

STORIES FROM OUR DREAM IT FORWARD PROGRAM

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



ConnectGroups
helping support groups & individuals



Kindly supported by Mental Health Commission
Government of Western Australia
Mental Health Commission



Dream it Forward is a unique program at the forefront of Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing within community. Designed to engage community and those working on the ground, it provides 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 Torres Strait Islander communities in WA a voice to direct their own healing.

Shaun Nannup – Dream it Forward Ambassador, Director at WISDOM in your Life

Thank You:

The Mental Health Commission’s David Axworthy, Sarah Green, Anya Statham, and Wayne Flugge for their steadfast support.

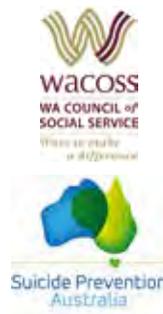
The Nyoongar people of the southwest region of WA, the Martu people of the Western Desert, the Wongatha people of the Goldfields, the Yinhawangka, Banyjimam and Niyiyaparli people of the Pilbara, and the Yawuru, Bardi, Kwini (Pela), Karajarri, Juwaliny, Mangala, Nyungamarta, Yulpartja, Jaru, Kija, Munumburru, Miriwoong, Kukatja,

Warlpiri, Walmajarri people of the Kimberley region

ConnectGroups Support Groups Association WA Inc.

Antonella Segre, CEO
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INTRODUCTION TO THE DREAM IT FORWARD PROGRAM - ISSUE #3

The **Dream it Forward** Program (DIF) is a ConnectGroups small grants program focused on identifying, strengthening, sustaining, or adding value to grassroots, community-led projects, and is a partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Western Australia.

Dream it Forward activates cultural strength as a protective factor against mental distress, and applies culturally-informed ways of healing to improve social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB). Place-based and strengths-focused solutions re-engage community, strengthen cultural identity, give community a voice in their own healing, and operate to reduce risk factors at a community level.

The model operates as an authentic partnership with stakeholders and supports a range of methodologies to increase community protection. The program reflects a direct response to the *Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025*¹ supporting system-wide reform, prevention, and mental health promotion direction, and more recently aligned to the recommendations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATISPEP) Final Report which promotes strengthening culture and cultural identity as a protective factor².

Dream it Forward is responsive to key stakeholders in its approach to building trust and culturally competent engagement with Elders and community leaders. It operates within a holistic decolonising framework that recognises the impact of underlying trans-generational grief and trauma caused by colonisation, dispossession, and successive government policies which have resulted in persistent disadvantage and distress.

Dream it Forward embeds the imperative of connection to country, culture, spirituality, family, and community in healing and wellbeing. Good practice has resulted in community embracing **Dream it Forward's** upstream and place-based approach which activates culture and builds local leadership capacity. With the benefit of four years building relationships with community, the model results in project legacy and meaningful benefit.

¹ Mental Health Commission (2015). Better Choices. Better Lives. Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025. Perth, Western Australian Mental Health Commission

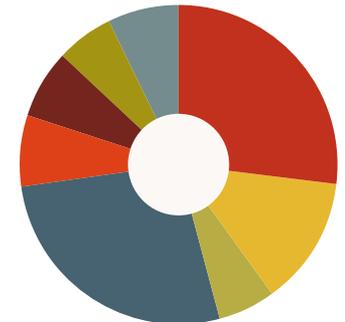
² "Solutions that Work: What the Evidence and our People Tell Us": Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATISPEP) Final Report 2016

SUMMARY – Grants awarded in 2017–18

- 34 submissions received in one funding round
- 10 grants awarded
- \$228,263 total amount requested from 34 submissions
- \$ 44,145 funds allocated across 10 grants representing 29% of all submissions and 19% of all funds requested

REGION	SUBMITTED	AWARDED
West Kimberley	16%	18%
East Kimberley	14%	37%
Wheatbelt	5%	0
Goldfields	3%	9%
Metro	35%	27%
Great Southern	16%	0
South West	3%	0
Pilbara	8%	9%

SUBMISSION CATEGORY	SUBMITTED	AWARDED
On-Country Camps	27%	27%
Language/Cultural Transmission	7%	13%
Art Projects	4%	6%
Women's Groups	13%	27%
Men's Groups	7%	7%
Sport/Dance/Music	6%	7%
Youth	18%	6%
Other	18%	7%



A key objective of the **Dream it Forward** Program is to add to the evidence that grassroots programs that strengthen culture and build social and emotional wellbeing competencies are a complement to mainstream services and encourage a “ground shift” toward local solutions and local ownership.

These are just some of their stories:

STORY 1

ALIVE and Kicking Goals! Suicide Prevention Program – Men’s Outreach Service

- Region:** Kimberley
- Category:** Other
- Areas of Impact**
- Recovery and Hope
 - Connection to Country
 - Strengthening of Connection to Culture
 - Strengthening Individual, Family, Kinship and Community Wellbeing
 - Improvement in Social and Emotional Wellbeing
 - Prevention and Early Intervention of Psychological Distress
 - Improved people’s access to other services

Alive and Kicking Goals (AKG) is a youth suicide prevention service based in Broome supporting communities across the Kimberley region. Established through a community initiative by local Aboriginal people, the program has a primary objective to reduce the high suicide rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth through peer-education workshops, one-to-one mentoring and counselling. AKG delivers age-appropriate, relevant and culturally-inclusive suicide prevention and awareness workshops, including alcohol and other drug (AOD) education, to Aboriginal communities and local schools across the Kimberley. AKG’s programs are based on grass-roots community knowledge and aim to strengthen awareness of what is happening within the community and how to actively protect those most vulnerable and at risk.

Dream It Forward funded the delivery of drug and alcohol, and suicide prevention workshops and presentations to address the impact of unresolved grief and loss following the coronial inquests in the region to youth in the East Kimberley communities of Fitzroy Crossing, Wyndham, Kununurra, and Halls Creek. AKG delivered 13 workshops and 6 agency presentations to over 200 participants. The workshops encouraged youth to practice help-seeking behaviours, and to identify safe spaces and people when distressed, as well as progressed engagement with key Aboriginal Health and Medical Services in the region. For many young people, it was the first time they were able to openly engage with peers about these issues.

Outcomes included positive youth engagement, an improved awareness and understanding of the issues and personal triggers, and an attitude to openly discuss the impact of suicide and AOD. Additionally, the team had an opportunity to engage with key community stakeholders including schools, sports teams, agencies, and health services.

“Calling kids helpline (1800 551 000). Very educational and helpful workshop.”
HD (13yrs)

“I like this session because it taught me a lot of things.”
AH (13yrs)

“I liked this a lot, it was fun. Good info.”
FA (14yrs)

“I learned that drugs can lead to death.”
JB (13yrs)

“I like talking about this because it makes me feel good.”
R (13yrs)



STORY 2

Bidyadanga Community Men's Health and Wellbeing Group

Region: Kimberley	Areas of Impact
Category: On-country Camps Men's Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recovery and Hope• Connection to Country• Strengthening of Connection to Culture• Strengthening Individual, Family, Kinship and Community Wellbeing• Improvement in Social and Emotional Wellbeing• Prevention and Early Intervention of Psychological Distress• Improved people's access to other services

Bidyadanga Aboriginal Community (La Grange) is located on the Kimberley coast, approximately 180km from Broome. Bidyadanga is the largest remote Aboriginal community in Western Australia with a population of approximately 750 residents and is home to the Karajarri, Juwalinny, Mangala, Nyungamarta and Yulpartja language groups. Rich in history, art and culture and with a developing economy, Bidyadanga has many community facilities and infrastructure to support community's people.

Partnering with the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service, the Community Men's Group delivers monthly events with activities that facilitate cultural exchange, storytelling, hunting/fishing, preparing healthy meals and positive fire-side discussions on different aspects of men's social and emotional wellbeing.



Dream It Forward funded a series of on-country camps to local areas important to the Karajarri, Juwaliny, Mangala, Nyungamarta and Yulparija language groups represented in Bidyadanga. The goal of the on-country camps is to improve the resilience of men in the community by facilitating male support networks and increasing their capacity by providing wellness education and activities. The project successfully resulted in intergenerational exchange based on culture, country and positive discussions about mental health wellness issues. The men learned cultural methods of hunting and cooking, traditional stories about the places where they camped and enjoyed each other's company away from the dynamics of community life.

The project responded directly to the Kooliaman Statement (2018) where 80 Aboriginal men and non-Aboriginal brothers gathered to share stories of community strength, courage, ingenuity and determination, and were united in the belief that they could affect change through a place and strength-based approach. The trust built through the camps encouraged access to natural supports and services available through KAMS and Men's Outreach to support the men's physical, social, cultural and emotional wellbeing, and to strengthen their capacity to move from a position of disempowerment to empowerment.



STORY 3

Glass Jar Australia – Shooting Stars Program

Region:

Kimberley

Category:

On-country
Camps | Youth

Areas of Impact

- Recovery and Hope
- Connection to Country
- Strengthening of Connection to Culture
- Strengthening Individual, Family, Kinship and Community Wellbeing
- Improvement in Social and Emotional Wellbeing
- Prevention and Early Intervention of Psychological Distress
- Improved people's access to other services

Shooting Stars is an initiative of Netball WA and Glass Jar Australia operating across remote WA in Derby, Halls Creek, Wiluna, Meekathara, Carnarvon, Mullewa, Leonora and Narrogin. The program promotes increased school attendance by encouraging girls' participation in netball and other activities. Approximately 350 girls are involved in the program which rewards those with an 80% attendance rate or a 20% improvement at school with eligibility to participate in a regional camp.

Dream It Forward funded The Confident Me Cultural Women's Camp held in Halls Creek. The camp accommodated 50 girls, aged 13–18 over 3 days, providing an environment focused on women's health, and social and emotional wellbeing. The Confident Me Camp, delivered in collaboration with Dove, included workshops educating the girls on resilience, body confidence, safe social media use and being empowered women. Emphasis was on connecting to their culture and celebrating diversity; teaching the girls about respecting individuality and building strength from their family history and culture. The camp provided an opportunity for the girls to come together for support and healing following the recent suicide of a young girl in Halls Creek with a focus on uncovering and addressing mental distress.

Strength of heritage and culture, and improved awareness of health and wellbeing, nutrition, mental health, and fitness were camp outcomes. Local role models and peer mentors supported the girls throughout the camp ensuring the girls built strong peer relationships and were informed of community supports available post-camp.



"See I'm body confident, I don't care; I am comfortable and that's all that matters, and I'm going swimming."

In

The context of this quote above is really impactful – Regional Coordinator for the Kimberley region – Helen Ockerby overheard Vicki say this the day after the camp at the local swimming pool – she was wearing a crop top and shorts and another girl tried to make fun of her; Vicki responded with the above quote.



STORY 4

Kapululangu Aboriginal Women’s Law and Cultural Centre

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Region: | Areas of Impact |
| Kimberley | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recovery and Hope• Connection to Country• Strengthening of Connection to Culture• Strengthening Individual, Family, Kinship and Community Wellbeing• Improvement in Social and Emotional Wellbeing• Improved people’s access to other services |
| Category: | |
| Language/
Cultural
Transmission | |

The Kapululangu Aboriginal Women’s Law and Cultural Centre was established in 1999 by Balgo Women Elders who were born and raised in the desert before the arrival of Kartiya/non-Indigenous people in their ancestral countries. The Elders are custodians of an immense wealth of stories, skills and cultural knowledge. The Elders believe that connectedness to Tjukurrpa (the Universal Life Force/Dreaming) through ceremony, country, and cultural awakening is an essential protective factor against the social problems impacting their people. Kapululangu provides law and cultural services to people in three remote Aboriginal communities: Balgo, Mulan and Billiluna.

Dream It Forward funded the Kurralkatjanu Parnytarn Nintitjorra project, meaning “The Last Generation Women Elders Teach.” The project involved on-country workshops which focused on intergenerational cultural learning, knowledge transmission, and women’s ceremony from the Parnytarn (Senior Law Women aged 70 to 85) to Young Elders (aged mid-50s to 69), and young women. The workshops involved traditional sand drawing – storytelling, illustrating stories in the sand as has been passed down through generations, body painting using ochres to teach ancient body designs related to Dreaming stories, and accompanying songs and dances taught by the Parnytarn to the Young Elders. Each event also provided opportunities for the women to yarn about issues impacting their lives including suicide prevention, alcohol and domestic violence, trauma and stress, protection against sexual diseases, and other issues specific to women’s social and emotional wellbeing with the support of local service providers.

The sharing of cultural knowledge fostered pride in culture, strengthened relationships between the women, and created a safe space for yarning. The Parnytarn teachers were proud to transmit cultural knowledge. The Young Elders were empowered to receive their cultural stories, songs, and dances; and have become engaged in Kapululangu’s cultural activities.



STORY 5

Laverton Crisis Intervention Service – One Tree Community Services Inc.

Region: Goldfields	Areas of Impact
Category: On-country Camps Women's Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recovery and Hope• Connection to Country• Strengthening of Connection to Culture• Strengthening Individual, Family, Kinship and Community Wellbeing

The Laverton Crisis Intervention Service, operated by One Tree Community Services, is based in the Northern Goldfields and services Laverton and surrounding towns and communities, including the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. The Service provides short-term crisis accommodation for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence, and community engagement and outreach services focusing on early intervention, prevention and follow-up for victims of family and domestic violence. The service runs a fortnightly girls group (Kungka) for girls aged 9–16 and a weekly Women's Group. Both groups aim to build self-esteem through group activities, promote wellbeing and resilience, and create safety networks.

Dream It Forward funded camping equipment to support on-country healing camps for women experiencing or at-risk of family and domestic violence. The camping trips support connection to country for women, and opportunities for cultural transmission from older to younger women, as well as a safe space to discuss mental health, as there is a gap in available services in Laverton.

The camp supported the women to talk freely about issues affecting the community and build connections to natural supports and services. The women expressed that being in the bush and on-country helped them safely discuss sensitive subjects. The women demonstrated pride in their skills and knowledge of the land, sharing stories and cultural connection with each other, and breaking down barriers around trust. Women who participated in the camps have been better engaged in town activities and appear more comfortable with general community engagement and service access.



“This fire is good for our minds, it brings us peace. Being out here in the bush is what our people need to do to let go of all the stress and problems we have in our lives. We need to connect with our land, it makes us happy.”

“The connection and time shared between women seemed incredibly valuable. Truths were told and a deeper understanding, interest, and empathy was developed amongst the group, I felt, through having space and time to spend together. An exceptional effort on behalf of One Tree's commitment and care for the community. Thank you for having me along.”



STORY 6

Moorditj Keila Community Group

Region:

Metro

Areas of Impact

- Recovery and Hope
- Connection to Country
- Strengthening of Connection to Culture
- Strengthening Individual, Family, Kinship and Community Wellbeing
- Improvement in Social and Emotional Wellbeing
- Prevention and Early Intervention of Psychological Distress
- Improved people's access to other services

Category:

Art Projects |
Women's Group

The South Perth Aboriginal community group Moorditj Keila (happy and healthy dolphin) is the name given to the group by a local Elder. The dolphin is significant to the Noongar people of the Canning and Swan River areas adjacent to the City of South Perth.

The Moorditj Keila group is committed to building healthy relationships and promoting safe and happy lives for Aboriginal children, youth, women, men and the family unit, facilitating and delivering community support programs including an Elders group, a breakfast program, community camps, women's and men's groups, youth outreach services and healthy lifestyle programs. In addition, Moorditj Keila provide referrals to other agencies to assist and support individuals and families in need.

Dream It Forward funded a therapeutic art program as part of the women's group. The program 'Yorgas business healing through art and culture' focused on strengthening women's social and emotional wellbeing in order to support connection to family and kinship, and the wider community. Through self-expression, the women fostered healing and social engagement, reconnecting to concepts of land and scenery, and tapping into inner strengths.

The impact of the program on women's healing was made evident through the experience of one participant in particular who displayed anxiety, distress and on occasion, a lack of respect towards peers and staff. Moorditj Keila provided early intervention by addressing her mental distress through teaching her strategies to deal with stressful situations in her hostel environment, and counselling and learning from staff and her peers. She is now respectful of the programs and the organisation which has assisted her recovery.



"Hi our names are Connie Clinch and Nola Bolton we really loved the art sessions and learning the new art technique of tissue art. The art teacher and Moorditj Keila really helped us to have a go at creating our own piece of art because we were encouraged that we could do it. The patience and support from both gave us the confidence to have a go at it and we did. We are happy we did it now and we have the confidence to start another one on our own. We feel happy and safe here at Moorditj Keila to do whatever activities are offered to us."

"When I first started my art piece I felt really shame because I'm not confident in doing art or I stress over trying to complete something. The art looked really hard and I really didn't want to try and do it. The art teacher and Moorditj Keila really helped me to have a go because art is art and I can do it. The patience and support from both gave me the confidence to have a go at it and I did. It took me the whole 12 weeks to do my art piece but I completed it and that's because of the trust I had with the art teacher and MK. I am happy I did it now and I have the confidence to start another one on my own. I feel happy and safe here."



STORY 7

Sister Kate's Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation

Region:

Metro

Areas of Impact

- Recovery and Hope
- Connection to Country
- Strengthening of Connection to Culture
- Strengthening Individual, Family, Kinship and Community Wellbeing
- Improvement in Social and Emotional Wellbeing
- Prevention and Early Intervention of Psychological Distress
- Improved people's access to other services

Category:

On-country
Camps |
Women's Group

Sister Kate's Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation (SKHKAC) is a not-for-profit organisation that provides services to members of the stolen generations as well as the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. SKHKAC delivers a range of culturally-based healing and education programs to address the personal, family and social effects of intergenerational trauma including loss of cultural identity and family relationships, racism, acculturative stress, drug and alcohol, and mental and physical health issues.

Dream It Forward funded an on-country cultural healing camp for women. The camp provided a safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to come together on-country to strengthen their connection to the land and culture, and to practice cultural healing. A cultural gathering is of core value to women's business.

The focus of the project was for Elders to share their cultural knowledge and demonstrate cultural healing practices. With over 50 women attending the 2-day camp, participation in cultural healing activities such as yarning circles, sharing life journeys, wildflower essence therapy sessions, identifying bush foods and medicines, art therapy, Noongar language, cultural songs, healing pits, and cultural ceremony generated confidence and healing. Being on country encouraged cultural transmission and storytelling through art and yarning circles.

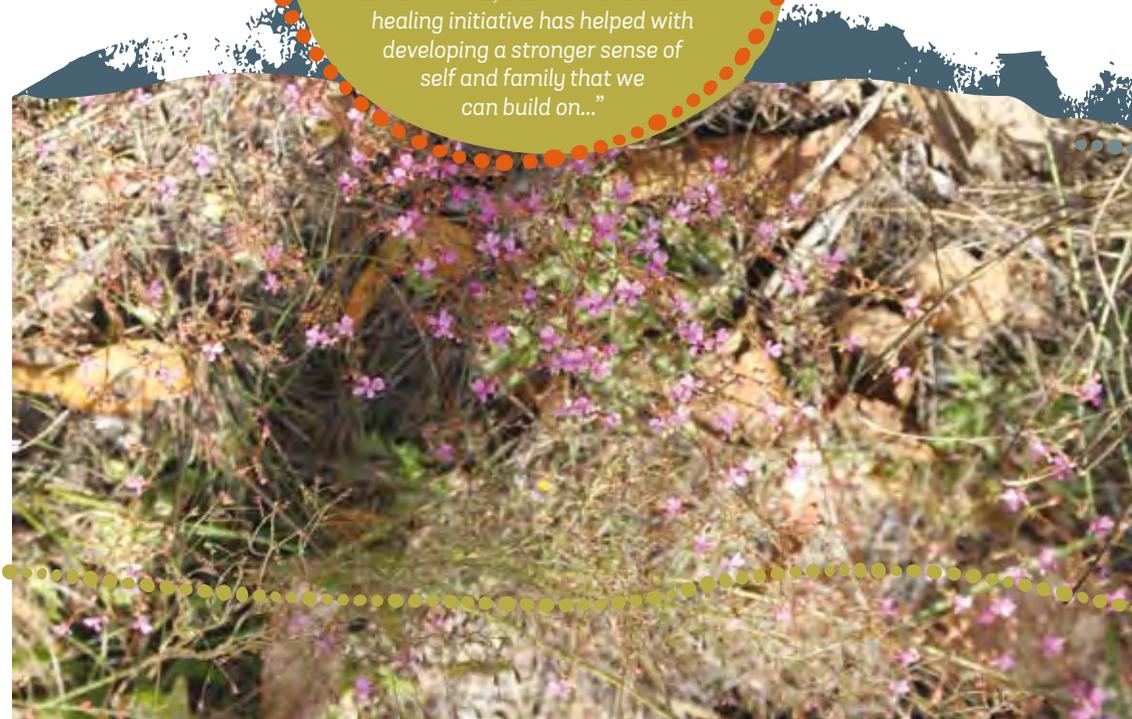
As members of the Stolen Generations, the camp supported the women to discuss issues that have affected their mental health and cultural identity, and provided links to service providers and connection to other women with similar experiences and trauma from displacement and disconnectedness from family, culture, and country.



"...I feel the camp provided a new experience in healing that a lot of us didn't know much about and it was amazing to participate in this type of cultural healing as it was all about what country can offer to make us better..."



"...I just loved being part of the camp as it has given me an insight into cultural healing practices that I was not aware of, and being from the Stolen Generations, not knowing for a long time where you came from, who your people were and not knowing your family till some of us linked up with family members at various events, this women's cultural healing initiative has helped with developing a stronger sense of self and family that we can build on..."



STORY 8

Val and Kathy's Crafty Kitchen

- Region:** Pilbara
- Category:** Women's Group
- Areas of Impact**
- Recovery and Hope
 - Connection to Country
 - Strengthening of Connection to Culture
 - Strengthening Individual, Family, Kinship and Community Wellbeing
 - Improvement in Social and Emotional Wellbeing
 - Prevention and Early Intervention of Psychological Distress

Val and Kathy's Crafty Kitchen is a community group based in Roebourne in the Pilbara region supporting local people to connect through craft, healthy meals, and other social and recreational activities. Established in 2016, the group works in partnership with Act-Belong-Commit, the City of Karratha, and NBAC (Ngarliyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation) to provide a safe space, a sense of community belonging, and encourages social connection.

Supporting community members with transport to activities reduces isolation and enables participation in activities. Participants lead activity planning which typically centres around fishing, on-country trips, arts and crafts, and gardening. Val and Kathy's Crafty Kitchen promote health, hope and healing, and support 20-30 people at weekly events and up to 130 community members at special events.



Dream It Forward funded sustainability for Val and Kathy's Crafty Kitchen for food, fuel, crafts, camping, and fishing supplies, to further their community engagement. Participants at Val and Kathy's Crafty Kitchen were able to come together in a safe space to yarn, connect with others, and foster belonging whilst doing an activity or craft of their choice. The group

supported families with meals while they were grieving and promoted healthy eating with cooking tips and planting of herbs and vegetables to take home. Further, community members were supported to go fishing on-country where Elders could yarn, and share stories with others. Local service providers built relationships and trust with community members through regular participation in the weekly activities and day trips, and were available to offer further support.



STANDING STRONG TOGETHER



"It is through their 'Val and Kathy's Crafty Kitchen' and in the community we see how they make a difference, they create a sense of belonging – like Act-Belong-Community! They help with other agencies like the ladies in the REFAP 'Lead the Way Program'. They help us in our time of great need when a loved one passes away by helping with floral arrangements, wreaths and eulogies to even transport to funerals. We just don't have that available to us in this remote community. They help us with shopping or going to the post office for example. They create a positive atmosphere at the crafty kitchen with healthy food, cuppas and all kinds of learnings with crafts and arts. They really want to help our community, its real support and we feel comfortable in their company. They provide help us with building our skills in arts, crafts, cooking and we feel satisfied with their outcomes. We leave happy, a full tummy and look forward to next week. We are mostly women but men come sometimes, it's a safe place for everyone. We enjoy one another's company of yarning, laughing and making things together as well as cooking together. We can't wait until next Tuesday!"

By Nana Pansy, Josie Samson, Lovina Samson, Nana Violet Samson & Nana Pansy Hicks

STORY 9

Woola Woola Koolankas Netball Club

- Region:** Metro
- Category:** Sport/Dance/Music
- Areas of Impact**
- Recovery and Hope
 - Connection to Country
 - Strengthening of Connection to Culture
 - Improvement in Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Woola Woola Koolankas, meaning “proud proud children” is an Aboriginal Netball Club with players from 9 to 55 years old. The club is based in Balga and supports children from disadvantaged backgrounds to engage with sport to foster resilience, a sense of belonging, and to build a lifelong skill. The club provides a support network for the girls, helps to build confidence and leadership skills, and provides an incentive for good behaviour as a requirement for play.

Dream It Forward funded Woola Woola Koolankas Netball Club for netball uniforms for disadvantaged children and young people without the resources to otherwise fully participate in the program. Having uniforms and the associated sense of belonging enhanced players’ confidence and encouraged them to better engage in the netball community. Through participation in the Woola Woola program, the girls build self-worth and positive relationship skills, and identify natural supports.

Dream it Forward further funded Woola Woola for the facilitation of a cultural connection and mapping workshop targeted at strengthening the cultural identity of the girls. Family connections were mapped and distributed to participants, providing a sense of where they belong. The project also identified mentors for the girls to help provide stability for them through school and life outside of school. Thirty girls participated in the workshop.

The club operates as a large extended family, with girls able to access support from teammates, other players, their coaches and club supporters. Resilience and mindfulness are explicitly taught as part of the club’s philosophy and players are supported to develop these skills. Importantly, the girls have access to a supportive community which recognises, respects and promotes their cultural needs as well as encouraging the benefits of physical exercise.

“I feel like I’m properly part of my team, like I’m professional and I’m just as good as the other clubs there. I feel like I’m playing better too because I feel like I’m a professional netballer and I look good. Also the socks are really cool and I like to wear them to school.”
LG (13yrs)



THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH OF HEALING WORKSHOP

As part of the Dream it Forward Program, ConnectGroups, in partnership with “WISDOM in Your Life”, continued to offer “*The Universal Truth of Healing*” a FREE metro-based workshop to members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The healing workshop was facilitated by Shaun Nannup and Roslyn Snyder and their team from WISDOM in your Life, and addressed culturally-safe approaches to healing and transformation, and held a space for the participants to nurture and heal by self-empowerment from within, through art, story-telling and poetry.

The following are observations from the facilitators:

“At first people were shy and quiet. Once Shaun moved the tables around and shuffled people closer, there came a lot more chatter and feedback that the room felt better and everyone started to talk to others more freely. This completely changed the energy of the room.

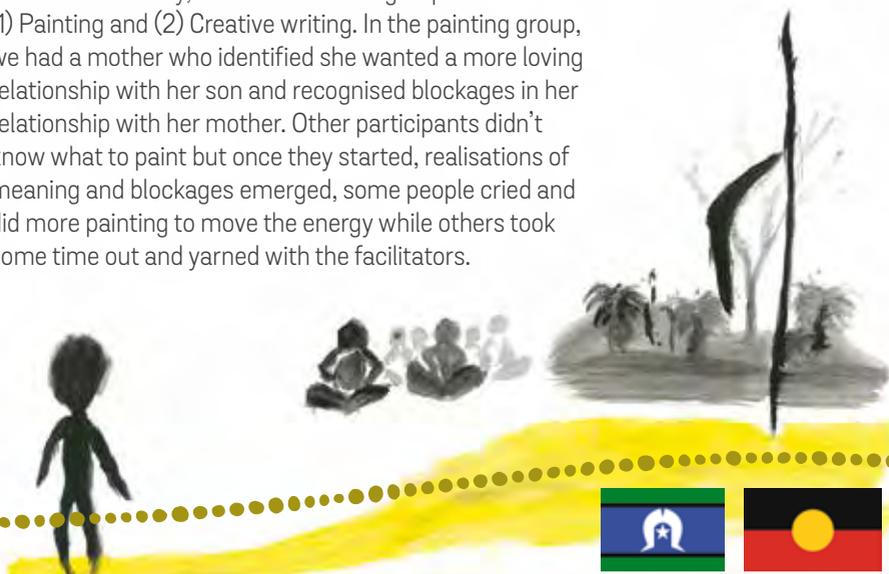
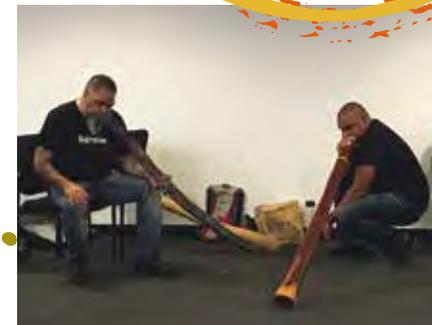
Our first activity displayed the levels of depression, we had three volunteers come up and participate at the front of the room. One lady said she thought the workshop and understanding the layers of depression would allow her to help her clients, but instead she saw the relevance in her own life and recognised where she needed to break the cycle. Another man said he was always there for others but he came to realise that he needed to help himself first and foremost.

For the last activity, we broke into two groups:

(1) Painting and (2) Creative writing. In the painting group, we had a mother who identified she wanted a more loving relationship with her son and recognised blockages in her relationship with her mother. Other participants didn't know what to paint but once they started, realisations of meaning and blockages emerged, some people cried and did more painting to move the energy while others took some time out and yarned with the facilitators.

In the creative writing group, one lady stood up said ‘don't laugh at me, this won't be any good’ she stood at the front of the group with her head down and shoulders caved in. Once she started reading the words at random on the board, her poem started to flow and she took the group on a journey beginning with her feeling like she was living in a cocoon but she could feel the butterfly within wanting to come out and fly free, how she felt stuck in her job governed by a system but she could see a future of strength like the Jedi within herself.

Painting and creative writing taps into the unconscious mind where language cannot describe emotion. Some people were surprised at the emotions which emerged. Having a process to follow to swim their swamp of feelings allowed participants to build resilience and to pave the way to self-empowerment.”



ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates.

This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness.

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

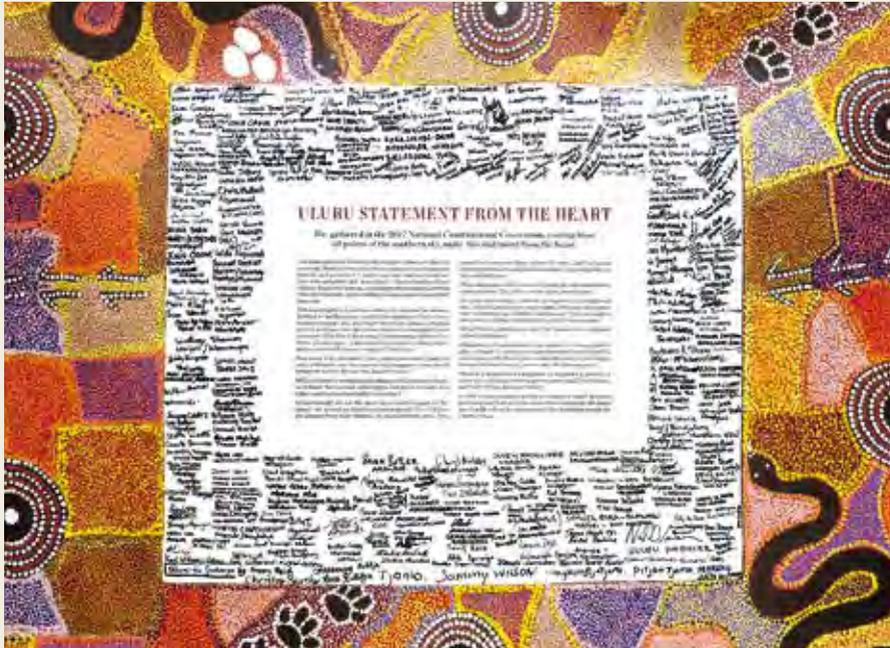
For additional information about the Uluru Statement from the Heart and to explore what it means to you:

reconciliation.org.au

shareourpride.org.au

1voiceuluru.org

recwa.org.au



ConnectGroups acknowledges the traditional carers of country throughout Western Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures; and to Elders past, present, and emerging. ConnectGroups acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar nation as the Traditional Carers of the land on which our office stands today.



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