It's in the heart constant and strong, Young people need to know where they belong.

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1. **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY**

Griffith University acknowledges the people who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land. The University pays respects to the Elders, past and present, and extends that respect to other Indigenous Australians.

2. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

2.1. The significantly higher rate of suicide amongst Indigenous communities across Australia has been the subject of numerous studies and inquiries in the past.\(^1\) As a result, National and State governments have implemented a range of strategies and programs to address this issue. While these efforts should be commended, the high rates of Indigenous youth suicides, particularly in Western Australia, continue to be a cause of concern.

2.2. Risk factors associated with youth suicide include domestic violence, bullying, poor health, drug and alcohol abuse and mental health issues.\(^2\) While these issues are also experienced by the non-Indigenous population, they are often exacerbated in Indigenous communities (particularly in rural areas).\(^3\) Other risk factors, such as ‘the ongoing effects of colonisation and government policies of forced assimilation, land dispossession, the effects of mining, poverty, racism, and an overall fracturing of culture and community’\(^4\) are unique to Indigenous communities.

2.3. Indigenous people view wellbeing as a holistic concept.\(^5\) It encompasses not only the physical and emotional wellbeing of the individual, but includes the ‘spiritual, environmental, ideological, political, social, economical and cultural well-being of the whole community’.\(^6\) Many mainstream suicide preventative strategies, on the other hand, are designed according to standard mental health principles that ‘focus on the pathology of the individual’.\(^7\) These programs often fail to address the range of ‘social, political, economic, socio-historical, sociopolitical and geographic’ factors that

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\(^1\) See, eg, Commonwealth, Department of Health and Ageing, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy* (May 2013); Commissioner of Children and Young People, Government of Western Australia, *Report to children, young people and the community: Inquiry into the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Western Australia* (April 2011); Mental Health Commission, Government of Western Australia, *Suicide Prevention 2020: Together we can save lives* (July 2015).

\(^2\) Culture is Life, ‘The Elders Report into preventing indigenous self-harm and youth suicide’ (Research Report, People Culture Environment, 3 April 2014) 6 (‘The Elders Report’).

\(^3\) Pat Dudgeon, et al, ‘Hear our Voices’ (Final Research Report, Commonwealth, Department of Health and Ageing, 2012) 12; Culture is Life, above n 2.


\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Tatz, above n 4, 17.

\(^8\) Tatz, above n 4, 20.
impact quality of life and the effects of intergenerational trauma that contribute to Indigenous youth suicide. Evidence suggests that these programs may be detrimental to Indigenous wellbeing.\(^9\)

2.4. Past paternalistic laws and policies have caused many Indigenous peoples to distrust government institutions.\(^10\) This distrust has the capacity to hinder the effective delivery of government implemented programs. Mainstream services that silence Indigenous people’s voices by failing to include community members in the design, development and execution of programs that directly impact their lives contribute to a feeling of powerlessness and run the risk of exacerbating many of the risk factors associated with Indigenous youth suicide.\(^11\)

2.5. This submission does not suggest that the government does not have a role to play in addressing Indigenous youth suicide. Nor is it to suggest that there is a ‘quick fix’ to the problem of Indigenous youth suicide. While it acknowledges that the prevalence of suicide among Indigenous communities is complex and requires a multi-faceted approach, it advocates strongly for the government to listen to Indigenous voices in order to facilitate change.

2.6. Our research suggests that programs designed, delivered and implemented by Indigenous communities, Elders and Indigenous leaders often reconnect individuals to ‘community, spirit and land,’\(^12\) ‘foster empowerment’\(^13\) and promote healing. These programs therefore address many of the underlying issues associated with Indigenous youth suicide and are important tools for reducing the incidence of suicide and self-harm in Indigenous communities.

3. OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. **Cultural and Spiritual Identity**: it is necessary to recognise that cultural and spiritual identity is strongly tied to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. The ongoing impact of colonisation and past government policies has disconnected many Indigenous youth from their culture and communities. Programs and initiatives that heal this fracture and strengthen the cultural and spiritual identity of youth are essential and must be supported.

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3.2. ‘In country’ experiences: camps or bush trips to traditional country with Elders and Indigenous leaders foster a reconnection to land, culture and community. By learning about and engaging with Indigenous traditions and history, Indigenous youth experience self respect and pride. These programs empower participants and facilitate healing and well being. Strategies and policies that support, encourage and facilitate ‘in country’ experiences should be adopted.

3.3. Community collaboration: there is a need for a greater focus on supporting communities to define and develop their own community responses and solutions to the issue of suicide in their own communities. Indigenous peoples are in the best position to identify the social determinants and unique risk factors that impact their youth. Community led initiatives promote self determination at both the individual and community level and therefore foster wellbeing. These programs have been effective in creating positive changes in Indigenous youth and reducing the incidence of youth suicide in a number of communities.

3.4. Funding and public agency collaboration: community grants and funding allocation needs to be directed towards Indigenous organisations and community-based suicide prevention programs. The current reporting requirements for future funding should be reconsidered as the criteria often disregards the positive outcomes and efficacy of these community programs. More effective collaboration between public sector agencies in the delivery of youth suicide prevention programs should also be prioritised. Effective collaboration between service providers is necessary to ensure the efficient use of available resources, effective allocation of funding, the provision of more educational and preventative activities and increased at risk youth participation.

3.5. After program support: ongoing support to participants is required after partaking in a suicide prevention program, to facilitate immersion back into the family and community. This is essential if the positive outcomes of a program are to be maintained in the long term.

4. IDENTIFYING AND MEASURING WHAT WORKS

4.1. An analysis of community designed and implemented programs that target the risk factors associated with Indigenous youth suicide was undertaken for the purpose of identifying effective methods to address the issue of Indigenous youth suicide.

4.2. With a few exceptions, our research focused on the community-based programs identified in the *Elders Report*. This Report highlights that cultural differences must be ‘taken into account in the

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14 Culture is Life, above n 2.
way help is provided’ if a response is to be effective. Specifically, we sought to analyse the focus of the programs, their aims, methods and effectiveness in order to construct a comprehensive overview of a range of community-based programs across different jurisdictions. This information has been compiled into a Table of Results, which is included in this report at Item 5.

4.3. There are concerns within the Indigenous community that mainstream research methodologies silence the voices of Indigenous Australians and, as a consequence, ‘continue the process of colonisation’. With this in mind, it was decided to predominantly focus our attention on information accessible from the program websites - particularly where anecdotal evaluations from members of their community were concerned – and studies or reports commissioned or undertaken by Indigenous peoples themselves. Nevertheless, where available, we have also included findings from studies conducted by non-indigenous scholars, specific research groups or the public sector.

4.4. Despite growing recognition of the importance of facilitating community-led suicide prevention strategies, in some instances there was limited information available to assess the efficacy of some of the programs outlined in our report. In a number of other cases, there was a lack of long-term or up to date evaluations. This suggests that a more focused study into current community-based programs is needed. However, we must again emphasise the importance of ensuring that research is undertaken and informed by the lived experience of Indigenous peoples themselves. This is a ‘powerful research method of inclusion that gives Indigenous people a voice in regard to matters affecting their own lives’ and goes some way towards righting the wrongs of the past.

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19 The need to prioritise more research in this area has also been acknowledged by the Commonwealth Government. See Commonwealth, Department of Health and Ageing, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy* (May 2013) 11.
5. **TABLE OF RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Established</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yarrabah Family Wellbeing program</td>
<td>Yarrabah – North Qld</td>
<td>Developed by Indigenous Australians in response to a spate of suicides in the area</td>
<td>Social, emotional and spiritual health of Indigenous peoples and their communities. This program focuses on the ‘concept of social and emotional wellbeing from the bottom up’.</td>
<td>Aims to empower individuals by reminding them of their connections to community, spirit and land.</td>
<td>Counselling service that:</td>
<td>Comparative studies have shown that this program has been effective in preventing suicides.</td>
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<td>Social and emotional wellbeing intervention program</td>
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<td>• focuses on grief and trauma, suicide and other forms of self-harm and the ways in which these issues impact on Indigenous individuals and families throughout the lifecycle</td>
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<td>• approaches mental health from a socio-historical perspective, responding to Indigenous Australian understandings of health as involving an inextricable relationship between physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.</td>
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<td>• provides a secure group environment for participants to explore sets of critical questions about themselves, their families and communities, through the process of participatory action research.</td>
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<td>There is evidence that:</td>
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<td>(a) the program has been successful in ‘empowering individuals to take greater control and responsibility for their situation’.</td>
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<td>(b) individual’s have a ‘renewed sense of hope for the future and vision for a better community’;</td>
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<td>(c) the program directly responds to many of the suicide risk factors identified by the Yarrabah community.</td>
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21 McEwan and Tsey, above n 12, iv, 3.
22 Ibid iv.
23 Ibid 4.
25 McEwan and Tsey, above n 12, 4.
26 Ibid 19.
27 Ibid 19.
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<tr>
<td>Warra-Warra Kanyi (Mt Theo Program)</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Established 1993 by Elders from Yuenumu in response to chronic petrol sniffing in the community. An initiative of the Walpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation. Incorporates a range of different programs</td>
<td>This program targets youth and youth issues. The focus is on ‘preventative projects, alternatives to incarceration, mentoring and counselling, and caring for young people struggling with substance abuse and other personal issues’.</td>
<td>Cultural &amp; individual rehabilitation and strengthening (Outstation program) Youth development and leadership (Jaru Pirrijirdi Strong Voices Program)</td>
<td>Outstation Offers a counselling &amp; mentoring service (est. 2008) ‘directed at youth which focus on rehabilitation and respite to strengthen young people through care by Warlpiri mentors and elders. Consists of a range of sport, cultural, and recreational activities designed to engage Walpiri youth including group project work and bush trips’. Jaru Pirrijirdi Offers a youth development and leadership program aimed at young adults between 15-25 yrs. ‘Operates on a 6 level structure that represent degrees of capacity to work through towards future careers and pathways. Opportunities to become mentors (and eyes and ears of at risk individuals)’.</td>
<td>Achievements – Outstation • Petrol or other inhalant abuse has been eliminated in communities that run the program. • Individuals have stated Mt Theo is ‘a life-saving place, where young people are safely and appropriately looked after in a ‘proper’ Warlpiri way’. • Young people often encourage others to attend Mt Theo and have been known to refer themselves to Mt Theo for respite care. Achievements – Jaru Pirrijirdi • ‘Evidence that young individuals are taking a more active leadership role within the community. These individuals are admired and respected by other young individuals, elders and other agencies as an important voice. • There are now more Jaru members on local boards and committees, in stronger positions of power to help change and mould the future for themselves and their families’.</td>
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29 Culture is Life, above n 2, 60.
30 Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation, Mt Theo Program, above n 28, 12.
31 Ibid 10.
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| Yiriman Project | Kimberley, WA | Developed by Elders from 4 language groups that share similar cultural, geographical, language and kingship ties. | Young people | The aim of the project is to ‘build stories in young people, build resilience, sense of self and community, cultural identity, healing, empowerment’. | On country cultural healing and education program that involves Elders taking youth out to traditional homelands for extended periods of time. | Evaluated by David Palmer from Murdoch University in 2013. There is evidence that the program:  
  - Increases self esteem and confidence  
  - Strengthens identification value, culture and encourages youth to take on cultural responsibilities  
  - Has encouraged and empowered young people to take on community responsibilities – many are now involved in community work and continue to willingly participate in a range of activities (particularly education, language learning and cultural development).  
  - Has increased awareness and education on mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse and suicide  
  - Evidence to suggest positive changes in the behaviour of young people, particularly young people with a previous track record of crime and anti-social behaviour.  
  - Demand exceeds the frequency of trips. |

33 Culture is Life, above n 2 , 57.  
34 David Palmer, ‘We know they healthy cos they on country with old people: demonstrating the value of the Yiriman Project 2010-2013’ (Research Report, Community Development Programme, Murdoch University, 2013) 29-35.  
35 Culture is Life, above n 2, 57.  
36 See Palmer, We know they healthy, above n 34.  
37 Ibid 77-78.
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| Red Dust | Northern Territory – travels to remote areas & works with communities | Developed by two experienced Indigenous workers. | Males including young indigenous peoples. | The program aims to ‘give Aboriginal men an understanding of identity, to equip them with self-evaluation skills, to develop future role models and fathers, and to restore family relationships’.\(^{39}\) It seeks to ‘raise awareness of the link between lifestyle choices and chronic disease with a focus on nutrition, hygiene, substance misuse and physical activity’.\(^{40}\) | The program is delivered through:  
- Group sessions and individual case management and support systems.  
- Sport, music, art and dance.  
- Role models from sport, music, art and dance are used to ‘educate, support and inspire young people in remote communities’.\(^{41}\) | The program is well received in all communities. There are marked increases in school attendance while Red Dust is in the area although this tends to decline after they leave. Need more sustainable solution.  
The use of Aboriginal role models has been shown to engage youth and show them that their situation is not hopeless.\(^{42}\) |

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\(^{38}\) Culture is Life, above n 2 , 59.  
\(^{39}\) Ibid.  
\(^{40}\) Red Dust Role Models, *Who we are: Health Promotion in Remote Indigenous Communities* <http://www.reddust.org.au/about>.  
\(^{41}\) Ibid.  
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<tr>
<td>National Empowerment Project</td>
<td>Perth, WA; Northam, WA; Narrogin, WA; Darwin, NT; Cherbourg, Qld; Toomeiah, NSW; Sydney, NSW and Mildura, Vic.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The National Empowerment Project (NEP) was developed as an expansion of the Kimberly Empowerment Project and its recommendations for empowerment, healing and leadership programs as a tool and first step for preventing suicide and psychological distress.</td>
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<td>The NEP aims to restore the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal communities through the development of a culturally appropriate empowerment, healing and leadership program.</td>
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<td>Through enabling communities to regain control of their health outcomes, and providing a supportive environment, the NEP aims to promote the recovery and healing of Aboriginal community members.</td>
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<td>This program adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process that 'gives voice' to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</td>
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<td>The PAR approach enabled participants to develop their own understandings of the social and emotional factors impacting on their overall wellbeing, and therefore identify appropriate responses to these issues.</td>
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<td>Two people from each community involved in the NEP were selected and trained to carry out focus groups and interviews with approximately 40 community participants in each site with the aim of engaging and building relationships with members across the communities.</td>
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45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Dudgeon et al, *Voices of the People*, above n 44.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
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| Youth in Communities | Various communities across the Northern Territory                        | $28.4 million was provided for the Youth in Communities program for the triennium of 2009/10 – 2011/12 financial years under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement.  
Priority participants were those at risk of:  
- using illicit drugs, alcohol, petrol, volatile substances or other drugs;  
- suicide or intentional self harm; and  
- entering or re-entering the criminal justice system.  
Under the program, 21 agreements were established with local organisations to fund infrastructure, youth workers and diversionary activities in remote communities across the Northern Territory in order to engage Aboriginal young people in positive social activities.  
Broadly, the achievements of the Youth in Communities program can be summarised as:  
- maturation and revision of the service models and types of activities implemented;  
- increased numbers of participants in community services;  
- young people actively engaged, empowered and developing leadership skills;  
- increased community support, and  
- provision of rewards and incentives for participants.  
Statistics show that overall the program had very good outcomes, with participants experiencing an increase in wellbeing and positive life choices. However, there was 'no change' in the rates of suicide or those engaging in volatile substance abuse. |

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56 Ibid.  
57 Ibid.  
58 Courage Partners, above n 54, 9.  
59 Ibid.  
60 Ibid.
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<td>Alive and Kicking Goals!</td>
<td>Kimberly, WA</td>
<td>This program, initiated in 2008 by members of the Broome Saints Football Club with support from the Broome Men’s Outreach Service, is managed and led by Aboriginal people in the Kimberly region.</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (12-25 years) however, maintains an ‘open-door’ policy to all members of the community.</td>
<td>In this program, young people are educated about suicide prevention and positive lifestyle choices for the future through a range of activities delivered by staff and volunteer youth leaders in the community. This peer driven education program is delivered at community events, schools, and in community settings with training, education and support offered to young men and women who volunteer to be peer educators for the project.</td>
<td>Most significantly, this program has been community owned and led from its inception. By maintaining close connections to the community, and maintaining the same staff since the program began in 2008, this program has founded long term, meaningful relationships with clients and at risk individuals in the community. Prior to the establishment of this program, some community members were reluctant to engage with mental health services due to the associated stigma and fear of the mental health system. However, these new found relationships ensure these individuals are able to get the best possible help when needed. Additionally, the program was found to have a positive impact on community attitudes and knowledge about suicide, with participants demonstrating a deeper knowledge of appropriate suicide prevention pathways and help seeking initiatives.</td>
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63 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Australian Institute of Family Studies, above n 62.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
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<tr>
<td>Building Bridges</td>
<td>Yarrabah, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, and Dalby, Qld</td>
<td>The Building Bridges project was initially funded by the National suicide prevention strategy (NSPS) and auspiced by the Australasian Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (formerly the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health, Queensland) in 2006.</td>
<td>Aboriginal Communities</td>
<td>The Building Bridges project aimed to establish effective and sustainable community based programs informed by the knowledge and experience of the Yarrabah community in Queensland in order to reduce suicide risk exposure and reduce the incidence of self harm in Aboriginal Communities across broader Queensland.</td>
<td>The Building Bridges program focused on the development of individual capacity, aiming to empower the participating individuals, which in turn links strongly with community and group empowerment. A community project officer was trained and established within each community to address issues related to prevention and self harm and the underlying protective and risk factors for suicide. The project officers involved in the Building Bridges program worked with participants to refocus their personal understanding of overall wellbeing from a framework of negativity and blame towards that of vision and hope, supported by positive actions and solutions.</td>
<td>The extent to which the solution-focused approach was accessible to individuals, groups and the community was seen as an indicator of the effectiveness of this approach. The establishment of a core group of trained project officers who worked locally in groups and with individuals was effective in promoting positive attitudes to health and allowed for the sharing of knowledge across the community. This support of local leaders and the community allowed individual participants the opportunity to recognise and address local risk factors and adverse social determinants in a solution-orientated approach that placed the individual at the heart of change.</td>
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72 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid 5.
78 Ibid.
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<td>Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Aborginal Corporation is a Nyoongah grass roots cultural advocacy agency established over twenty years ago.</td>
<td>Indigenous cultural arts based projects and initiatives.</td>
<td>Healing and Empowerment. Dumbartung seeks to address the suffering caused by colonisation and paternalistic government policies, and the ongoing negatives effects which include high suicide rates. It does this by focusing on developing and maintaining the cultural spirituality of the Noogah people to support their identity, pride, spirituality and unity.</td>
<td>Cultural art based projects and an art gallery for Indigenous art (Kyana Gallery) to represent and maintain cultural identity. By exhibiting a range of Indigenous art, the Kyana Gallery lays the foundation for the organisations objective of achieving cultural and spiritual healing and empowerment for the Noogah people. The gallery also serves as a place for youth to seek knowledge about the history and culture of their people.</td>
<td>No information available</td>
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81 Nyoongah Cultural Resource Agency, About Dumbartung, above n 79.
82 Ibid.
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Baluna Foundation</td>
<td>Darwin, Northern Territory</td>
<td>Indigenous owned and operated charity.</td>
<td>The Baluna Foundation targets at risk Indigenous youth through culturally appropriate programs. The program’s aim is to help youth reconnect with their identity and overcome the challenges they face.</td>
<td>The aim of the Foundation is to break the cycle of Indigenous disadvantage. In particular, the program aims to increase the self-esteem, confidence and emotional and spiritual wellbeing of Indigenous youth to assist them to become strong, balanced individuals who will create strong families and positive pathways for future generations.</td>
<td>Culturally appropriate therapeutic and healing programs that cover health, education, life skills, training, and employment, and maintain a strong emphasis on emotional wellbeing. The camps are run for 6 days and seek to provide participants with a positive cultural and outdoor experience. Participation in the camp is followed by mentoring through outreach and case-management to facilitate the transition of participants back into their family.</td>
<td>Effective in preventing suicides by focusing on intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous youth. Over a six year period the program has not lost a youth to suicide. 80% of participants reported a positive change in behaviour and a move away from self-harm and suicide ideation. The program is wholly Aboriginal owned and run. Indigenous Elders in partnership with the Baluna Foundation designed the healing approaches of the program, and all youth workers and Elders are Indigenous. The result of this is that the strategies are culturally appropriate, address the specific needs of Indigenous youth, and provide an environment where Indigenous youth feel that they can open up to the workers. The continued support for participants after completion of the program is also a positive feature of the program, as supporting participants through their transition back into the community ensures that the positive outcomes of the camp are maintained over the long term.</td>
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87 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
91 Australian Institute of Family Studies, above n 16.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
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| Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (CAYLUS)            | Based in Alice Springs, Northern Territory. Services area across bottom half of the Northern Territory. | Founded in 2002 through Government funding in response to reports of petrol sniffing. | To support community initiatives that improve quality of life and address substance misuse affecting young people in Central Australia. | The aim of CAYLUS is to improve the quality of life for young people in Central Australia, with a focus on reducing the impact of substance misuse. This is achieved by targeting the reduction of the demand, supply, and harm related to the misuse of volatile substances. | CAYLUS adopts two key strategies to achieve its aim. (1) Focuses on addressing gaps in services provided to young people in the region, through direct service provisions, provision of support to other service providers, and advocating for change with policy makers. (2) Identifies and addresses issues which negatively impact the lives of young people, such as substance misuse. Reduces substance abuse by limiting supply and demand to petrol, glue and paint by:  
- supporting the use of Low Aromatic Fuel (often known as Opal fuel) and providing advice and support to retailers on managing high risk products.  
- linking stakeholders to ensure cooperation in reduction of volatile substances.  
- developing and supporting youth and holiday programs;  
- individual casework with at risk individuals.  
- linking stakeholders together to ensure holistic community approaches to addressing problems.  
- developing rehabilitation and youth services, policing initiatives, football carnivals and video and radio projects in local languages. | CAYLUS' holistic approach to addressing substance misuse in the region has had a myriad of health, substance misuse prevention and community safety outcomes, including the reduction of suicide and self-harm. By addressing the supply, demand and individual harm caused by substance misuse, CAYLUS has been effective in reducing petrol sniffing, with rates of petrol sniffing dropping from 244 to 9 between 2005 and 2008. Key to this success has been the successful advocating of almost universal use of Opal fuel in the region. The demand for volatile substances has also been successfully tackled by CAYLUS. This is done by directly supplying services, in addition to identifying barriers to the provision of quality services by other providers, including limited funding and infrastructure. Through successful advocacy to Government, CAYLUS has played a vital role in securing $19.6M of increased government funding for youth services in the region. |

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98 CAYLUS, above n 97..


100 ibid.

101 ibid.

102 ibid.

103 CAYLUS, above n 97.

104 Shaw, above n 99, 2.

105 ibid.

106 ibid 1.

107 Culture is Life, above n 2, 60.

108 Culture is Life, above n 2, 60.

109 Shaw, above n 99, 6.
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<tr>
<td>The Hope Vale – Pelican Project</td>
<td>Sea country in Cape York, Queensland</td>
<td>Pelican Expeditions is a catamaran company, and was invited by Hopevale Elders in 2004 to assist in addressing issues of youth suicide and family breakdown. The project was initiated in response to a letter from a Hope Vale woman to Pelican Expeditions expressing concern about the number of suicides occurring in the Hope Vale community.</td>
<td>Multidisciplinary programs run in collaboration with the community. Programs are predominately overseen by community elders, and focus on cultural reinforcement, self-esteem, leadership and vocational training. The aim of the project is to decrease suicide by fostering the empowerment and wellbeing of participants. In addition, the two- four week camp seeks to engage youth in activities providing a rest for the community.</td>
<td>Each year a two to four week ‘in country’ program is run in remote locations on the Cape York Coast, through collaboration with Elders from Hope Vale and Pelican expeditions. The program focuses on activities that promote ‘caring for Country, health, marine science and preservation of culture’ such as ‘turtle and dugong research, seagrass monitoring, digital storytelling, weaving, dance and music workshops as well as sail training, visits to sea country and recreation of the traditional voyages undertaken in dugout canoes to Lizard Island’. In addition, in 2013 a smaller scale program was run involving daily trips from Cooktown to the reef, with the aim of fostering a connection with the reef for Aboriginal kids in care.</td>
<td>The program has run for over ten years, and has expanded since its formation in 2004. It has been instrumental in decreasing suicides in the Hope Vale community, with only one suicide occurring during the three year period since the program commenced in 2004. The success of the program is attributed to long term community collaboration and combining culturally relevant traditional and contemporary activities.</td>
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110 Ibid.
111 Ibid 5.
112 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
117 Pelican Expeditions and Saltwater Projects, above n 113.
118 Pelican Expeditions and Saltwater Projects, above n 116.
119 Pelican Expeditions and Saltwater Projects, above n 113.
121 Pelican Expeditions and Saltwater Expeditions, above n 113.
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<tr>
<td>Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service (StrongBala Men's Health Program)</td>
<td>Katherine, NT</td>
<td>Wurli-Wurlinjang is an Indigenous-run primary health care provider for the Katherine Region, established in 2009. Its Board of Directors constitute Elders from five neighbouring Indigenous communities.</td>
<td>The organisation comprises of entities including clinical health programs, Wellbeing Unit, and StrongBala Men's Health Program. Its focus is on both primary health care, as well as educational seminars and services covering lifestyle, drug/alcohol dependence and personal finances.</td>
<td>StrongBala aims to provide culturally appropriate health and wellbeing services, in particular men's health checks and lifestyle seminars. A particular focus is on high-school students and men who have been through the criminal justice system.</td>
<td>Provision of health checks, lifestyle education and support seminars, referrals to internal and external health providers within the one organisation. A particular focus of the program is the promotion of self-empowerment for clients to initiate change 'within themselves (and) for their families'. The focus on self-help and self-empowerment is achieved by encouraging visiting clients to access workshops that promote healthy lifestyle and mental health... (and) work skills training.'... Often, elders and community mentors will be brought in to run seminars.</td>
<td>Provision of services to more than 4500 indigenous men over 40 years. May see up to 350 people a month, with a sizeable number of young school leavers transitioning to work; has had men referred by NT Dept. of Justice. StrongBala Justice support – group providing sessions on life skills, employment, work training etc - lacking government funding for 2016 onwards.</td>
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123 Ibid.  
124 Ibid.  
125 Ibid.  
127 Ibid.  
128 Ibid.  
129 Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service, Wurli-Wurlinjang Annual, above n 122.
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<tr>
<td>Yanyun Lotjpan Yapenyebak</td>
<td>Murray Region (Barmah State Forest), VIC</td>
<td>This program was established by the Uniting Care Kildonan Group (a community service organisation part of Uniting Churches in Churches) in 2012.</td>
<td>This organisation runs 'in-country' cultural immersion for indigenous youth, located at Barmah State Forest (VIC).</td>
<td>The cultural immersion programs aim to provide leadership skills, cultural awareness and an opportunity to connect with heritage for Indigenous youth. An important focus is on the teaching of traditional land practices.</td>
<td>The cultural immersion programs are achieved through a partnership between Uniting Care, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Council of Elders of the Yorta Yorta Region and Parks Victoria, providing access to, and use of, the Barmah Forest for youth-based cultural excursions. A primary focus of these 'in-country' cultural exchanges is to allow youth to share their stories and life experiences with others. The cultural immersion program also seeks to teach participants 'traditional cultural practices...using the natural resources in the Barmah State Forest'. The workshops are holistic, allowing youth to 'reconnect with their culture, build self-respect and respect for others, and help develop their sense of identity'.</td>
<td>Up to 20 indigenous youth accessing weekly activities over three years (2012-2014)</td>
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131 Ibid.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.


135 Ibid.

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<td><strong>Wesley Lifeforce National Program for Suicide Prevention</strong></td>
<td>National (under the aegis of Wesley Missions)</td>
<td>This nation-wide suicide prevention program was established by the Wesley Mission in 1996. 137</td>
<td>Whilst the program is based on a national model, it has an indigenous focus, including suicide prevention networks such as: Darwin Region Indigenous Suicide Prevention Network, Top End Suicide Prevention Network, Galupa Marrgarr Suicide Prevention Network and Life Networks Wambool Aboriginal Team. 138</td>
<td>Nationally, the aim of the seminars is to provide healthcare providers with the skills for identifying signs of suicide risk. In the context of indigenous community networks, the aim of the seminars is to train community members to identify signs of suicidal behaviour, and follow-up with appropriate responses in time of suicide crisis. 139</td>
<td>The inclusion of particular indigenous networks into the national framework allows for communities to exchange information about youth suicide risk factors. 140</td>
<td>The suicide prevention seminars have been run 279 times over 10 years, outreach of 5412 people in rural and remote Australia. 141 Galupa Marrgarr well known in East Arnhem communities – invited by Groote Eyland Anindilyakwa Land Council to cooperate on prevention strategies 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marumali Journey of Healing</strong></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>This nation-wide counselling service was developed in 200 by ‘Auntie’ Lorraine Peeters. 143</td>
<td>This program targets health providers, by providing them with workshops that aim to address trauma linked to the Stolen Generation policies. 144</td>
<td>The focus of the workshops depends on the target audience: - Mental Health service providers: workshops aim to provide training on addressing trauma suffered by survivors of removal/assimilation policies; - Indigenous Youth: workshops aim to address trauma ‘associated with removal practices’ as well as other ‘issues of a sensitive nature’. 145</td>
<td>Delivery of 5-day workshops is based on the ‘Marumali Healing Strategy’, developed ‘by an Aboriginal survivor for Aboriginal survivors’ and targets the causes of related trauma in ways that are culturally appropriate, and allow participants to set the pace of their recovery. - Aspects of the workshops consider spirituality for Indigenous people, as well as ‘trans-generational effects removal’ that may be felt by youth. 146</td>
<td>Workshops have trained over 100 counsellors with skills to treat trauma related to cultural separation/diaspora; 93% of workshop evaluations have been classed as ‘excellent’ 147</td>
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6. **CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

An analysis of community based (or grass roots) programs revealed that the effectiveness of these programs is attributed to several key features:

6.1. **Cultural and spiritual identity**

6.1.1. All of the community-based programs assessed in this submission have the specific focus of recognising, respecting and harnessing the cultural and spiritual identity of program participants in order to bring about healing and empowerment of the individual and the community. For example:

**Yarrabah Family Wellbeing Program**

This program encourages participants to recognise ‘that connectedness to family or kin is fundamental to Indigenous identity’ \(^{148}\) and to appreciate ‘the values underlying [an individual’s] relationship with others and of dimensions beyond the self’. \(^{149}\) This is consistent with Indigenous peoples’ understanding of health as involving an inextricable relationship between physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. \(^{150}\) Importantly, program participants have ‘reported an improved understanding of emotions, relationships and life circumstances’, \(^{151}\) ‘better communication skills and an ability to avoid or manage conflicts’ \(^{152}\) and a ‘renewed sense of hope for the future’. \(^{153}\) By encouraging individuals to harness their cultural and spiritual identity, this program has empowered individuals and communities and been effective in preventing Indigenous suicide in the Yarrabah community. \(^{154}\)

**Yiriman Project**

Based in the Kimberley, this program aims to empower Indigenous youth by strengthening their identification value. It does this by ‘bringing out stories, building narratives and offering young people a chance to reconnect with their traditional culture and laws’. \(^{155}\) The program has been effective in creating positive behavioral changes in ‘at risk’ youth and has empowered ‘young people to take on community responsibilities’. \(^{156}\) By mending the fracture

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\(^{148}\) McEwan and Tsey, above n 12, 15.  
\(^{149}\) Ibid 2.  
\(^{150}\) Ibid 4.  
\(^{151}\) Ibid 18.  
\(^{152}\) Ibid.  
\(^{153}\) Ibid.  
\(^{154}\) Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, *Strategies to minimise*, above n 24, 10.  
\(^{155}\) Palmer, *We know they healthy*, above n 34, 10.  
\(^{156}\) Ibid 51-76.
between culture, community and the individual which is experienced by many young Indigenous peoples,\textsuperscript{157} this project addresses a range of cultural, social and historical factors that are drivers of Indigenous youth suicide.

\textit{National Empowerment Project}

The National Empowerment Project (NEP) aims to address the devastating effects of suicide and psychological distress in Indigenous communities by bringing the voices of Indigenous peoples’ to the fore.\textsuperscript{158} This program highlights the disparity between Indigenous and Western notions of social and emotional wellbeing to identify the current challenges that Indigenous communities are faced with and the problematic nature of ‘one size fits all’ solutions.\textsuperscript{159} The NEP places a great emphasis on restoring and enhancing cultural strength and identity and advocates for culturally specific programs that aim to reinforce the positive determinants of health that Indigenous people value the most.\textsuperscript{160} By giving priority to programs and recourses that concentrate on restoring and strengthening Indigenous people’s connectedness to family, community and culture, the NEP facilities healing and promotes the empowerment of the Indigenous community.\textsuperscript{161}

\textit{Marumali Journey of Healing}

These counseling workshops were developed 'by an Aboriginal survivor for an Aboriginal survivor'; this personal perspective has allowed the program to target the causes of trauma in Indigenous communities in culturally appropriate ways.\textsuperscript{162} Youth workshops have been specifically designed to create a welcoming and respectful environment so that ‘issues of a sensitive nature’ - such as youth suicide - can be addressed. Testimonial evidence suggests that such an approach to counseling has been particularly effective, with over 94 per cent of participants in this program rating it as ‘excellent’.\textsuperscript{163}

6.2. 'In country' experiences

6.2.1. Four (4) of the community based programs reviewed in our report (Baluna Foundation, Yanyun Lotjpan Yapenyebak, The Hope Vale, The Yiriman Project) delivered ‘in-country’ programs aimed at reconnecting Indigenous youth to their cultural and historical background as a means of fostering self-identity. For example:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[157] Tatz, above n 4, 17-18.
\item[158] Dudgeon, et al, \textit{Voices of the People}, above n 44.
\item[159] Ibid.
\item[160] Ibid.
\item[161] Ibid.
\item[162] Winangali Marumali, \textit{Workshop Formats}, above n 144.
\end{footnotes}
**Baluna Foundation**

Based in Western Australia, this program aims to break the cycle of Indigenous disadvantage and increase the self-esteem, confidence and emotional and spiritual wellbeing of Indigenous youth through 6 day camps that are culturally appropriate and emphasise healing.\(^{164}\) Over a six year period the program has not lost a youth to suicide and 80% of participants reported a move away from self-harm and suicide ideation and an overall positive change in behaviour.\(^{165}\) The promising nature of culturally focused in-country experiences or camps is therefore demonstrated by the success of the Baluna Foundation in targeting Indigenous youth suicide.

**Yiriman Program**

This program involves Elders taking youth out to country,\(^{166}\) sharing their oral history with young people and, in turn, allowing young people to build their own stories of the country.\(^{167}\) This strengthens, reconnects and redevelops relationships between youth, their Elders and land.\(^{168}\) David Palmer of Murdoch University has provided a number of case studies that demonstrate that the effectiveness of this program lies in its ability to create a sense of belonging and value amongst young people.\(^{169}\) After attending a bush trip, one youth worker commented that:

> The walk provided a culturally appropriate setting for these young men to share their grief and as a result to support them in their healing and grieving journeys. We believe this is crucial in preventing further suicides.\(^{170}\)

The value of this program lies in its ability to empower young people to take responsibility for their own health and provide them with a safe environment in which to seek help when needed.

**Yanyun Lotjpan Yapenyebak**

This program aims to provide leadership skills and cultural awareness among youth participants, by focusing the immersion program on the teaching of traditional land use

\(^{164}\) Baluna, above n 85.
\(^{165}\) Australian Institute of Family Studies, above n 16.
\(^{166}\) Culture is Life, above n 2, 57.
\(^{168}\) McEwan and Tsey, above n 12, iv.
\(^{169}\) Palmer, *We know they healthy*, above n 34, 77-78.
practices. These activities help provide a sense of self-identity and self-respect for their cultural heritage, and their popularity among local youths has seen at around 20 participants at each immersion camp over a period of three years.

6.3. **Community collaboration**

6.3.1. Community involvement in the design, implementation and delivery of programs promotes community support, a sense of community ownership and ‘addresses the social inequality and relative powerlessness that is considered a major factor in [Indigenous peoples’] disadvantage.’ This fosters trust among participants, which is instrumental to the effective delivery of programs in Indigenous communities. For example:

**Hope Vale – Pelican Project**

This project was founded in response to a call for help from a member of the Hope Vale community to Pelican Projects, expressing concern about the high rates of Indigenous youth suicide in the community. It was established in 2004 in collaboration with the Elders from Hope Vale community. Members of Pelican Project take direction from the Elders and community on how best to address Indigenous disadvantage and suicide through the program. This has been key to the success of the program, as it ensures that the program is culturally appropriate in supporting the cultural and spiritual identity of participants. In the process, it fosters a connection between Indigenous Elders and youth as well as a connection between youth and the traditional land. The effectiveness of this approach is reflected in the continued expansion and success of the program. In the three year period following the founding of the program in 2004, it was reported that only one suicide occurred in the community (reflecting a dramatic decrease in suicide rates). In addition, members on board the Pelican expedition report a notable positive response in participants to the experience of seeing traditional lands from the sea and also experiencing the ‘seacountry’.

**Yarrabah Family Wellbeing Program**

The high rates of suicides in the Yarrabah community prompted a psychiatrist to visit the area, raising concerns amongst community members that a ‘crisis intervention’ would be

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172 Shepparton News, *Young leadership program*, above n 136.
173 Culture is Life, above n 2,118.
174 Australian Institute of Family Studies, above n 16.
175 Pelican Expeditions and Saltwater Projects, above n 113.
176 ABC Television, above n 120.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
implemented ‘from the top down’. As highlighted earlier, suicide risk factors in Indigenous communities include the impact of past assimilation policies under the guise of ‘protection’. Government interventions which simply repeat these practices re-inflict trauma and exacerbate suicide risk factors. The Yarrabah Family Wellbeing program, on the other hand, has been designed, developed and is delivered by Indigenous community members. It therefore enhances (rather than hinders) Indigenous peoples’ positive sense of identity and promotes self-determination.\(^{181}\)

**Baluna Foundation**

The Baluna Foundation is a charity wholly owned and operated by Indigenous Australians that seeks to break the cycle of Indigenous disadvantage through culturally appropriate programs that foster a reconnection with cultural identity in Indigenous youth.\(^ {182}\) The healing approaches of the program are designed through collaboration between the Baluna Foundation and Indigenous Elders. This ensures that the programs are culturally appropriate, address the needs of Indigenous youth and target the suicide risk factors unique to Indigenous youth.\(^ {183}\) The workers involved in the delivery of the programs are also all Indigenous. This has also been identified as a key to the effectiveness of Baluna's strategy as it creates an environment where participants feel they can open up to workers.\(^ {184}\) The effective outcomes that the program has achieved demonstrate that policy initiatives that support Indigenous peoples’ self determination at both the community and individual level should be prioritised.

**Alive and Kicking Goals!**

The Alive and Kicking Goals! program harnesses the power of community to educate and respond to escalating rates of suicide and suicidal behaviour throughout the Kimberly region.\(^ {185}\) This program adopts a peer driven education system where local Indigenous community leaders and volunteers conduct evidence based suicide prevention workshops in schools, prisons and social environments to help the community deal with the impacts of suicide.\(^ {186}\) This program, being community driven from its inception in 2008, has forged close connections between mentors and at risk individuals in the community. Prior to the establishment of this program, due to the fear and stigma associated with the mental health system, many individuals were too afraid to seek help or advice. The close collaboration


\(^{181}\) Dudgeon, et al., *Hear our Voices*, above n 3, 85.

\(^{182}\) Balunu, *The vision*, above n 89.

\(^{183}\) Australian Institute of Family Studies, above n 16.

\(^{184}\) Ibid.

\(^{185}\) Australian Institute of Family Studies, above n 62.

\(^{186}\) Ibid.
amongst the community demonstrated in this program has allowed at risk individuals to feel more comfortable in seeking help when needed, has fostered a sense of trust and togetherness in the community and has been the most effective factor driving the success of this program.\footnote{187}

\textit{Wurli-Wurlinjadj StrongBala Men's Health Service}

This program is wholly operated by local Elders (who rotate on the Board of Directors of \textit{Wurli-Wurlinjadj Health Service}), meaning that local communities have complete autonomy over creating culturally appropriate lifestyle and education seminars for clients.\footnote{188} By actively encouraging clients to make use of in-house lifestyle and education seminars so that they are instigators of change 'within themselves (and) for their families'\footnote{189} this program fosters empowerment. The added input of visiting Elders and community leaders adds a mentoring dynamic to the program, whose presence helps empower clients to effect personal changes.\footnote{190}

6.4. \textbf{Funding and public sector collaboration}

6.4.1. Community grants and funding allocated to Indigenous organisations build the capacity of communities to deliver successful and sustainable programs - particularly where ‘the power to budget, plan and make operational decisions is devolved to the organisation’.\footnote{191} For example:

\textit{CAYLUS}

CAYLUS seeks to address the misuse of volatile substances in Central Australia through a myriad of strategies, including the direct provision of services such as youth groups to divert youth away from harmful activities and also the provision of support to other service providers.\footnote{192} This is effected through various means, including the maintenance of a 'brokerage fund',\footnote{193} which is a pool of funds held by CAYLUS to be deployed to fill vital gaps in services.\footnote{194} For example, between 2002 and 2009 CAYLUS deployed $1M of funds to support individuals and youth programs.\footnote{195} This ability to 'disburse funds in a fast and flexible

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{187} Ibid. \textsuperscript{188} Wurli-Wurlinjadj Health Service, \textit{Wurli-Wurlinjadj Annual}, above n 122. \textsuperscript{189} Ibid. \textsuperscript{190} Ibid. \textsuperscript{191} Mark Moran, Doug Porter and Jodie Curth-Bibb, ‘Funding Indigenous Organisations: improving governance performance through innovations in public finance management in remote Australia’ (Issues Paper 11, Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Institute of Family Services, September 2014) 3. \textsuperscript{192} Shaw, above n 99, 5. \textsuperscript{193} Ibid 2. \textsuperscript{194} Ibid 2. \textsuperscript{195} Ibid 7.}
fashion to meet immediate needs\textsuperscript{196} has been identified as a factor in the success of the CAYLUS model.\textsuperscript{197} In addition, the effective advocating and sourcing of funding by CAYLUS has resulted in an improvement in the availability and quality of youth services in the region, being key to the reduction of the demand for volatile substances. For example, CAYLUS accessed $3.3M of funding for the construction of infrastructure such as recreation halls and staff housing to support youth programs in 12 communities in the region.\textsuperscript{198} In addition, CAYLUS has played a key role in securing increased Government funding towards youth services in the Northern Territory since 2002, with a total of $19.6M being made available by various Government bodies.\textsuperscript{199} As such, ongoing Government support and funding and ‘allowing a project time to mature within a region’\textsuperscript{200} has been key to the success of CAYLUS, its’ multifaceted strategy to addressing substance misuse having a positive impact in the region.

6.4.2. A major challenge facing many community-led initiatives is a lack of (or uncertainty in terms of) funding. David Palmer suggests that one reason for this is that ‘funding bodies often seem to want to know about outcomes’, before they will allocate funds and yet, ‘there is rarely additional resourcing provided to carry out [research]’.\textsuperscript{201} Further, government reporting requirements for future funding is often onerous and ‘is not always aligned with addressing community issues and community priorities’.\textsuperscript{202} Unfortunately, what this means is that opportunities to deliver positive outcomes in Indigenous communities (including reducing the prevalence of youth suicide) may be missed. For example:

\textit{Yiriman Family Wellbeing Program}

While this program now enjoys government support and funding, there are reports that ‘the program struggled for years before obtaining this support’.\textsuperscript{203} Further, program participants often wish to return to Yiriman and/or refer friends or relatives to the program. Unfortunately, there is limited capacity to accommodate all requests and referrals – ‘demand exceeds the frequency of trips’.\textsuperscript{204} The positive outcomes achieved by the program suggest that policy initiatives and additional funding to support and facilitate additional ‘on-country’ trips should be seriously explored.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid 9.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid 7.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid 8.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid 9.
\textsuperscript{201} Palmer, \textit{We know they healthy}, above n 34, 6.
\textsuperscript{202} Dudgeon, et al, \textit{Hear our Voices}, above n 3, 76.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid 51.
\textsuperscript{204} Palmer, \textit{We know they healthy}, above n 34, 34.
Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service (StrongBala Men’s Health Program)
As the risk factors for youth suicide encompass socio-economic issues such as alcohol and drug abuse, poverty and the ‘fracturing of culture and community,’ there are clear benefits when a community program seeks to provide holistic care in a way that educates and seeks to alleviate these issues. The StrongBala Justice Support Program’s focus on providing educational seminars on health and lifestyle issues - often led by Elders and role models within Indigenous communities - is an example of the kind of holistic service that should be commended for addressing the broad set of risk factors linked to Indigenous youth suicide.

It is therefore concerning that this program was unsuccessful in the 2016 Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding round - a Federal Government grant scheme with an objective of improving employment opportunities so that Indigenous Australians ‘participate in the economy and broader society.’ Without external funding support, the viability of this program beyond June 2016 remains unclear.

6.4.3. In a sector that does not enjoy the prospect of certainty in terms of funding, the effective delivery of community programs often requires a range of businesses and organisations to work in partnership and combine resources. For example:

Yanyun Lotjpan Yapenyebak
In this program, Uniting Care collaborates with the Department of Sustainability and Environment (Victoria), Council Elders of the Yorta-Yorta Region and Parks Victoria so as to facilitate the logistics and human resources necessary for in-country immersion programs in Barwah State Forest (Vic).

Youth In Communities
The Youth In Communities program saw 21 agreements with various organisations established in order to address increasing at risk behaviour and facilitate better health outcomes for young Indigenous people across the Northern Territory. Under the Youth In Communities program umbrella, this multi-organisational approach to service delivery allowed for the funding of infrastructure, additional youth workers and diversionary activities across

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205 Tatz, above n 4, 17-18.
206 Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service, Wurli-Wurlinjang Annual, above n 122.
208 Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service, Wurli-Wurlinjang Annual, above n 122.
210 Courage Partners, above n 54, 9.
many diverse projects. Participants of this program therefore had access to a myriad of services from substance abuse assistance to relationship advice that operated simultaneously in conjunction with the Youth In Communities program to ultimately create safer community environments and enhance the integration of positive attitudes throughout the community. Collaboration between service providers allows for the efficient use of available resources, the provision of well-targeted activities and increased youth participation and was ultimately a contributing factor to the success of community development in this program.

6.4.4. Evidently, there are opportunities for public agencies to collaborate with community groups in ensuring the effective delivery of community-based programs. This is an area that should be seriously explored.

6.5. After program support

6.5.1. The provision of continued support to individuals following participation in a program is essential to ensuring that the skills and benefits gained through that participation are maintained for the long term. For example:

**Baluna Foundation**

Participation in a six-day camp is followed by the provision of continued support and mentoring to participants to facilitate immersion back into the community and family. This has been identified as a positive feature of the Baluna Foundation program, as post-program support through outreach and case-management fosters the maintenance of the positive outcomes of the program, such as the development of life, education and employment skills.

**Mt Theo Program**

The Mt Theo Youth development and leadership (Jaru Pirjirdi Strong Voices) Program is aimed at young adults between 15-25 yrs and is delivered by the Walpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation in conjunction with Elders. The program offers young people leadership development, which involves participants working through a 6 tier structure until they become ‘Senior Jaru’ – at which time, they are given the opportunity to mentor
younger participants.\textsuperscript{216} As Senior Jaru have worked through the program themselves, they are well placed to identify ‘at risk individuals’ and provide them with additional support. Additionally, a large number of past participants of the program are now on ‘local boards and committees [and therefore] in stronger positions of power to help change and mould the future for themselves and their families’.\textsuperscript{217}

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. The \textit{Hear our Voices Report}\textsuperscript{218} notes that ‘while governments strongly espouse the goal of working in partnership with communities, there is ample evidence ... to show there is a lack of knowledge or skill about how to put this goal into practice’.\textsuperscript{219} As the above analysis demonstrates supporting communities to define their own responses and solutions to issues affecting their lives is one way of achieving this goal.

7.2. The loss of Aboriginal youth to self-harm and suicide is a devastating, systemic issue facing our society. In order to address this issue it is important to recognise the social determinants unique to the Indigenous population and the practices of dispossession and assimilation at the heart of these issues. Programs that aim to strengthen community action, heal cultural identities and promote a connectedness to traditional land reduce feelings of youth hopelessness and stand to address the epidemics devastating Aboriginal communities.\textsuperscript{220} These are the programs that must be implemented in the future.

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\textsuperscript{216} Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation, \textit{Mt Theo Program}, above n 28, 11-15.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid 12; See also, Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation, \textit{Annual Report 2014-2015}, above n 28, 24.
\textsuperscript{218} Dudgeon, et al, \textit{Hear our Voices}, above n 3.
\textsuperscript{219} Dudgeon, et al, \textit{Hear our Voices}, above n 3, 51.
\textsuperscript{220} Culture is Life, above n 2, 4.
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