



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



in

Thank You:

The Mental Health Commission's David Axworthy, Sarah Green, Wayne Flugge and Julie Spratt for their steadfast support.

All the people, families and communities across Western Australia with whom we have partnered through Dream it Forward. The Nyoongar people of the South West the Martu people of the Western Desert, the Karajarri, Nyangumarta, Yulparija, Juwaliny, Mangala, Kwini, Kukatja, Ngardi, Nyikina, Mangala, Karajarri, Walmajarri and Yawuru people of the Kimberley, the Ngadju, Wangkatja, Tjupan, Ngaanyatjarra people of the Goldfields,

Dream it Forward provided Harmoni House with funding to expand our art and yarnning program. It's amazing what happens when our mob comes together and produces art – we share stories, we yarn and we heal. We've been teaching the young ones to paint as a NAIDOC activity and have had the opportunity to share our art into the community – people love to look at our art and talk about Indigenous perspectives. Dream it Forward also gave us the opportunity to mobilise and take our mob back to visit the country we grew up on. It was healing and we were able to share our stories with the younger ones so they could learn about where they came from. We have had good synergy working in partnership with Dream it Forward.

Gloria Miller, Dream it Forward Grant Recipient and member of the ConnectGroups Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group

the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara of the NPY lands, and the Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi, Banyjima, Yinhawangka people of the Pilbara.

ConnectGroups Support Groups Association WA Inc.

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ConnectGroups is a Mental Health First Aid Gold Skilled Workplace.



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INTRODUCTION

The **Dream it Forward** Program 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 since 2014.

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 continued to be delivered as a partnership with stakeholders and supported a range of methodologies to increase community protection. The program reflected 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 is also aligned with 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.

More recently, **Dream it Forward** has been endorsed by the Centre for Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention (CBPATISIP) in the category of Indigenous Governance – Commissioning and Partnering. This endorsement substantiates the impact of upstream place-based community-led solutions on SEWB competencies downstream.

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. Best practice delivery has resulted in community responding to the model's upstream and place-based approach which puts culture first and builds local leadership capacity. With the benefit of seven years building relationships with community, the model has provided 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

FINANCIAL YEARS

2018–19
2019–20
2020–21

5094

Average \$ awarded per Community Group to date

213,938

\$ Awarded to Date

1048

Individuals Impacted

42

Community Groups

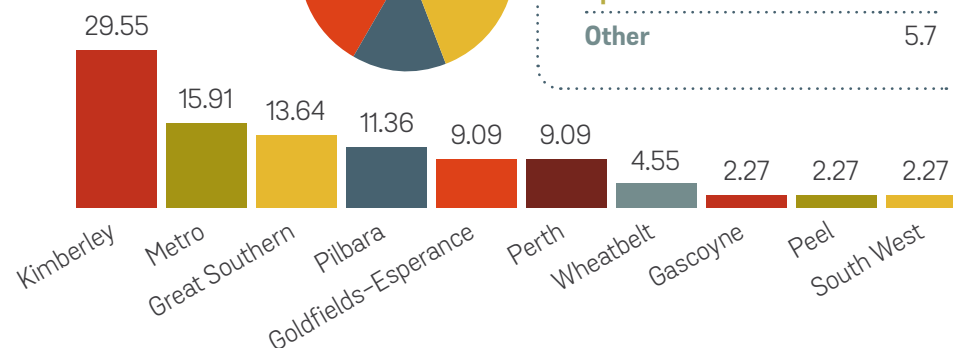
44

Projects Funded

PROJECT TYPE

PROJECT TYPE	%
Art Projects	10.0
Men's Group	8.6
On Country Camp	25.7
Language / Knowledge Transfer	14.3
Youth	20.0
Women's Group	15.7
Sport/Music/Dance	–
Other	5.7

REGION %



A key objective of the **Dream it Forward** Program is to add to the evidence that grassroots community-led programs strengthen culture, build social and emotional wellbeing competencies and are a complement to mainstream services encouraging a ground shift toward place-based solutions and local ownership.

These are some of their stories:

STORY 1

Broome Community and Child Health Service

Region Kimberley

Category Art Projects

Broome Community and Child Health Service provide primary health care to children and their families in Broome and the Kullarri region including health education to mothers through yarning. These Mums and Bubs Health Sessions are guided by the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–30 respecting the principles of cultural security, partnership, Aboriginal community control and engagement, and accountability.

Dream it Forward funded practical support to the Broome Boab Tree of Strength project to support Aboriginal mothers and families identified as at-risk. The Tree of Strength project used the medium of art to engage vulnerable mothers by strengthening and activating culture. Yarning with the women explored how distress has affected their families, services they could access and ways to promote wellbeing.

Outcomes included a large-scale group painting representing strength, empowerment, and culture, which was exhibited during NAIDOC week. Yarning and storytelling supported the social and emotional wellbeing of the young mothers who experienced an increase in self-esteem and confidence in themselves and in their parenting.

STORY 2

Burrungglo Aboriginal Corporation

Region Kimberley

Category Youth | On-Country

Burrungglo operates with the Dampier Peninsula region of the Kimberley supporting at-risk Indigenous youth through culturally safe and inclusive programs promoting recovery, empowerment and healing from trauma, grief and loss.

Dream it Forward funded practical support of two week-long Youth Empowerment and Healing Cultural Camps (YEaHCC) for youth from the Kullari region (Broome, Bidyadanga, Beagle Bay, Lombardina, Djarindjin, Ardyaloon, and community outstations. The camps delivered a series of healing, social, emotional, health, wellbeing, life skills, leadership, and cultural activities. The activities were designed to activate cultural identity, strengthen peer support, and promote knowledge of country and belonging with the goal of increasing personal agency and leadership to disrupt suicide risk.

Outcomes for participants included learning the skills needed to manage their social and emotional wellbeing and the confidence and trust to seek support from networks and service providers. The camps encouraged resilience through recognition and activation of their cultural strength.



"Painting helps me show what I am thinking, which then helps me talk about it."

"I like this project because I felt listened to. So many health mob come in and stir things up and then leave. You guys stuck around for the long time and it makes us feel appreciated and understood."

STORY 3

Bidyadanga Community

Region Kimberley

Category Men's Group | On-Country

Bidyadanga is the largest Indigenous remote community in WA and is home to five language groups: Karajarri, Nyangumarta, Yulparija, Juwaliny, and Mangala. As needed, men in the community have gathered to yarn about issues impacting them as men both young and old. Informal gatherings traditionally take place under the Lore tree or facilitated at the men's space.

Dream it Forward funded a series of on-country camps for the men and boys of Bidyadanga to address culture, AOD, wellbeing and mentoring. This process supported the men to act early and to support younger men and boys at risk of disengagement or interaction with the justice system; issues of great concern to the community.

This project provided an opportunity to explore country, hold meaningful discussions about past and present wounds and wins in a culturally-safe environment supported by the Elders. The camps and day activities also provided opportunities to learn from Elders and share each other's experiences being on-country.



STORY 4

Carnarvon Community Men's Group

Region Gascoyne

Category Youth | Language/Knowledge

The Carnarvon Community Men's Group is a community group focused in Carnarvon in the north west region of WA. Activities are solutions-focused and designed to address community-identified issues, and in particular issues affecting youth.

Dream it Forward funded practical support for delivery of three on-country camps for cultural transmission between senior men and Elders and younger boys. The camps were planned as an early intervention initiative to support the boys through yarning and fishing. Many of the boys are exposed to alcohol and other drugs, and other stressors in community life. The camps represented opportunities to connect to country and to participate in healthy activities.

Outcomes of the project included connecting the young boys to country and providing positive male role modelling and leadership for them. Strengthening culture by yarning and fishing on country with the older men is a needed feature in the younger boys' lives. Yarning was framed to encourage youth to use cultural solutions to contemporary problems.



STORY 5

Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation

Region Metro

Category Other

The Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation has been servicing the Aboriginal community in Perth in the areas of cultural capabilities and social wellbeing for the past 32 years. The organisation delivers a number of cultural and social wellbeing initiatives including art-based therapy programs, cultural camps for Aboriginal children, and cross-cultural programs through their Kyana Gallery.

Dream it Forward funded the production of a film clip for the hip hop song “Hunger”, a follow-up to “Kya Kyana”. The clip which was widely shared celebrates culture, cultural strength, and repossession of culture; with an understanding of what has happened to culture and how to reclaim it. The project utilised social network systems that many Aboriginal young people access, encouraging a pathway for young people to experience visual and performing contemporary arts as a medium to strengthen culture.

Outcomes included a multimedia edit that commented on the social issues experienced by young people influenced by cultural aspects of history that is seldom told in the mainstream. Focus on these issues has a positive mental health outcome by exploring the complexities of inter-generational trauma and healing.

DUMBARTUNG
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

“This is the most important project I have had the honour on working with. I will also adopt it in the projects I work with in both Casuarina and Banksia Hill institutions.”

Scott Optumus
Griffiths

STORY 6

Great Southern Noongar Emerging Leaders Group

Region Great Southern

Category Language/Knowledge | On-Country

The Great Southern Noongar Emerging Leadership Group was formed in 2016 and represents the majority of Aboriginal families and communities in the Great Southern. The group is comprised of Aboriginal people aged 20 to 40 years and those considered to be the next tier of future leaders. The group come together to yarn about issues affecting Aboriginal communities.

Dream it Forward funded the “Building Strong Cultural Leaders” project supporting intergenerational transfer of culture and leadership from Elders and community leaders to the Great Southern Noongar Emerging Leadership Group. The project supported events that promoted positive messaging, networking opportunities and leadership growth including camps and a regional conference with ongoing mentoring and guidance from Elders and leaders.

Outcomes included building the capacity of the emerging leaders to respond to issues in and between communities. The project provided leadership opportunities for Aboriginal staff and young leaders, working with Aboriginal communities, to learn from Elders and community leaders who shared their knowledge and legacy creating a bond of trust that will culminate in an ongoing transfer of cultural custodianship and leadership development.



STORY 7

**Kalgoorlie NAIDOC Planning Committee/
Goldfields Aboriginal Language Centre
Aboriginal Corporation**

Region Goldfields-Esperance

Category Art Projects

The Kalgoorlie/Boulder NAIDOC Planning Committee was formed in 2017 and is tasked with focusing on cultural activities and experiences for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who live or visit Kalgoorlie/Boulder during NAIDOC week. Disconnection with country and culture significantly impacts young people with limited connection to traditional people or who have lost connection from the impact of the mission systems through the Goldfields that resulted in loss of culture and language.

Dream it Forward funded a series of traditional arts, crafts, dance and song workshops run by Elders from the Ngaanyatjarra Lands and Tjuntjuntjarra Community to pass on knowledge, skills and traditional art forms. The workshops targeted youth and young adults to use culture to build resilience, strength, and cultural capability.

The project also supported Elders to explore how they could use engagement with culture in a contemporary environment, to build strength and resilience in younger people. The project contributed to healing by connecting Aboriginal people and families with limited cultural engagement with 2 Ngadju Elders, 3 Wangkatja Elders, 1 younger Wangkatja person, 2 Tjupan Elders and 6 Ngaanyatjarra Elders.



"The 2 days were well received in Kalgoorlie/Boulder with children from the schools coming to experience 1st hand cultural experience, people from within the town. On the last day people were fortunate enough to see the women dancing and singing. It was truly a great cultural experience."

STORY 8

Harmoni House

Region Metro

Category Art Projects | On-Country

Harmoni House is a community hub with an open door policy for all Aboriginal people and community members in the Armadale area, and a place where people can feel a sense of belonging in a culturally safe and supportive environment. The organisation provides a broad range of programs and services to reduce disadvantage and vulnerability through a community development framework which empowers individuals and the community.

Dream it Forward funded Harmoni House's art and yarnning program and on-country engagement to re-connect to country, culture, spirituality, family and community. The art and yarnning circle was developed to provide opportunities for the visual art and creative process to merge into "art therapy" where participants were supported to connect with and gain insight into their past and present, feelings, emotions and relationships.

The project provided the opportunity to improve individual, family and community mental health and wellbeing in a safe and positive environment that increased people's awareness and access to support and services available at Harmoni House and to refer them to other agencies as needed.



"One of the Elders remembered catching the school bus and together we remembered getting wet feet after walking through winter's cold water and getting our shoes wet – memories of the past. But we were really happy. The younger ones were able to see and hear our memories and share in our past. We were deeply impacted for good."



STORY 9

Kwaalup Djet Aboriginal Corporation

Region Great Southern

Category Youth

Kwaalup Djet is volunteer-run and provides community advocacy and support. The organisation is challenged with providing meaningful services to an extended community suffering from high rates of alcohol and other drug abuse, grief and other psychological distress, youth disengagement, a lack of opportunity, and limited reasonable access to counselling services or other support agencies.

Dream it Forward funded a shearing camp for teenagers from Tambellup and the surrounding region inspired by Noongar Elders' memories of their connection to the land and the lifestyle experienced through farming. Elders and leaders in the region provided cultural knowledge and shearing industry skills to support the camp and the young people.

A number of Noongar teenagers in Tambellup and the region struggle to find meaning and purpose for their lives. This project was designed as an introduction to shearing and connecting with Elders with strong industry experience, a pathway to further training, employment, self-respect and pride in their culture.



"It was great coming together, become like family. It was good for me to realise that everyone is important in a shearing team, everyone and every task is important. Everyone needs each other to get the job done. I realise that I need to be fit mentally spiritually and physically to be in the shearing industry."

"It's good to learn here as it's what my parents and grandparents did. It's harder than it looks and it's fun to get together and see all our mob."



STORY 10

Martu Men – Carving for the Future

Region Pilbara

Category Language/Knowledge | Men's Group

This project was initiated to enable several senior Martu men to continue traditional carving activities. Between them they hold the cultural authority and expertise for making boomerangs, digging sticks, spears, spear throwers, and shields. At the same time these activities provide an opportunity for traditional carving skills to be shared with younger generations of Martu. The project was led by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ), a Martu-led Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

Dream it Forward funded purchase of the tools needed. The project operated in small groups bringing the younger Martu men into contact with the skills and knowledge held by the older men promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer for this important cultural activity.

The project helped to reinvigorate the relationship between Martu elders and youth through carving and associated cultural activities, including being the catalyst for a traditional dance celebration involving the mixing of many community members. Traditional carving contributes to a process of healing and developing aspiration in Martu men. The project has helped reinvigorate a crucial Martu practice that had been steadily eroding over the past 10 years. This was, largely due to a lack of accessibility to carving tools. The Carving for the Future project has been embedded with the KJ rangers and as a result means carving is now accessible to many Martu community members.



"These tools are important to me and I feel happy when I'm carving. I wouldn't have this opportunity without the tools. I also want to show my son what I know while I can." Grant Judson talking about his son Lionel Judson.



STORY 11

Moorditj Keila

Region Metro

Category Art Projects | Women's Group

Moorditj Keila provides support and opportunity for Aboriginal people in the greater South Perth area and helps develop the capacity of the Aboriginal community in partnership with the broader community, to empower individuals and families to build a community of trust, engagement and participation, for the mutual benefit of all. Programs are designed to holistically strengthen families and community and include yorgas and marmans groups, youth sporting clubs, and community events.

Dream it Forward funded the yorgas group as a culturally safe place for women to create art, yarn, share, eat together, support and encourage each other. The group is a space where the Elders guide the younger women in their journey exploring their Aboriginal identity and roles. The group also offered the women the opportunity to develop art skills.

Outcomes included providing a space that allowed the younger women to release fears and hurts with the support and guidance from the older women. The trust built in the group facilitated discussions about financial budgeting, managing children on drugs, emotional wellbeing, supporting young women through pregnancy and birth, managing children and lifestyles that challenge, trauma and loss.

"I found having the screen-printing skills and learning how to paint landscape art has not only helped me connect with my culture but helped with anxiety."



STORY 12

Nagula Jarndu

Region Kimberley

Category Women's Group | On-Country

Nagula Jarndu (Saltwater Woman) is a Yawuru-led and operated art centre for Aboriginal women based in Broome. It supports Aboriginal women to produce, exhibit and sell their art and provides a culturally safe space for Aboriginal women to meet, have a cuppa and a yarn with other Aboriginal women.

Dream it Forward funded a series of on-country trips for Elders and younger women to yarn, to take photographs and to record stories about their lives, their Country and their connection to it. The Elders told stories of place and provided knowledge about the area's plants, animals and surrounding waters.

The women's work culminated in the production of a book preserving, maintaining and celebrating Aboriginal culture, particularly Yawuru women and their culture. The project built capacity within the group by upskilling the use of technology to document and record culture and stories. A sense of belonging was forged as a group of Yawuru women with similar and shared experiences.



STORY 13

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council

Region Goldfields-Esperance

Category On-Country | Men's Camp | Women's Camp

NPY Women's Council (NPYWC) is a service delivery, advocacy and support organisation created by Anangu women from 28 remote communities in the tristate region of NT, SA and WA. NPYWC delivers programs to improve health, wellbeing and safety. The NPYWC Ngangkari Program supports a dynamic group of ngangkari (traditional healers) who are also highly respected artists, teachers, and health workers with cultural authority.

Dream it Forward funded the Uti Kulintjaku men's camp in Warutjara to address the issues facing young people while strengthening cultural maintenance and connection to country. The Uti Kulintjaku Project explores health concepts from both Anangu and western medicine worldviews.

Dream it Forward also funded the Uti Kulintjaku women's camp to share cultural knowledge, participate in a series of traditional practices, to walk on country, and to listen to tjukurpa stories (cultural stories). Most activities were centred on learnings from the UK program, through story, conversation and song.

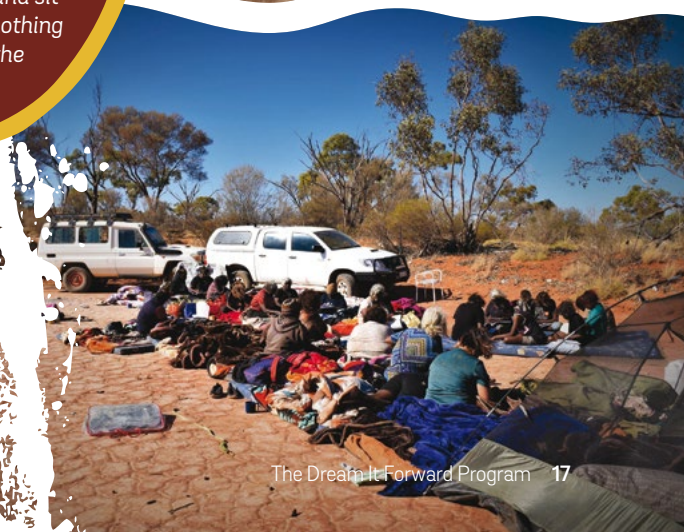
Participants had the opportunity to create a safe and culturally sensitive space to talk about trauma, mental health, alcohol and drugs use, domestic and community violence. The camps created an opportunity for people to gather on country, away from the day-to-day stresses that exist in remote communities, and to listen and connect deeply with each other. The land is an important healing element.



"On Day 3 women did inma (ceremonial song) for the site and the young women joined in. This made us so happy. They wanted to wear skirts like us and participate in the inma. At the end, they wanted more. On Day 4 we packed up and left the camp. Everyone was so happy. 'We should have another one!' the young girls told us."



"I think that the camp was really good. It was exciting to see all the young fellas going on a camp like that. The tjilpis (old men) were feeling good about it. It is important for young men to be with the tjilpis to catch the tjukurpa (cultural stories). It was important to me to listen and sit down with tjilpis. There is nothing like that happening in the lands."



STORY 14

Swan City Youth Service

Region Metro

Category Youth

Swan City Youth Service works with principally marginalised young people aged 12–25 within the Midland and surrounding areas. The service provides education, recreation, and art and music therapies, as well as teaching life skills, counselling, outreach, and assistance with accommodation, AOD referrals, legal and court support.

Dream it Forward funded the practical components of a youth program which encouraged connection to culture to address trauma, AOD issues, family and domestic violence, and self-harm and suicide risk. Cultural workshops strengthened connection to Elders and traditional practices including storytelling, Didgeridoo, and language. There was facilitated discussion of history and ways of moving forward with pride and strength, disrupting the perception that incarceration is normal.

The project worked towards increasing young people's knowledge and understanding of trauma and its impact of them, their families and the community through weekly yarning sessions, and engagement through music and art to build resilience, strengthen cultural identity, overcome shame, and create a greater sense of community belonging.



STORY 15

Tambellup Aboriginal Progress Association

Region Great Southern

Category Other

Tambellup Aboriginal Progress Association (TAPA) has been operating for over 40 years supporting the Aboriginal Community in the rural town of Tambellup, located in the Great Southern region of WA. TAPA runs youth and community programs, grief and loss workshop and focuses on reconnecting to family, community and country.

Dream it Forward funded a series of community gatherings with cultural activities and sports for children as a way of bringing the community together and strengthening culture. Elders shared their stories and cultural knowledge within the group and families could yarn and connect with each other at these gatherings.

This project built upon previous *Dream it Forward* projects which involved community camps to facilitate healing and connection within the community. Outcomes for the weekly gatherings included a more connected and resilient community and a stronger connection to culture and the Elders within the community. This project was led by a well-respected Elder of the community whose leadership and commitment to the Aboriginal community of Tambellup has been her legacy.



STORY 16

Tramulla Strong Women's Group

Region Kimberley

Category Women's Group

The Tramulla Strong Women's Group of Kalumburu is a group of senior women who come together and yarn about issues impacting their community and to plan local action. Since 2016, the group has developed a Local Drug Action Group, a microenterprise within the community, established an Op shop and supported cultural tourism initiatives.

Dream it Forward funded Tramulla senior women working in partnership with Enterprise Partnerships WA (EPWA), which supports local capacity building in microenterprise development, to travel to Fitzroy Crossing to collaborate and share knowledge with Indigenous leaders of Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre and Marnin Studio to progress governance, local responses to Drug and Alcohol issues, and a Strategic Plan.

Dream it Forward also funded a further initiative to foster leadership, capacity building and succession planning within the Tramulla Strong Women's Group in partnership with Kimberley Jiyigas and EPWA.



**enterprise
partnerships.**



"Please bring this workshop back next year so we can learn from it. We want this leadership training to happen again because we want Aboriginal people standing on their own two feet in this community."



These projects supported the Tramulla Strong Women to access mentoring and leadership and share the challenges and opportunities of living and working in remote Indigenous communities. The women gained knowledge which could be implemented with the Kalumburu community to encourage wellbeing and healing from the impact of trauma as well as conflict resolution skills, and how to work together to achieve the collective goals and aspirations of the group.



STORY 17

Val & Kathy's Crafty Kitchen

Region Pilbara

Category Art Projects | On-Country

Val and Kathy's Crafty Kitchen is a small grassroots volunteer-run community group based in Roebourne supporting local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider community to connect through yarning, arts, crafts, healthy meals, cultural activities and other social and recreational events. Established in 2016 by Val Walker and Kathy Brooker, the group work in partnership to provide a safe space, a sense of community belonging, and to encourage social connection following the lead of two Elders Nana Pansy and Nana Violet.

Dream it Forward funded the Crafty Kitchen to deliver therapeutic art activities in Roebourne, and on-country events including fishing and art in the park where families come together and support each other through grief, loss, and community conflict.

Outcomes included supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of group participants who experience belonging, support, and respite from daily stresses and worries, and contributing to the social fabric of the community. Elders from the local language groups, Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi, share their knowledge and the group support the community to collectively move forward.



STORY 18

Wakuthini Health and Wellbeing Group | Gumula Aboriginal Corporation

Region Pilbara

Category Women's Group | Men's Group

Wakuthini community is located 30km from the town of Tom Price, in the Pilbara. The community was formed over 20 years ago when two sisters decided to return to their country and fought for several years for native title to a small parcel of land. This community consists of about 50 people who are members of the three local language groups, Yinhawangka, Banyjima and Nyiyaparli.

Dream it Forward funded the community to develop men's and a women's yarning groups in partnership with the Gumula Aboriginal Corporation. Each group operated weekly activities to develop skills for the men and women, create safe spaces, build their coping skills, reduce stress and to come together to talk about health and wellbeing.

The groups enjoyed coming together and connecting on a regular basis. They identified what they wanted to achieve and were supported to program those aspirations; the women wanted to improve their homes and made curtains and other soft furnishings; the men formed a group to fix cars and go fishing. The participants acquired new skills and experienced a sense of community belonging.



"The women meeting together is good. We get to catch-up because even though we live in the same community, we don't see each other that often. It's good to learn new things. We feel good about ourselves now."

"I like going fishing with the boys. We don't do this much anymore. It's good for us to go on country; makes us feel good in here (points to heart). Next time we should take the old people; they know the stories of this country more than we do."

Dream It Forward

Gumula is supporting Wakuthini to develop a Men's and Women's Yarn Group via the Dream It Forward grant. Each Tuesday the women meet at the Community House to paint, cook and yarn about the issues that are important to them.

The Men's Group is in the process of forming. They are keen to start an Indigenous Men's Shed to make and repair broken furniture. Our Community Projects Coordinator Shane Seers will be involved and support the men to create woodwork projects.



STORY 19

Warlayirti Community Arts Centre

Region Kimberley

Category Art Projects | Youth

Warlayirti is a community owned and operated Aboriginal Art Centre located in Balgo in the Tanami region of the East Kimberley. The predominate language group is Kukatja however the country's remaining Ngardi speakers also reside in Balgo. Over 100 artists ranging in age from the very young to elderly regularly attend the art centre. Warlayirti Art Centre has a long history of providing cultural healing projects.

Dream it Forward funded the engagement of young women who were disengaged from education, employment and training to participate in an art-focused silk scarf dyeing skills-based project. Participants worked with senior women who provided cultural support, knowledge, and expertise.

The project provided an opportunity for arts and small enterprise skill development, intergenerational engagement to strengthen cultural knowledge and Tjurkupa (dreaming/law stories) as well as youth mental health specific interventions as required to provide emotional and psychological support. The project brought a new demographic of young women into the space to engage with art and healing, connecting with their Elders, and invigorating the Centre.



"We're enjoying it, we love doing it! They (the silks) are really beautiful you know. Same as painting, we do a little bit of painting, have a break, do a little bit of silks, have a break. We can wear our paintings, on silks. We can sell them for people to wear."



STORY 20

Woola Woola Koolankas Netball Club

Region Metro

Category Youth

Woola Woola Koolankas is a grassroots netball program operating in the Balga area. The program supports approximately 60 players aged 10–18, who are rewarded for school attendance and behaviour by participation in the program. Woola Woola empowers Aboriginal girls and their families as well as girls from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to have a go and participate in sport as players, coaches, umpires and leaders.

Dream it Forward funded a cultural connection and mapping workshop aimed at reconnecting Aboriginal girls to their culture and ancestry. The project involved guest speakers who are Elders and cultural leaders in the local community.

Dream it Forward also funded a second series of cultural workshops which built on the connection and mapping experience to progress the sense of belonging and social connectedness for the girls involved. Girls were able to identify as part of the Aboriginal community and learn about stories of resilience and healing from Elders facilitating the workshops.

Outcomes included a sense of belonging for the girls to see their family connections, support through leadership and role modelling, and building of resilience through cultural strength. The workshops provided an opportunity for the girls to connect more deeply and have more time to be really involved in the process of healing and building self-esteem with strong women and Elders as their teachers and role models.



STORY 21

The Yiriman Project

Region Kimberley

Category On-Country

The Yiriman Project was conceived by the Elders of four Kimberley language groups; Nyikina, Mangala, Karajarri and Walmajarri. The Elders whose aim is to “build stories in young people” were concerned about their young people and recognise the need for a place where youth can remove themselves from negative influences and reconnect with their culture. Yiriman is auspiced by the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC).

Dream it Forward funded the Yiriman Women’s Project for a culture camp in Wolgali to deliver activities including traditional song, dance and storytelling, and bush produce workshops. The camp linked with other organisations including the Ngurrara Women Rangers, Mangkaja Arts, and Nindilingari Cultural Health Service. Building cross-organisational links, particularly around the Fitzroy River Valley region, is crucial to creating a supportive community structure focused on individual wellbeing.

Outcomes included progressing the Yiriman Women’s Bush Knowledge and Enterprise Development Plan. The camp improved the Yiriman Women’s Group’s capacity and education regarding the potency and need for their traditional healing practices and the bush medicine workshops delivered by the Yiriman women provided inspiration.





DREAM IT FORWARD REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE PILBARA



ConnectGroups travelled broadly in the Pilbara in 2020–21 for the purpose of building and progressing relationships with community champions and groups, local government partners, stakeholders, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) which can benefit from *Dream it Forward* funding, as well as to promote the program's message of place-based, community-led solutions.

Pilbara regional engagement is a priority in ConnectGroups' 2021–22 Rural and Regional Strategy; a framework which supports ConnectGroups' strategic intent to strengthen collaboration in order to promote better community outcomes and build regional capacity and capability.

A trip in October 2020 took place in the Karratha, Roebourne and Port Hedland corridor, and was followed by a second trip in April 2021 to the inland Pilbara towns of Paraburdoo, Tom Price and Newman. Both trips focused on discussing local issues, understanding the needs in each town and region, strengthening relationships, and assessing where *Dream it Forward* could fill gaps or add value to existing initiatives.

Regional engagement led to the emergence of new partnerships and alliances including with Pilbara for Purpose (P4P), the peak body of the "for purpose" sector in the Pilbara, and broadened *Dream it Forward*'s reach into the region. ConnectGroups returned to Karratha and Roebourne in June 2021 to continue to progress relationships and to recognise the important and innovative work being delivered in the Pilbara at the Pilbara Community Service Excellence awards.

Regional travel has expanded ConnectGroups' knowledge of the Pilbara and the unique challenges and opportunities experienced in Pilbara communities. ConnectGroups will continue to support these communities, and leverage *Dream it Forward*'s purpose to strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Pilbara and throughout Western Australia.

CONNECTGROUPS' REFLECT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

ConnectGroups was delighted to launch its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in 2021 during NAIDOC week to demonstrate its pledge and commitment to First Nations Australians.

This Reflect RAP (May 2021–May 2022) is a partnership and organisational strategy which articulates how ConnectGroups will work towards greater understanding, cooperation, and trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families, and communities.

The beautiful artwork which illustrates ConnectGroups' RAP was developed as an act of reconciliation between Aboriginal students from St. Catherine's College Dandjoo Darbalung program in collaboration with St Hilda's School for Girls. Students and staff participated in a series of workshops run by Dandjoo Darbalung students where they discussed the importance of family while learning about the 6 Nyoongar seasons.

Each student created their own interpretation of what family meant for them before recording it on the canvas. Together they created the giant canvas symbolising the importance of community and the sharing of knowledge.



Reconciliation Action Plan

May 2021 - May 2022



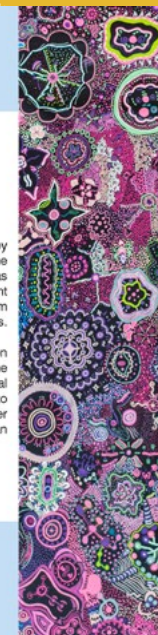
Our Reconciliation Action Plan

ConnectGroups is committed to advocating for social justice, for the reduction of over-representation in rates of incarceration and out-of-home care, for self-determination, for the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration, for the adoption of the Uluru Statement of the Heart, and for Australia's First Peoples' voices to inform the development of policy, the implementation of reform, and at every level of society beginning with our own.

This Reflect RAP will drive ConnectGroups to ensure cultural competency, cultural safety, social justice principles and evidence-based practice is implemented across all service provision, providing a framework for the organisation to support the national reconciliation movement.

The RAP journey is internally championed by ConnectGroups CEO Antonella Segre supported by the Board of Management Chair Peta Wootton. The Board has seconded a member to the REFLECT RAP development and implementation to support the organisation's Program Manager who will drive the RAP activities and obligations.

ConnectGroups commits itself to the path of reconciliation and to reflect and progress it in our daily work and in the values that underpin what we do. Our commitment is real and inspired by the Uluru Statement from the Heart – to walk alongside our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters in a movement of the Australian peoples for a better future.



WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Welcome to Country is a ceremony performed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to welcome visitors to their traditional land (country).

Welcome to Country has been part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture for thousands of years. Aboriginal people have clearly defined territories and boundaries that continue to be observed today. When entering another group's country, traditional protocols required visitors to seek permission to enter. When permission was provided, visitors were granted safe passage through another's country and were held responsible for maintaining the cultural protocols of that land.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way for all people to show awareness of and respect for Aboriginal cultures and heritage, and the ongoing relationship that traditional custodians have with their land or waters.

An Acknowledgement of Country can be given by both non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Similar to a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country is generally offered at the beginning of a meeting, speech or formal occasion.



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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