culturally-secure environments that support change for Aboriginal community members affected by alcohol and other drugs. Clients participate in a number of programs including a 12-week AOD Program to educate and create awareness of the issues involved in excessive use of alcohol and other drugs, the Family Engagement Support Program (FESP), Edge of Nowhere (EON), Foundation Program (food, nutrition, hygiene), Men's Program, Women's Program, Art Therapy, Relapse Prevention Program, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) Program and Day Programs. It has been recognised that treatment of individuals with an AOD problem requires a holistic approach.

The Dream it Forward project focused on the delivery of FESP, which is designed to involve key family members of clients, in a support role. Staff at Milliya Rumurra provide continued care (outreach) and informally work in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way with the family of a client to help them understand the services available, and to provide support while their family member is receiving treatment. On completion of treatment, the continued care team assists clients leaving Milliya Rumurra to effectively transition back into their family and community.

The Dream it Forward grant funded staff and clients to travel and stay at the Oongkalkada Wilderness Camp at Udialla Springs between Broome and Derby in the West Kimberley, adding value to the work being done by the Milliya Rumurra clinical team. While at the camp and on-country, parts of the FESP program were delivered within a spiritual and healing environment, building on new strengths and promoting recovery.

Participants in the camp benefited holistically by remaining actively engaged in the program while their emotional and social wellbeing was strengthened from being in touch with culture, community, and homelands. The Camp facilitated the effective re-engagement of clients with family and community networks.





## STORY 2

### Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service: Women's Support Group

**Region:** Derby, West Kimberley

**Impact:** Prevention and Early Intervention, Recovery and Hope, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing

The Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service launched a Women's Support Group in early 2014 in response to women in the Derby, Mowanjum, and Pandanus communities living with trauma resulting from the impact of mental illness, exposure to domestic violence, and the high rate of suicide in their communities.

The Group operates within a holistic framework intended to provide support and information in all areas of women's health principally focusing on social and emotional wellbeing. The Group has a participation of 8 – 10 women in the program ranging in age from 25 – 60 years old and often includes their children. The Group facilitates activities including: healthy eating sessions (the Food Sense program), social and emotional wellbeing workshops, yarnning circles, and arts and crafts sessions including crocheting, knitting, jewellery making and card making.

The Women's Group is a critical intervention initiative providing a culturally-secure healing environment where women can socially engage with one another, yarn, build strong cultural community links, feel supported, participate in healthy eating and budgeting programs, and receive mental health and drug and alcohol counselling. Partnerships with other external organisations and service providers offered further support to the Group including: the Australian Red Cross PHaMS (Personal Helpers and Mentors) team, Anglicare, Derby Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation (DASSA), and Ngunga Women's Resource Centre. By bringing service providers, agencies, and community together, the Group has created a comfortable and safe environment where initiatives and services can be delivered about information and supports within the greater Derby community.

Members participated in workshops including: "Self-Esteem: How to feel good about yourself and your mob," "Deadly Thinking," and "Sorry Day". The Women's Support Group has identified the need for further information around making their community strong against suicide, alcohol and other drugs, and family and domestic violence.

The Dream it Forward grant supported the Women's Group toward growing, developing their model, and building sustainability by provisioning both the Group and the Healthy Eating Program as tools of engagement. Long-term sustainability and on-going membership outreach will promote a culturally-safe and rich environment where women can work together to believe in themselves and their value, build strong social, emotional, and cultural links to each other, their families, and their communities.



*"My name is Edna O,  
I like Women's Group because  
we go to the river, go fishing and  
we always do paintings. I like doing  
paintings of "Lovers".*

*I like it when we cook and make lunch and  
get to take a big feed home for us mob.*

*I like going to Women's Group because we  
have fun. I talk to Christine and Santana  
and sometimes with the other ladies, too.*

*I like it when there are lots of ladies  
coming to see me."*

## STORY 3

### City of Melville: Mooditj Yorgas Program

**Region:** Perth Metro

**Impact:** Prevention and Early Intervention, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion

The City of Melville, in partnership with Melville Senior High School, implemented the 10 week Mooditj Yorgas program operating as an early intervention model. The program was aimed at between 10–15 young Aboriginal girls in Years 8, 9 and 10 who had become increasingly disengaged from school and were showing poor attendance, and placed emphasis on improving social and emotional wellbeing. Students interested in participating needed to attend school in order to be involved in the program.

Patterns had emerged around young women experiencing mental health issues and disengaging from school, leading to early drop-out rates and reduced opportunity. Participation by the girls introduced them to skills, facts about health and wellbeing, how to stay involved in their local community, and access to a permanent Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing resource within the Willagee Community Centre.

The Dream it Forward grant supported a facilitated Healthy Lifestyles component of the program designed around confidence and self-esteem building, developing resilience, and healthy lifestyle choices. Exercises around identifying self-worth, self-perception, and the value of positive self-image were yarned about and included in journals kept by the girls as part of the program. These concepts were extended to discussions about employment opportunities for females, and connection to culture, community, and identity.

The correlations between positive mental health and the program topics were discussed and explored using a mix of hands on activities, worksheets, guest facilitators and information provision. A peer-led approach was also used to promote and foster shared learning, experiences and awareness.

Mooditj Yorgas encouraged a sense of ownership and responsibility and was co-facilitated by an Aboriginal Health Promotions Officer from the Department of Health. Data gathered from this program will inform a best practice model for school engagement and retention, and can be scaled to other schools.

The young women who participated, responded positively to all the activities and were more engaged and open than in their usual school environment. It was evident that there was also a positive connection made between the participants and the facilitator.





## STORY 4

### MAN – Healthier Directions for Males: Mooditj Marmun Android app

**Region:** Perth Metro

**Impact:** Prevention and Early Intervention, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion

In 2013, MAN published the Mooditj Marmun Book – a 60 page hard copy directory of health and wellbeing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in southern Western Australia (Geraldton to Esperance). This resource was very well received by indigenous communities and service providers, and was Highly Commended as a Finalist in the 2014 WACOSS Awards for Community Service Excellence.

An iPhone app of this directory was developed to provide real-time, current, and searchable access to information on available resources. The iPhone app was the more complex one to develop so was undertaken first but not launched until an Android app became available.

The Dream it Forward grant provided funding to develop the Android app of Mooditj Marmun which was launched simultaneous with the iPhone app and is anticipated that Aboriginal and TSI males will use the apps as a primary tool to access vital health information. The app is powered by a built-in data vault which listed organisations and services can directly update and contains considerably more information than the book. The app is a free download and the data it contains remains available even when the device is not in a service area.

Much of the information listed in the app has either a direct or indirect mental health focus and has, at its core, a holistic approach for the person. Listings provide contact with Aboriginal community-run, public and private mental health facilities and crisis lines, as well as domestic violence, suicide prevention, substance abuse, men's groups, fathering, mentoring, relationships, youth and aged programs and services.

Project research indicated that 'shame' was a potentially limiting factor for Aboriginal men to take a copy of the book, although, anecdotally, it seems the book has been very well-received by many men and is something of a source of cultural pride. Nonetheless, a phone app is easier to keep private, is a faster way to access the data for most men, and is always current. The positive messages, delivered by the men featured in the app, add to the general encouragement to be "proud of who we are – to look after ourselves, our families, our communities, and our culture".



## STORY 5

### Cyrenian House/Milliya Rumurra Outreach Team: Tools for Engagement

**Region:** Broome, West Kimberley

**Impact:** Prevention and Early Intervention, Recovery and Hope, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion

The Cyrenian House/Milliya Rumurra (CHMR) Outreach Service is based in Broome and services remote Kimberley communities on the Dampier Peninsula including Beagle Bay, Djarindjin, Lombadina and One Arm Point as well as Bidyadanga to the south of Broome, the largest remote Aboriginal community in WA. The team provides alcohol and other drug (AOD) counselling support and prevention services and strengthens community capacity and resilience using a wide range of engagement tools and strategies. The team offers support to clients seeking to overcome AOD related issues and/or those referred by Juvenile Justice, DCP, mental health services, community alcohol and drug services, court orders and other service providers.

In addition, the team identifies and addresses community needs through consultation and engagement. For example, CHMR was a key partner in developing a Beagle Bay Men's Group. They also provide on-going support for regular meetings with the Nyul Nyul Rangers and advocacy with the local Men's Outreach team.

The CHMR team have found success working with clients and the community by engaging them in activities. Examples include organising and contributing to community-wide music events in Broome and Bidyadanga to raise awareness of alcohol-related harms such as FASD. Other projects specifically targeting youth on the Peninsula have included song-writing, music playing, production, recording and instrument instruction. In Bidyadanga, the team have staged a mechanical repair workshop. The workshop began with repairing bicycles but with the "tools for engagement," have expanded to cars, boats and motorcycles. In Bidyadanga, women's groups have engaged in sewing and clothes making workshops. More recently the team have participated in AOD education health expos targeted at schools, a leadership camp for young men from the Kimberley, and local drug action group activities.

The Dream it Forward grant added value to the work being done by the team by providing funding toward the purchase of a secure, covered trailer as well as the purchase of equipment which is towed in the trailer into remote communities. The trailer and tools give the outreach team access to multiple and diverse 'tools for engagement' while travelling. The team uses multi-media to engage people in music-related activities as a means of building relationships with people and communities. Engagement with music promotes interest and trust in the CHMR team and facilitates opportunities to discuss issues affecting the wellbeing of all community members. Using tools for repair helps build skills and encourages local community-led solutions.



*"Yesterday my client and I fixed 3 bikes out of the 6 that people brought around to be fixed with the Dream it Forward tools, a really good social community project and the kids were so happy to have their bikes going again! I was able to get a really good insight into his progress and talk openly and freely with him about a range of things."*





## STORY 6

### Tambellup Aboriginal Progress Association: Community Camp

**Region:** Tambellup, Great Southern

**Impact:** Recovery and Hope, Prevention and Early Intervention, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion

The Tambellup Aboriginal Progress Association has been in operation for over 40 years. Tambellup is a small town approximately 3 hours southeast of Perth in an isolated rural area, and home to an Aboriginal community of approximately 160 people. The Association runs youth and community programs, Grief and Loss Days, and is supported by Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service, Relationships Australia, Southern AgCare and Palmerston to divert youth away from at-risk behaviours, to reconnect family, community, and country, to promote social and emotional wellbeing, and to deliver health services.

In spite of the local Nyoongar community becoming increasingly independent and self-supportive, the community struggles with the social and emotional trauma of grief and loss. The community has found healing and hope in camps away from Tambellup where families can reconnect with each other, strengthen resilience, yarn about healing, participate in grief and loss counselling, and be together away from the distractions of alcohol and other drugs.

The Dream it Forward grant, with participation from the Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service, Southern AgCare, and Palmerston Association Inc., funded a 3-day Community Camp in Pemberton. Over 100 community members participated. Around healthy physical and family activities, facilitators led community yarning about wellbeing, quality of life, social inclusion, and strength and resilience (how it applies to Aboriginal people traumatised by colonisation and dispossession). Goals also included having a safe place to create awareness to learn stress management and relaxation techniques. Throughout the camp, facilitators were on hand to address participant needs whilst building trust and rapport, and ensuring a safe environment for people to seek support.

Healing opportunities were enhanced with children socially interacting with service providers in a relaxed and culturally-safe environment, facilitating delivery of services back on community. Children have become very comfortable with the service providers who participate in the weekly school Breakfast Club and afterschool cooking class. Additionally, the same service providers are now facilitating weekly exercise classes for the ladies which have flowed on from activities begun at the camp.



*"It was such a good time... a dardy camp!"*



*"I have been visiting Tambellup for a long time now and have never seen the kids so happy, there was no arguing or bossing, the kids were all playing together...the opportunities and the joy the kids were experiencing outdoors could not be replicated at any other time. It was a privilege to attend the camp."*



# STORY 7

## Muggin Aboriginal Corporation: Boodja Wangkaning (Our Mob) Program

**Region:** Armadale

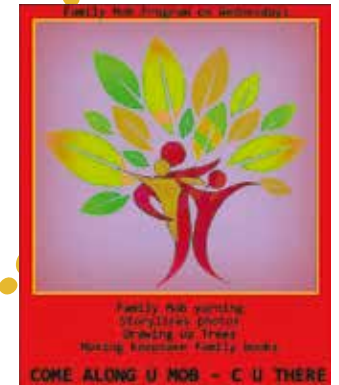
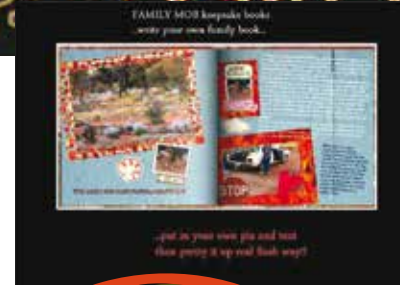
**Impact:** Recovery and Hope, Prevention and Early Intervention, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion

Muggin is supporting the local and regional indigenous community to enhance their social, physical, and spiritual wellbeing through integrated and responsive service and program delivery, and constructive partnerships with the public, community, and non-government sectors. Muggin have identified factors specific to Armadale which impact on social and emotional wellbeing; Armadale is a convergence point for all country towns of the South West destined for Perth. As such, extended family and community issues often occur in the region.

Gaps analysis by Muggin have demonstrated that there are inadequate culturally appropriate primary health care and support services in Armadale. Low accessibility became a deterrent for members of the community to seek help when it is most needed. In response, Muggin has focused its efforts on supporting a Women's Group (Yorgas Wangkaningy), a Youth Group (Moorditj Youth Development), and delivery of Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid (Moorditj Kaart) through its programs arm, Impacts Aboriginal Community Development Programs.

The Dream it Forward grant funded delivery of the pilot Boodja Wangkaning program to increase cultural capacity and identity by creating online and hard-bound books related to family trees. The program was directed toward mothers and daughters (cross-generational women's business) and ran alongside the "Family Lines" program run collaboratively between the West Australian Library and the Shire of Armadale at the Champion Centre, a hub for Aboriginal services. The two programs complemented one another as the library was coordinating an online database resource of Nyoongar and other Aboriginal regional photographs, and historical records. Champion Centre and Impacts staff assisted Nyoongar families to access and tag these records, some of which were then used by participants in the Boodja Wangkaning program.

The program strengthened a sense of belonging which is a pivotal component of social and emotional wellbeing, and facilitated the sharing of cultural yarns and knowledge. While participants were engaged in the program, they were increasing their cultural knowledge while passing and sharing their own. As many participants were affected by "Stolen Generations" practices, the program was underpinned by therapeutic yarning in a culturally-secure location.



*"I look forward to this Wednesday every week. Working on this project, I feel energised learning about my family and excited to do more and have stories I can share with my children and grandchildren. It is wonderful to yarn with each other during the hours we are here together."*





## STORY 8

### Women's Health and Family Service – Aboriginal Grandparent and Family Service: Deadly Thinking Workshops

**Region:** Perth Metro

**Impact:** Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention

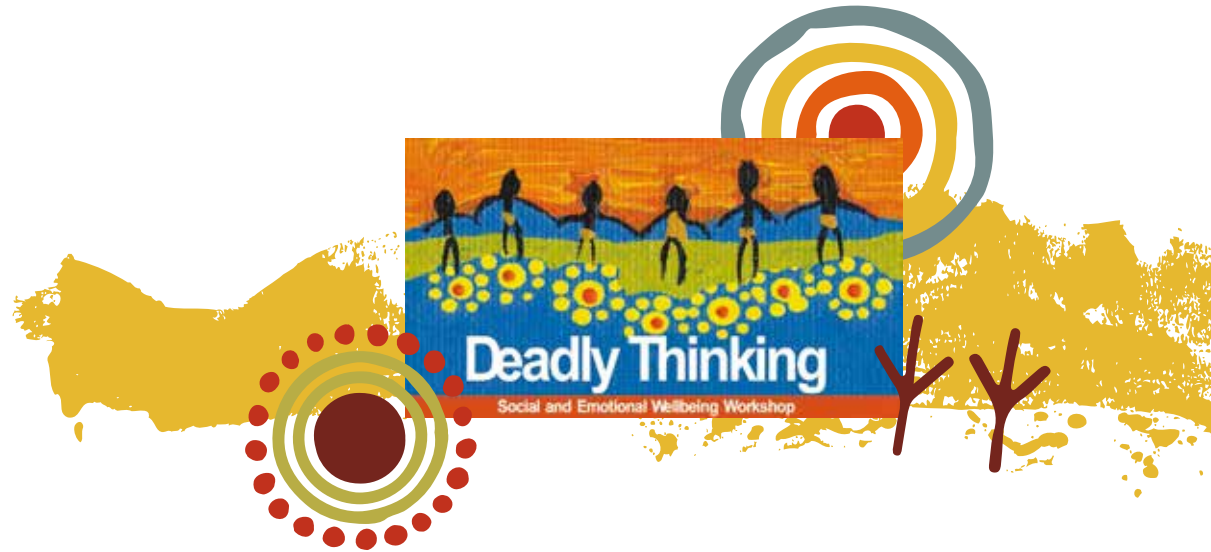
The Women's Health and Family Service (WHFS) creates opportunities for women to improve their own, their families', and their communities' health and wellbeing and was a 2014 winner of the Mental Health Commission's Good Outcomes "University of Western Australia Award for excellence in rural and remote mental health". WHFS' vision of 'Opportunity, Diversity, Equity' underpins all activities and operates within the social model of health.

The WHFS – Aboriginal Grandparent and Family Service delivers holistic Aboriginal targeted–programs focused on families. Programs support and strengthen cross–generations of families by increasing opportunities for healthy life choices, providing an integrated care and referral system, and working to improve access to health services.

The Dream it Forward grant funded delivery of four Deadly Thinking Workshops to Aboriginal community members. Through culturally–appropriate engagement with community members, the workshops contributed to mental health literacy by raising awareness and understanding around depression, anxiety, and suicide in the context of family, community, cultural spirituality, and sense of country.

Deadly Thinking's principal intent is to promote positive social and emotional wellbeing by delivering skills to participants to foster and maintain good mental health. Discussion around stresses and worries, and of creating healthy habits and choices to influence positive long–term wellness. Deadly Thinking further operates as a prevention tool by identifying preventative measures and good mental health maintenance.

The Workshops also provided pathways to support and help, and identified Aboriginal community members willing to undertake more advanced training. They were delivered in a culturally–secure approach and included a 'Train–the–Trainer' component giving opportunity for knowledge to be locally adapted and delivered.





## STORY 9

### Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation: On-Country Cultural Fishing/Hunting Trips

**Region:** Gnowangerup, Great Southern

**Impact:** Connection to Country, Recovery and Hope, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Intervention

The Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation (GAC) delivers community engagement programs, youth support programs, and works closely with the Gnowangerup Cultural Heritage Centre to strengthen Nyoongar identity and honour its history and heritage.

The Dream it Forward grant provided funding for GAC to transport, provision, and facilitate three on-country men's cultural fishing and hunting camping trips. The camps were at places significant to the Nyoongar people and included visits to sacred sites. Engaging in traditional activities underpinned by yarning offered healing and hope to participants struggling to understand their connection to culture and community.

Within these culturally-safe settings, men yarned about resolving family conflict, alcohol and other drug problems, family loss, and grief. The on-country trips encouraged intergenerational reconnection to culture and emphasised the importance of culture in understanding identity, and in becoming strong men and fathers.

Within the program, Elders shared traditional knowledge with younger people, helped to strengthen family bonds, and encouraged leadership qualities in the next generation by promoting self-esteem, pride, and confidence in who they are and where they come from.

Young men were challenged and empowered to catch and consume traditional foods caught from the ocean's edge including pennywinkles (rock snails), and salmon. The men spent time at a reserve where past Elders had performed dance ceremonies, and held a gathering of special men's business. Kangaroos were caught and prepared in traditional ways, and this knowledge was passed to the younger men. The men engaged and yarned with participants not previously open to cultural healing.

Participants on a different trip were struggling to cope with the impact of suicide and, through cultural yarning, began working through feelings of sadness, loss, and anger. They were able to speak freely and safely, and put their feelings into context whilst applying cultural values to begin the process of healing.

This project was about connection: between generations, to country, to community, and to strengthening a sense of identity and belonging. Approximately 50 participants shared the journey.



"Thanks for giving our community the opportunity to grow positively."

## STORY 10

### Kwaalup Djet Aboriginal Corporation: Women's Cancer Support Group

**Region:** Tambellup, Great Southern

**Impact:** Recovery and Hope, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Intervention

The Kwaalup Djet Aboriginal Corporation provides community advocacy, assistance to community members requiring help to meet appointments, yarning, and early intervention to local and regional community members suffering from social, emotional, or physical distress.

The organisation is challenged with providing meaningful support services to an extended community suffering from high rates of alcohol and other drug (AOD) abuse, incidence of suicide, grief and other psychological distress, youth disengagement, a lack of opportunity, and limited reasonable access to counselling services or other support services.

The Dream it Forward grant funded the seed support and provisioning of a Women's Cancer Support Group, in the model of a Djookian (Nyoongar word for "Sisters") yarning circle, for women recently diagnosed, recovering, or coping with cancer. This yarning circle provided an opportunity for Aboriginal women to benefit from each other's journeys by sharing stories of kinship, hope, and survival in a respectful and supportive setting. Additionally, the Group offered a social environment to yarn informally, to process at their own pace, and to receive information about treatment and recovery when they were ready for it.

Between 2004–2008, Indigenous Australians had a higher rate of new cancer cases than non-Indigenous Australians using age-standardised data. In 2007–2011, the age-standardised cancer mortality rate was higher for Indigenous Australians than for non-Indigenous Australians. Additionally, Indigenous Australians have a lower survival rate and few cancer-related hospitalisations.

A key recommendation to improve cancer outcomes in Aboriginal communities is "Community education – getting more information in the community about preventing cancer and early diagnosis, and sharing more positive stories about treatment and recovery."

Cancer is a frightening experience for Aboriginal people who often fear having to leave family and country in order to seek treatment, and often avoid seeking treatment as a result. The Group hopes to improve cancer outcomes in the community by breaking down fear, and sharing positive stories respectfully and within a culturally-safe environment. Toward that goal, the Group extended yarning to the community and wider family members, and included speakers from the Cancer Council of WA, Great Southern Aboriginal Health, and Elders who had survived cancer diagnoses.



*"I have had Cervical Cancer and was treated for it. I was very scared at the time but with good family support and a good Doctor I was able to beat cancer. I still have to have regular checkups. This group has helped me to talk about my cancer and how I felt. I enjoy the yarning and sharing my experience"*



*"This group was formed to give others some hope and a safe place for Indigenous women who feel shame, or have no one to talk to and even those who are having a hard time adjusting to living with the taboo topic of cancer. The group sessions have helped me by mixing and yarning with other women in a good comfortable environment. I enjoyed sharing and listening to the other women's journey."*

## STORY 11

### Woolkabunning Kiaka Inc.: Outback Academy Roelands RESPECT Camp

**Region:** Roelands (Bunbury), Southwest

**Impact:** Connection to Country, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Intervention

Roelands Village is the spiritual home of the Outback Academy and its Red Dust Healing, a successful Aboriginal-led healing program. Woolkabunning Kiaka Inc. (WKI) was founded in 1976 to represent the children who had been removed to the former Roelands Mission. WKI represents those living, and who have passed, and their families, while also contributing to the healing and wellbeing of members in the broader south-west Aboriginal community.

Red Dust Healing covers areas significant to Aboriginal healing such as identity, family structure, Elders, Men's and Women's Business, indigenous history and the impacts of colonialism, rejection, drug and alcohol abuse, family violence, grief and loss, mental health, education and employment, housing, and connection to community and country.

The Dream it Forward grant funded a 3-day RESPECT camp for at-risk Aboriginal youth. All workshops delivered as part of the weekend promoted positive social and emotional wellbeing beginning with healing self, family and relationships, and participating in positive life choices and activities to enhance that goal. The camp included delivery of components of the Red Dust Healing program led by Tom Powell, founder of Red Dust Healing.

The key factor, underpinning all components of the weekend program, was the issue of 'rejection'. Rejection was collectively examined: the nature of it, the causes of it, the results of it, and most importantly, participants were given tools to deal with their hurt. In this way, participants could apply the same tools to taking control of their lives. This same theme was explored during music making, cultural history lessons, art, and learning life skills through Golf with Aboriginal Elder and community leader Syd Jackson.

All elements of the camp were delivered by Aboriginal Elders and leaders with the objective of directing young people to work toward their dreams and goals for education and/or employment. The program gave participants the opportunity to view mental health from a different and holistic angle – can't have wellbeing if body parts not okay – can't have wellbeing if family not okay – can't have wellbeing if resource and financial wellbeing not okay. Embedding resilient values in children was an important feature of the program, to ensure they make better choices as adults.

Tom Powell,  
founder of Red Dust Healing

*There are no right or wrong answers  
It is all right to not know the answers  
It is all right to feel angry  
It is all right to cry  
It is all right to feel scared  
It is all right to feel shamed  
It is all right to feel like your family has  
kicked your guts in  
It is all right to just be you  
You make a lousy somebody else  
but you can be the best you,  
you can be*





## STORY 12

### Koya Aboriginal Corporation and Pindi Pindi Centre for Research Excellence in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing: Phase II Pilot of the Perinatal Mental Health Project at Roelands Mission

**Region:** Roelands (Bunbury), Southwest

**Impact:** Connection to Country, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Intervention

The Pindi Pindi Centre for Research Excellence in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing is conducting a perinatal mental health research project entitled “Maambart Maam” in the City of Swan. The primary objectives of this research project are:

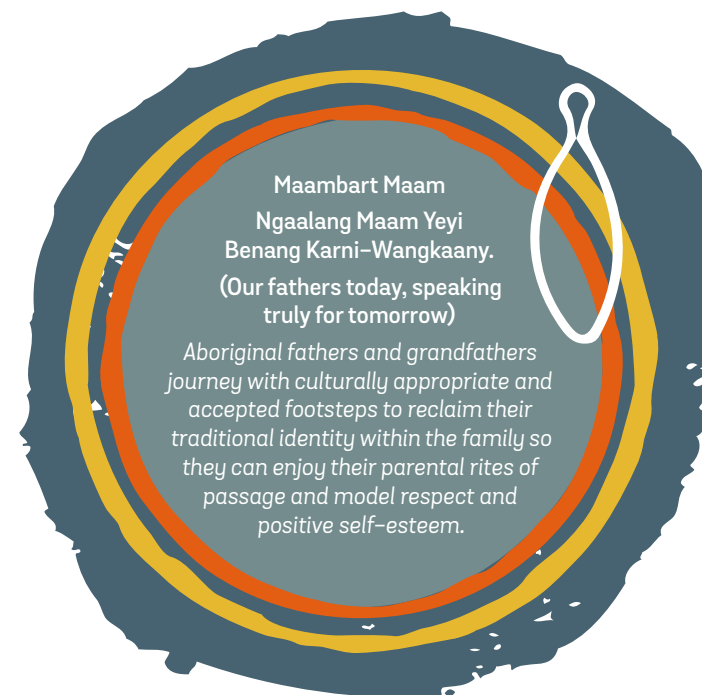
(1) to understand the nature of the perinatal mental health of Aboriginal people and (2) to develop and trial a culturally-secure perinatal wellbeing program to assist Aboriginal families, with a focus on men, during the perinatal period.

Phase I of the research project investigated and analysed data sources, surveyed population groups, and mapped metropolitan mental health services. Phase II developed and trialled support activities to provide culturally-secure wellbeing assistance to Aboriginal families during the perinatal period.

The Dream it Forward grant funded one of those support activities: a trip by 12 families to the Roelands Mission, a site significant to the Stolen Generation. This trip was one of 15 events trialled by Pindi Pindi. The chronological sequence of the 15 events has been informed by data indicating that, in order for individuals to benefit from mental health support programs, cognitive barriers to receiving social and emotional wellbeing assistance needed to be removed. The 15 events were scheduled to first remove barriers and then build participants’ connection with country and culture.

Participants were supported throughout the two-day stay by three Aboriginal Elders who lived on the mission as children during the era of the Stolen Generation. Activities focused on teaching fathers the value of culture and getting back to country. Sessions were facilitated around traditional values (respect for oneself, respecting Elders, and community values), bush foods and Aboriginal history. The sessions and activities were designed to provide a platform to share knowledge of Aboriginal culture as a powerful vehicle for adults to take control of their own lives.

The overall aim of the study is to enhance the perinatal mental health of Aboriginal families and build the capacity of Aboriginal expectant fathers and their families to deal effectively with the stresses of new parenthood. The project is in response to a lack of culturally-secure programs or services that address this specific health need in new fathers. It is expected that individual participants will be better informed about what to anticipate as a new or expectant father, and how to find support and information about perinatal depression or stress if needed.



## STORY 13

### Tammar Aboriginal Corporation: Developing the Tambellup grassroots Aboriginal Netball Organisation

**Region:** Tambellup, Great Southern

**Impact:** Connection to Country, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Intervention

The Tambellup grassroots Aboriginal Netball Organisation is a small and progressing association with the objective of promoting Aboriginal youth to participate in sport, to develop social and life skills through sport, to build pride in culture, and to create a sense of belonging.

There is a large body of evidence, both in community sports and in sports therapies (that is, the use of sports as platforms for therapeutic treatment of physical or mental health issues), which demonstrates the links between these activities and improved physical and mental wellbeing (Cunningham & Beneforti, 2005; Nichols, 2007; Ruhanen & Whitford, 2011), as well as with improved social cohesion and inclusion.<sup>1</sup>

In remote communities, there is often limited infrastructure and programming to provide leisure and other pursuits (SA CSI 2007; Cunningham & Beneforti 2005), at times leading to engagement in unhealthy or negative activities (SA CSI 2007). The evidence suggests that providing locally relevant sports and recreation programs can be useful in building a sense of purpose, hope and belonging in these communities (Ruhanen & Whitford 2011; Stojanovski 2010).<sup>2</sup>

The above reports suggest that active involvement in sport contributes to improvements in school retention, attitudes towards learning, social and cognitive skills, increased social inclusion and cohesion, and increased validation of and connection to culture.

The Dream it Forward grant funded support for Tambellup's Aboriginal Netball Organisation to participate in the two most significant indigenous tournaments in 2015. The grant supported the Tambellup team and their sister Katanning All-Stars team to participate in the 2015 Aboriginal Youth Gala Day in Mandurah coinciding with Harmony Day. Additionally, the grant supported the Tambellup team to attend the 2015 NAIDOC Netball Carnival, and provided team shirts for the NAIDOC event. Support to the team was also made available by the community, and the Southwest Aboriginal Land and Sea Council.

The Tambellup netball program supports the social and emotional wellbeing of participants by diverting and discouraging them from potentially at-risk or sedentary behaviours through sport. Tournament travel will provide the girls with healthy experiences and encourage their self-esteem. Other benefits to the program include community socialisation and encouraging, by example, other members of the community to become more active.

1, 2 AIHW/AIFS Closing the Gap clearinghouse; Supporting healthy communities through sports and recreation programs, resource sheet #26, December 2013



# STORY 14

## Replants Pty Ltd/Sync7: Community Engagement in Grasstree Gardens

**Region:** Perth Metro

**Impact:** Recovery and Hope, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Promotion, Strengthening Individual, Family and Community Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Intervention

Replants connected their experience of creating grasstree gardens as an opportunity to gather Aboriginal community members for yarning in a beautiful and culturally-appropriate space. The project leveraged the significant community engagement that was built when constructing the garden with Clontarf Academy students and their families (Clontarf exists to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem, and employment prospects of young Aboriginal men and equips them to participate meaningfully in society).

The Dream it Forward grant funded community facilitation to assist local Indigenous people to come together to discuss issues of concern and create a culturally-appropriate forum to access guidance from Elders, community leaders, and support services.

Following the community engagement component of the project, the grant provided Phase 2 funding to deliver and provision Men's and Women's yarning circle workshops around social and emotional wellbeing, and culture.

Men's Workshops were delivered and facilitated by Charlie Kickett in the Balga garden at the Wandoo Reintegration Facility, and at Clontarf Academy in Kwinana. Approximately 20 men and 45 young people participated in the yarning circles.

Women's yarning circles workshops were delivered and facilitated by Vivienne Hansen at Settlers Common in Armadale.

The grant further funded a third component of the project: the delivery and provisioning of four Cultural Workshops in the Balga gardens at Clontarf Aboriginal College.

The development and execution of this model of community engagement and facilitated healing within a culturally-secure environment, contributed to building community capacity, and identifying local leadership. The model facilitated a cultural exchange connecting people back to landscape and operated within the framework that indigenous healing, health, and mental wellbeing are bound together with community connection and connection to country.



*"I like speaking to Charlie. It was nice meeting him. He shares good yarns. Gives us advice. He is a good man. He is a good old fella to talk to. He talks about family and is a good listener."*





## THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH OF HEALING WORKSHOP

As part of the Dream it Forward objective of contributing to the social and emotional wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, ConnectGroups, in partnership with WISDOM in Your Life, offered a free one-day culturally-appropriate healing workshop to members of the Aboriginal community. The workshop was delivered at Derbarl Yerrigan and attended by 38 participants. The facilitators, Shaun Nannup and Roslyn Snyder embodied the power of healing and transformation. Together, they engaged the participants and encouraged them to regain control in their lives. It was a healing and empowering experience for all involved using art, story-telling, and writing.

### The following is an observation from one of the facilitators:

Very early on in the workshop a young man volunteered to have a cloth put over his head; we discussed how depression/stress can lead people to become invisible. As he sat down, he whispered, "I don't want to be invisible anymore!" I'm not sure how many people heard him, but throughout the day many more shared this sentiment in one form or another. One woman who looked shell-shocked most of the day passed me her writings with a smile, "I want you to read this," which roughly translated to I want you to see who I am. Three others in the group who wrote, shared their writings, or part of, all wanting to be seen. Another woman who identified that she was 'lost' in the desolate desert, shared with me how alone, isolated and lost she was, handed me a piece of paper with a name, address, phone number, date and time and excitedly told me that she had been invited to attend an outing next week. She stayed behind, long after everyone else had left working on her evaluation. She wrote about how she learned that some people need other people, then laughingly, crossed out some people and wrote, "I need other people."

One woman asked to share her writing with the entire group; she told me she never tells anyone about herself in any way, translated 'I want the entire group to see me!' As a couple of the women waited to say thank you and good bye, a few of them hugged me. Then one of the men was standing to the side; I asked did he want a hug too, he nodded and hugged me very tightly. He said, "I've been wanting to do that all day, thank you, you may not know how much this means to me." Finally, a small group of people were writing on the paper for the letting go step. A young man gave me his paper. On it he had written, "not winning lotto," and I said something about this being a bit superficial but a good first step. He shook his head, and another person said, "no, it's really really deep!" I looked at him as he nodded, the other person said, "he's letting go of waiting to win lotto; he now knows it's up to him." I was totally flabbergasted. One of the reasons we do these workshops is to empower people to be responsible for their own lives; this interaction showed exactly that.



# BLOGGING FROM THE KIMBERLEY

Blog...Dream it Forward in the Kimberley

Project Coordinator: Christine Hendricks



## April 13

I flew up to the Kimberley the week of April 13 2015 to work alongside some of our projects operating in the Broome and Derby areas, to gather evidence around need for future Dream it Forward (DIF) projects, and to make contact with those individuals and organisations with vision and clear ideas for community-led initiatives around Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing.

## April 14

I was privileged to shadow the Cyrenian House/Milliya Rumurra (CHMR) Outreach Team, one of our grant recipients, as we travelled 180 km south of Broome to Bidyadanga, the largest remote Aboriginal community in WA. In addition to shadowing the team, I met with several community members, and the Youth and Community Engagement Coordinator, had a visit with artists at the local Art Colony, and explored several local initiatives.


## April 15

The following day, I drove 200km north, through Boab-studded plains, to Derby and visited with the Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service (Derby) and our Women's Support Group project lead. Together, we toured the facility where the Group meets, discussed their activities and future plans. I was given a painting from one of the members who prior to joining the group had been largely non-verbal and traumatised but who has begun to experience healing through her connection to the Group. We also visited Mowanjum, a medium-sized Aboriginal community, 10km south of Derby.

## April 16

Throughout the rest of the week, I liaised with several amazing people with inspiring ideas about engaging their communities in healing and hope including representatives from Men's Outreach, Youth Justice, Nyamba Buru Yawuru, the Alive and Kicking Goals suicide prevention project, and the Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service (Broome). From this brief trip, it is clear that the Dream it Forward model is consistent with local indigenous communities' perspectives around implementing grassroots, community-delivered projects to promote holistic mental health wellbeing. It was also evident that there is much to be done in this region and that we have only scratched the surface.





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