

# An overview of approaches for philanthropic investment in Aboriginal women and girls

The best of every

# woman

## A message from AMP



**Craig Dunn**

Chief Executive Officer, AMP

Throughout my career I have been fortunate enough to work with a great number of remarkable and inspiring women – many of whom work alongside me now as directors and senior leaders at AMP.

The fact that women make some of the best leaders and influencers is now the accepted business norm and Australian society is much richer as a result of our greater gender equality and cultural diversity.

However, we still have a way to go when it comes to equality for Indigenous Australians – particularly for women and girls. There are many challenges to overcome, but there are also opportunities to be developed and achievements to be celebrated.

We hope this report, which provides insights into how to best support Aboriginal women and girls, will highlight some of those challenges and the excellent work which could be developed further to assist the untapped potential of the next generation of Aboriginal leaders.

At AMP, we invest in the community through the AMP Foundation, which has been managing our community investments for more than 20 years. The AMP Foundation has a long-standing focus on supporting organisations and programs which empower young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve their education and career goals.

Many of these organisations have a particular focus on young Indigenous people – a group who despite some progress, remain one of Australia's most educationally disadvantaged.

The freedom and the opportunity to achieve our full potential is one we should all enjoy, and that is just one of the reasons why this is an important report.

It is a reminder that both the current and next generation of Indigenous people should be nurtured and encouraged to be what they aspire to, and this is particularly important for Aboriginal women and girls. I hope you will offer your support.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Craig Dunn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chief Executive Officer, AMP

## Foreword



### **Professor Kerry Arabena**

Professor and Director of  
Research, School for Indigenous  
Health Faculty of Medicine,  
Nursing and Health Sciences,  
Monash University.

Throughout my life, I have worked hard to improve the lives of my people. I did so to make good the nation's promise that we are all equal, all free, and all deserving of a chance to pursue our opportunities and experience happiness. I overcame significant challenges and demonstrated to the nation that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are committed contributors to social and economic life in our communities, as well as that of Australian society. I have always, and will always, be a strong advocate and believer that investing in our girls and women is essential to build strong economies, establish stable and just societies, achieve human rights and improve the quality of life not only for women, but for men, families and communities.

We are starting to see the benefits of investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls. We have women in decision-making and powerful positions. We have women working in corrections, youth agencies, and women representing us locally, nationally and internationally. We have done our teething in health, education, academia, natural resource management, in regional autonomy, leadership development, organisational management, youth empowerment, media marketing and public policy, land purchasing, business development, economic development, human rights and political strategy. We must also celebrate those women who have kept their children and families strong, and despite great challenges in their lives, helped them thrive. Despite progress being made, however, there is still much work to change current commitments into actions that make real the aspirations for a better future held by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children across the country.

I am mindful of the fact that we are looking to secure our First Peoples' economic, environmental, social and cultural futures in an unprecedented period of change in the world. Many of us are still not fully engaged with a 'real economy', nor do some of us live in places where a buoyant market economy exists. Our life expectancy, whilst improving, is increasing at a glacial pace. We are not all benefitting from the delivery of education, our own knowledge systems are still marginalised and we sadly remain over-represented in judicial and child protection systems. What is required is a concerted effort to draw on good practice and elaborate key strategies that will accelerate benefits to all women.

There is real value in taking an informed approach to how you support women and girls to make that journey. This Report provides a basis to inform philanthropic and other interested parties about how to do just that. We are indeed fortunate that this Report found its way into your hands, not only to rebuild our relationships in the spirit of reconciliation, based on mutual respect and dignity, but also to ensure the dignity of women and girls, which gives hope to us all.



Professor and Director of Research,  
School for Indigenous Health Faculty of Medicine,  
Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University.

## About this publication

This Report has been commissioned and published by the AMP Foundation. It has been prepared on behalf of the Foundation by Effective Philanthropy. This report follows on from research published in 2008 in a collaboration between the AMP Foundation, Effective Philanthropy and Social Ventures Australia. The report, *Our Children, Our Future – Achieving Improved Primary and Secondary Education Outcomes for Indigenous students*, helped guide AMP Foundation's program funding in Indigenous education.

The Report is copyright apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). You may copy this Report for your own personal use and research or that of your firm or company. You may not republish the Report without written permission from the AMP Foundation.

Copies of the Report are available for download at the AMP Foundation and Effective Philanthropy websites. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction should be addressed to the AMP Foundation through one of the contacts listed below.

In all cases the Report must be acknowledged as the source when reproducing or quoting any part of this publication.

Recommended citation: Doyle, L. & Hill, R., *The Best of Every Woman: An Overview of Approaches for Philanthropic Investment in Aboriginal Women and Girls*, AMP Foundation, NSW, 2012.

For any inquiries in relation to this Report please contact the AMP Foundation at [amp\\_foundation@amp.com.au](mailto:amp_foundation@amp.com.au) or authors Louise Doyle or Regina Hill at [info@effectivephilanthropy.com.au](mailto:info@effectivephilanthropy.com.au).

## Notice and disclaimer

The AMP Foundation and Effective Philanthropy shall not be liable for loss or damage arising out of or in connection with the use of this Report. This is a comprehensive limitation of liability that applies to all damages of any kind, including without limitation compensatory, direct, indirect or consequential damages, loss of data, income or profit, loss of or damage to property and claims of third parties.

## AMP Foundation

[www.amp.com.au/ampfoundation](http://www.amp.com.au/ampfoundation)

AMP has been contributing to the Australian community for more than 160 years. This commitment was formalised in 1992 when the AMP Foundation was established as the vehicle through which AMP invests in the community.

Our purpose is to make a difference in the Australian community at a grassroots level where AMP people live and work. Based on the philosophy of offering a 'hand up and not a handout', the Foundation invests in two key areas – Capacity Building and Community Involvement.

Our Capacity Building programs encourage and support people to help themselves. Our efforts focus on improving the education and employment outcomes of disadvantaged young people, especially Indigenous young people. We also work to build the sustainability of the not-for-profit sector.

Our Community Involvement programs encourage and support people to help others. We focus on supporting the work of AMP people in the community.

The AMP Foundation takes a strategic approach to philanthropy by forming ongoing community partnerships with a small group of charities. Our community partners run programs that are in-depth, multi-faceted and help address intergenerational or socio-economic disadvantage.

Our partnership funding can contain a 'growth capital' component to help an organisation grow, or 'core infrastructure' – funding a critical position within an organisation that will allow it to operate more effectively day-to-day.

## Effective Philanthropy

[www.effectivephilanthropy.com.au](http://www.effectivephilanthropy.com.au)

Founded in early 2006 by Louise Doyle and Regina Hill, Effective Philanthropy is a research consultancy that works to identify, promote and pilot innovative and effective approaches to social and environmental issues. Effective Philanthropy provides expert advice to philanthropists and policy makers on where and how they can make the greatest difference. We research social issues so that our clients can make informed decisions that allow them to fulfil their philanthropic and policy ambitions.

## About the Authors

### Louise Doyle

**Stanford Executive Program for Philanthropy Leaders, Bachelor of Arts, Certificate in Public Relations**

[louisedoyle@effectivephilanthropy.com.au](mailto:louisedoyle@effectivephilanthropy.com.au)

Louise Doyle is a principal with Effective Philanthropy. Louise works as a consultant and researcher in the government and not-for-profit sectors providing advice to philanthropists in relation to their strategy and grant making.

### Regina Hill

**Masters International Laws, Masters of Business Administration, Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws Hons.**

[reginahill@effectivephilanthropy.com.au](mailto:reginahill@effectivephilanthropy.com.au)

Regina Hill is a principal with Effective Philanthropy. Regina works as a consultant and researcher in the government and not-for-profit sectors. She has a special interest in issues relating to Aboriginal issues and has specific experience working on policy and programs relating to early childhood development, families, children and young people at risk, education and school to work transitions.

## Acknowledgements

The Authors are grateful to the range of not-for-profit organisations, philanthropic trusts and foundations that contributed to this Report. They are particularly grateful to the following subject matter experts who provided input into this Report:

- Adrian Appo AO, CEO of Ganbina (specialist not-for-profit organisation supporting Aboriginal school to work transitions)
- Dr Kerry Arabena, Professor and Director of Research, School for Indigenous Health Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University, and
- Professor Nereda White, Director of The Centre for Indigenous Education and Research, Australian Catholic University.

The Authors are also grateful to Dr Kerry Arabena for contributing the foreword to this Report. The Authors are also grateful to the panel of experts who have peer reviewed this Report:

- Professor MaryAnn Bin-Sallik, Senior Education Researcher, Charles Darwin University (retired)
- Professor Jeannie Herbert AM, Foundation Chair of Indigenous Studies, Charles Sturt University
- Professor Bronwyn Fredericks BMA Chair in Indigenous Engagement and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement), Central Queensland University.

The Authors would also like to thank Katherine Dobson and Ian Seal for additional research on the particular organisations and projects that support Aboriginal girls.

The Authors take full responsibility for the views expressed in this Report and note that any errors or omissions are their responsibility and not those of anyone consulted in the process of preparing the Report.

Throughout this Report the term 'Aboriginal' is used to refer to people identifying themselves as being of Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

# Contents

A message from AMP	1
Foreword	2
About this publication	3
Notice and disclaimer	3
AMP Foundation	3
Effective Philanthropy	4
About the Authors	4
Acknowledgements	5
Executive Summary	8
1 Introduction	14
1.1 Purpose of this Report	14
1.2 Scope of this Report	14
1.3 Methodology used to prepare this Report	16
1.4 How the Report is structured and can be used	17
2 Why is investing in Aboriginal women and girls a good idea?	18
3 What holds Aboriginal women and girls back from realising their potential?	20
3.1 The role of women in traditional Aboriginal society	20
3.2 The impact of colonisation	21
3.3 The experience and response of Aboriginal women to colonisation and its legacy	27
4 How do mainstream education, employment and career development systems inhibit Aboriginal women and girls from realising their potential?	31
4.1 Mainstream education, employment and career systems	32
4.2 Barriers to engagement in education and employment and career development	35
4.2.1 Peer, family and community influence	35
4.2.2 Early family formation and carer responsibilities	37
4.2.3 Extended family obligations	39
4.2.4 Access to information and networks	39
5 How can Aboriginal women and girls be supported to negotiate and leverage those systems?	41
5.1 Tapping into and fostering Aboriginal women's and girls' aspirations	41
5.2 Strengthening cultural identity	43
6 What types of programs or supports can help Aboriginal women and girls realise their potential?	44
6.1 Program or support categories	44
6.2 Key program success factors	46
6.3 Considerations when investing in programs to support Aboriginal people	48
7 Case study examples	50
7.1 Personal and life skills development	51
7.2 Student engagement	53
7.3 Vocational development	56
7.4 Young mums	58
7.5 Leadership and professional network development	61
7.6 Strengthening Aboriginal organisations	65
7.7 Program and funding gaps	68
8 Conclusion	69
Bibliography	70
Appendix 1 – Consulted Parties	73

*“There is real value in taking an informed approach to how you support Aboriginal women and girls... This Report provides a basis to inform philanthropic and other interested parties about how to do just that.”*

PROFESSOR KERRY ARABENA



# Executive Summary

Australians generally are becoming more aware of the challenges being faced by Aboriginal people in our community. It is well recognised that there are significant gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians; however, the particular challenges faced by Aboriginal women and girls are often lost within the broader context in which these issues are discussed and responded to.

This research has been commissioned by the AMP Foundation to identify whether there are specific supports that can be provided to help Aboriginal women and girls to address the particular challenges that they face and assist them to realise their aspirations and full potential.

The Report provides a framework that philanthropists and policy makers can use to inform their own efforts to support Aboriginal women and girls to get the knowledge, skills and qualifications that they need to pursue their life and career goals. It has been prepared to help readers to:

- develop a better understanding of the potential that Aboriginal women and girls have to achieve and create positive life outcomes for themselves, their families and communities and why investing in them is a good idea
- identify some of the key factors that hold Aboriginal women and girls back from achieving the goals and aspirations that they hold for themselves, their families and communities
- identify the types of programs and supports that can help them to overcome those barriers, and
- identify key success factors that can be used when designing, funding and or delivering those types of programs and supports to make sure that they work effectively.

International studies indicate that women have a particular propensity to lead improvements in the health and wellbeing of their families and communities and act as catalysts for social change.

Because of that, investments in programs that help improve the health, education and wellbeing of women are often described as having a significant ‘multiplier effect’ based on the cross-generational benefits that those investments support.<sup>1</sup>

Investing in Aboriginal women and girls can help promote:

- **social justice**—by working to address past and present inequities in the treatment and status of Aboriginal people within Australian society
- **gender equity**—by confronting direct and indirect forms of discrimination that prevent Aboriginal women and girls from accessing opportunities that are available both to men and non-Aboriginal women, and
- **social change**—by supporting Aboriginal women and girls to realise their aspirations and potential and act as leaders in the community and drivers for social change.

1. WHO 2012, p.1.

Aboriginal people are the most socio-economically disadvantaged group in Australia. Many families and communities are caught in a cycle of poverty, with poor health, high levels of single parenthood, low education, high rates of unemployment, low incomes, poor access to essential services and high levels of involvement in the justice system.

**Table 1 – Summary of socio-economic indicators<sup>2</sup>**

Parameters (percentage of group population) <sup>3</sup>	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Population (2011)	278,038	270,332	10,595,670	10,093,347
Estimated life expectancy at birth (2005–2007)	73 years	67 years	83 years	79 years
Percentage of population 15 years and over with a year 12 or equivalent qualification (2011)	25.7%	21.9%	51.1%	47.0%
Proportion 20–64 year olds with or working towards a post-school qualification (PSQ) (2008)	34%		58%	
Employment to population ratio (2008)	54%		76%	
Median household weekly income (adjusted for household composition) (2011)	\$991		\$1,241	
Median personal weekly income (2011)	\$362		\$582	
Children 0–14 years living in single parent families (2006)	42%		17%	
Rate of young people aged 10–17 years in detention on an average day (# per 1,000 of relevant population) (2008–2009)	0.70	7.27	0.03	0.29
Number of people in detention (2010)	7,656		21,426	

The challenges faced by Aboriginal women and girls in dealing with issues such as poverty, poor health, domestic and family violence and lateral violence perpetrated within Aboriginal communities between Aboriginal people, in accessing mainstream education and work and in balancing family and work obligations are influenced by a number of factors that need to be understood in both an historical and cultural context. In this Report we try to provide some understanding of how the current day experiences of Aboriginal women and girls are informed by the legacy of colonisation and the present day challenges that flow from that. We also try to explain how the different life experiences and frames of reference that many Aboriginal people bring influence the life course decisions that they make.

Aboriginal women and girls face a number of specific challenges related to:

#### **A. Peer, family and community influences**

The desire to stay connected with their family and peer group can have a significant influence on the life course decisions that Aboriginal women and girls make. In some cases it can lead them to forego education and career opportunities to remain close to, or return to, their home community.

The need to meet home or family based responsibilities can also influence Aboriginal women's and girls' ability to participate in education and work. For example, girls can often be called on to provide support at home to help look after younger siblings or help care for parents and family members who are unwell or need support to negotiate mainstream service systems. This can lead to broken attendance at school which in turn can make it difficult to learn, reduce performance and inhibit further education, employment and career options.

2. ABS. Cat. No. 2002.0, Tables I01a and I01b.; SCRGSG 2011.; AIHW Cat. No. JUV 6 2010, Table 4.2.; ABS Cat. No. 4517.0, Table 2.; Biddle & Yap 2010, pp. 149–150, Figs.9.2 and 9.3.

3. ABS. Cat. No. 4125.0, Tables 2, 7, 8, 14–17.

The need to support their family by exiting school early and moving into (often low paid) work and then being locked into lower paid positions as a consequence of a lack of education can also ‘cap’ Aboriginal women’s and girls’ options.

## **B. Early family formation and carer responsibilities**

Aboriginal women tend to have larger families and are more likely to be single parents than their non-Aboriginal peers.<sup>4</sup> Aboriginal women are also more likely to have children earlier, rather than defer family formation until after they have completed study and or established themselves in work. That means that Aboriginal women often defer their move into further education or work until their children have started (or in some cases completed) their schooling.

The challenges associated with balancing family with work and or study responsibilities can make it difficult for Aboriginal women to engage in study and work. They can also hold women back from pursuing management level positions. While ‘work-life’ balance is an issue for many families, researchers have noted that the challenge can be particularly significant for Aboriginal women who often need to balance extended family and kinship responsibilities.<sup>5</sup>

The cost and availability of culturally appropriate child care can play a significant role in Aboriginal women’s decision to defer taking up further study or work. Researchers have noted that the lack of appropriate, affordable child care is a major factor in Aboriginal women’s low participation in the workforce and has implications for their ability to participate in further education and pursue career development and leadership opportunities.<sup>6</sup>

## **C. Extended family obligations**

Aboriginal people usually have strong links to their extended family. Where Aboriginal people complete further education and or move into higher paying employment the responsibilities that they have within their extended family can mean that they will often be called upon to spread that income across not only their own immediate family but also their broader extended family base. That means that although their income increases, they are often still not able to build up financial savings or establish an asset or capital base in the same way that other higher earning workers might be able to do.

In addition to that, Aboriginal people often do not have the same understanding of the financial system and are not as well placed as their non-Aboriginal peers to access financial management advice to help them to manage and grow their available financial resources. Although financial programs are available to assist Aboriginal people to manage their money, those services tend to be based around basic budgeting rather than investment and money management strategies (eg in relation to tax, investments, superannuation and insurance) aimed at building long-term financial stability and wealth. Where financial products and advice are provided they often do not take into account the different frames of reference that Aboriginal people bring to family and caring responsibilities and the realities that they currently face in terms of reduced life expectancy and health compared to their non-Aboriginal peers (ie they are not designed in a culturally and contextually appropriate way).

Both of the above factors mean that Aboriginal people generally are not as well placed as their non-Aboriginal peers to leverage their earnings. That has implications for their ability to break out of the low income or poverty cycle and build their financial security. There are factors that compound this situation for women. Women often earn less than men, have a shortened employment life span because they take time out of the workforce to raise children and often bear the bulk of the responsibility for child care. These additional challenges make it even more difficult to achieve financial security. This is particularly true for single mothers.

The cost and availability of culturally appropriate child care can play a significant role in Aboriginal women’s decision to defer taking up further study or work.

4. Biddle & Yap 2010, pp.31 and 33; ABS Cat. No. 4704.0 2010.

5. White 2007, p.61.

6. White 2007, p.57.

Women often earn less than men, have a shortened employment life span because they take time out of the workforce to raise children and often bear the bulk of the responsibility for child care.

#### D. Lack of access to information and networks

Many Aboriginal women see education and employment as a key step towards being able to realise cross-generational change in their communities.

Often Aboriginal people lack exposure to many of the life experiences and formal and informal information networks that mainstream Australians take for granted. Because of that, they are often not aware of many of the education and career options available to them and or do not have access to the information or networks that they need to be able to pursue those options as effectively as their non-Aboriginal peers.

Researchers have identified the lack of access to information and professional or peer networks as a significant barrier to women being able to complete further study and proactively manage their careers.<sup>7</sup>

Balancing family and community responsibilities, negotiating mainstream education and employment systems and dealing with gender and race based discrimination often makes it difficult for Aboriginal women and girls to pursue their education and career goals. In part that is because Australian education, employment and career development systems are largely designed to support mainstream participation. They do not tend to take into account or accommodate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples' life experiences and the frames of reference that many Aboriginal people bring or the different life course decisions that they make, particularly in relation to early family formation and the need to maintain close connections with extended family and community.

Philanthropy can support Aboriginal women and girls to overcome the challenges they face by funding activities that work with individuals, families and communities, education providers and employers to:

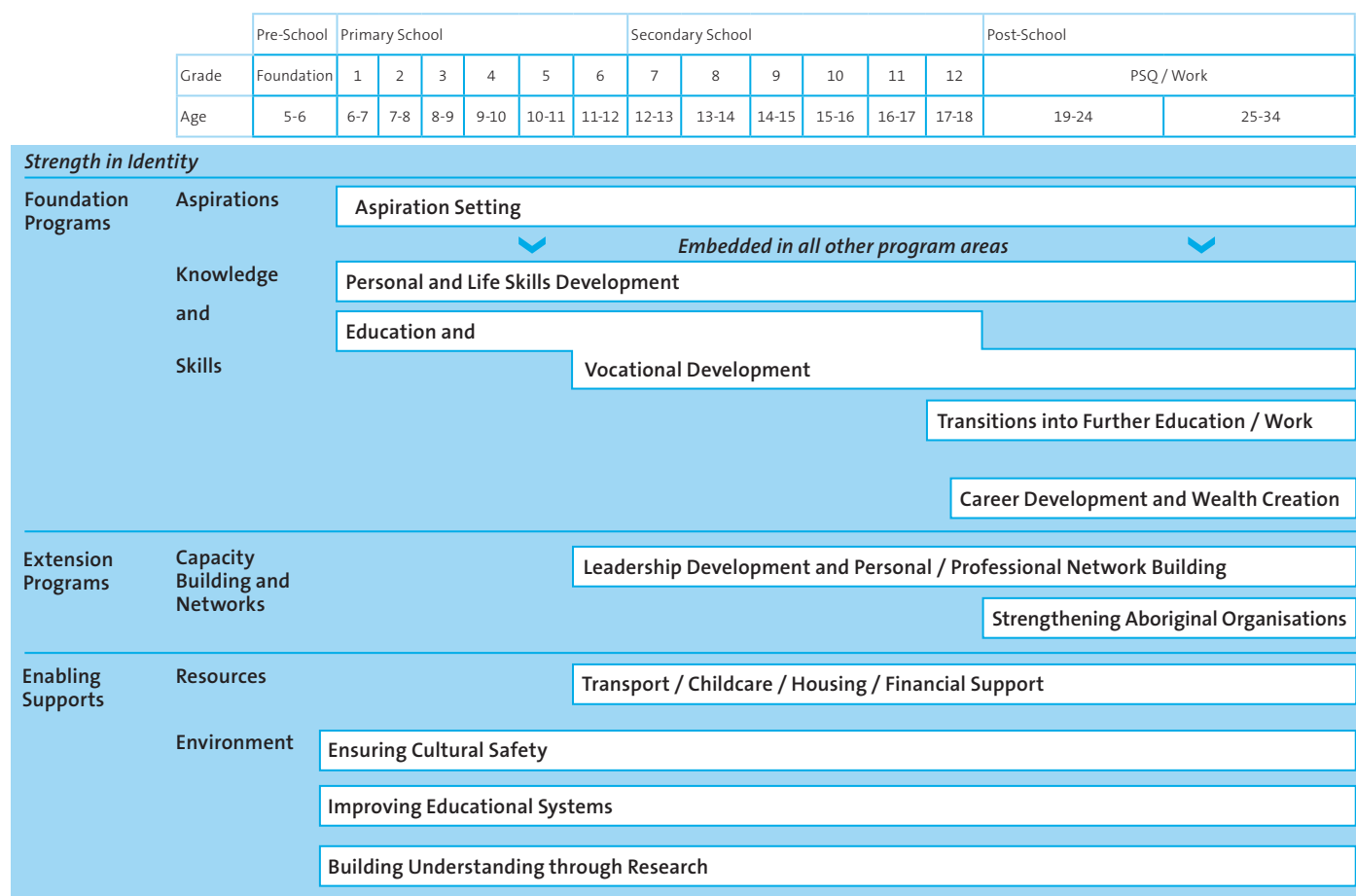
- strengthen and reinforce Aboriginal women's and girls' view of themselves and what they are capable of
- improve their awareness of, and access to, education and employment options
- expand their cultural and professional networks and
- address barriers to education, employment and career development.

This Report identifies three broad types of activity that philanthropists can invest in to help Aboriginal women and girls to realise their potential:

- **Foundation programs** – that help Aboriginal women and girls to broaden the range of life and career options that they see as being available to them, set themselves positive life goals and **aspirations** and develop the foundation **knowledge and skills** that they need to pursue those goals.
- **Extension programs** – that work at an individual and organisational level to help Aboriginal women and girls build on the above skills and develop **capabilities and networks** that can help them to develop their careers and take up employment and leadership roles, and
- **Enabling supports** – that help Aboriginal women and girls to access **resources** such as transport, child care, housing and financial support to help make it easier for them to balance family, work, study and community obligations. This category also includes programs that work to change the **environment** in which Aboriginal women and girls live, study and work by improving cultural safety and inclusionary practices, addressing systemic biases in the education system and supporting research to better understand what is needed to support Aboriginal women and girls to succeed.

7. White 2007, p.72.

**Figure 1 – Program or support categories**



This Report focuses on the first two categories of program identified (**Foundation and Extension Programs**). Specifically, it identifies and provides a range of case study examples of:

**A. Foundation Programs** that are designed to support:

- **Personal and life skills development** – these programs often focus on the development of a mix of personal and general life skills including things such as nutrition, physical, spiritual, mental and sexual health, healthy relationships and financial management. They are designed to help strengthen and or reinforce Aboriginal women's and girls' view of themselves and what they are capable of and build a core set of personal or life skills that arm them to engage in study and work and negotiate life.
- **Student engagement** – these programs focus on helping to link (hook) students into school and provide them with the support that they need to engage effectively at school and learn. They often include a mix of activities aimed at addressing students' underlying material and personal support requirements, as well as their basic behavioural and skill development needs on the basis that, until those underlying needs are met, a student is unlikely to be able to effectively apply themselves to learning.
- **Vocational development** – these programs involve a mix of activities aimed at helping students to broaden their perspective of what they can be, help them identify what they would like to be and develop the vocational and work-ready skills that they need to pursue their career goals.

The Foundation Programs described above cover a mix of age groups including both school and older age groups. They are often focused on supporting Aboriginal girls to make the transition through school and into further study or work.

Some programs will focus on specific target groups, such as young mothers. The significance of this group is such that we have identified it as a separate area for focus in this Report. Programs for Young Mums usually include aspects of all three of the Foundation Program areas.

**B. Extension Programs** that are designed to support:

- **Leadership and professional network development** – these programs focus on developing both personal and professional management and leadership skills and help Aboriginal women to link into peer and professional support networks to help them to develop and progress in their careers and to balance their home, work and community responsibilities.
- **Organisational capacity development** – these programs focus on Aboriginal organisations and work with them to improve their governance and operational capacity on the basis that such organisations can provide strong employment, career development and leadership opportunities for Aboriginal women.

The Extension Programs described tend to be targeted at the post-school age group and are focused on supporting Aboriginal women who are pursuing career development goals or are looking to take on leadership roles within their workplace or community.

Research conducted as part of the preparation of this Report suggests that well designed and implemented Foundation and Extension Programs have the following features:

- Aboriginal involvement in program design
- provision of a culturally safe environment
- use of a strengths-based approach in program design and delivery
- active promotion of cultural identity and strength
- flexibility in delivery to support participation
- awareness and management of any potential barriers to engagement
- encouragement and reinforcement of participant aspirations and goal setting
- use of appropriately vocationally, culturally and emotionally qualified staff
- investment in quality participant-staff relationships, and
- engagement with an appropriate network of collaborators.

The Report identifies a range of areas where there appear to be significant gaps in current activity that would benefit from further support including:

- **research** into the factors that influence Aboriginal women's and girls' involvement in education and work and how best to support them to achieve their aspirations and full potential
- **program evaluation**
- **financial support, child care and transport**
- **programs and activities to support young Aboriginal mums** to stay engaged in education and or work and or to re-engage after having time out to have a baby
- **career advice, career guidance, professional networking and mentoring**
- **financial programs that focus on wealth generation, investment and money management strategies** aimed at building long-term financial stability and wealth
- additional investment in **organisational capacity development and governance training programs**
- investment in Aboriginal **education and support services at universities** and improved access to **multi-mode and away from base vocational and tertiary education programs and courses**, and
- investment in **programs to help support women and girls undertaking distance or external study programs**.

While this Report does not make specific recommendations about what to fund, it is intended to provide a framework that can be used both to encourage and inform good grant-making and help support Aboriginal women and girls to realise their aspirations and full potential.

# 1. Introduction

This section outlines the purpose, scope and structure of this Report and explains the methodology that was used to prepare it.

## 1.1 Purpose of this Report

This Report has been commissioned by the AMP Foundation. The AMP Foundation has a longstanding record of supporting organisations that work to build the capacity of young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly Aboriginal young people, through education and training. It has supported a number of organisations such as AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience), the Clontarf Foundation, Ganbina, the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation and Mission Australia that work with Aboriginal young people to help them to engage in education and make a successful transition through school and into work.

The AMP Foundation has commissioned Effective Philanthropy to undertake research to identify whether there are specific supports that could be provided to help Aboriginal women and girls to realise their aspirations and full potential.

The following Report summarises the outcomes of that research. It has been written predominately to inform philanthropic grant-making. It is also intended to provide a guide for practitioners in the not-for-profit and government sectors with an interest in supporting Aboriginal women and girls.

In particular, the Report has been designed to help readers to:

- develop a better understanding of the potential that Aboriginal women and girls have to achieve and create positive life outcomes for themselves, their families and communities and why investing in them is a good idea
- identify some of the key factors that hold Aboriginal women and girls back from achieving the goals and aspirations that they hold for themselves, their families and communities
- identify the types of programs and supports that can help them to overcome those barriers, and
- identify key success factors that can be used when designing, funding and or delivering those types of programs and supports to make sure that they work effectively.

It provides a framework that philanthropists and policy makers can use to inform grant-making activity to support Aboriginal women and girls to get the knowledge, skills and qualifications that they need to pursue their life and career goals.

The Report does not make specific recommendations about what to fund, but provides examples of the types of activities that philanthropists can fund to support Aboriginal women and girls.

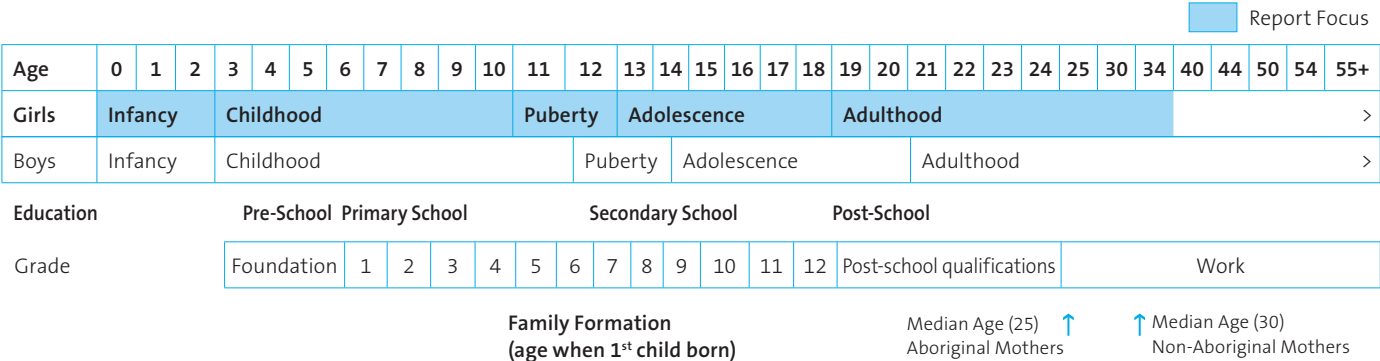
## 1.2 Scope of this Report

This Report focuses on the learning and development pathways of Aboriginal women and girls in the early part of their life course from 0–34 years of age.

That age range has been selected to include early childhood development, on the basis that it is in that period that children develop the foundation social, literacy and cognitive skills to prepare them for school, the school years and the early post-school transition and career development years. The age range has been extended beyond what would be a more common upper age break of 24 years to 34 years to take into account the fact that many Aboriginal women defer their transition into further study or work until after they have had their family and their children have started (and in some cases completed) school.

Many Aboriginal women defer their transition into further study or work until after they have had their family and their children have started (and in some cases) completed school.

Figure 2 – Early life course focus

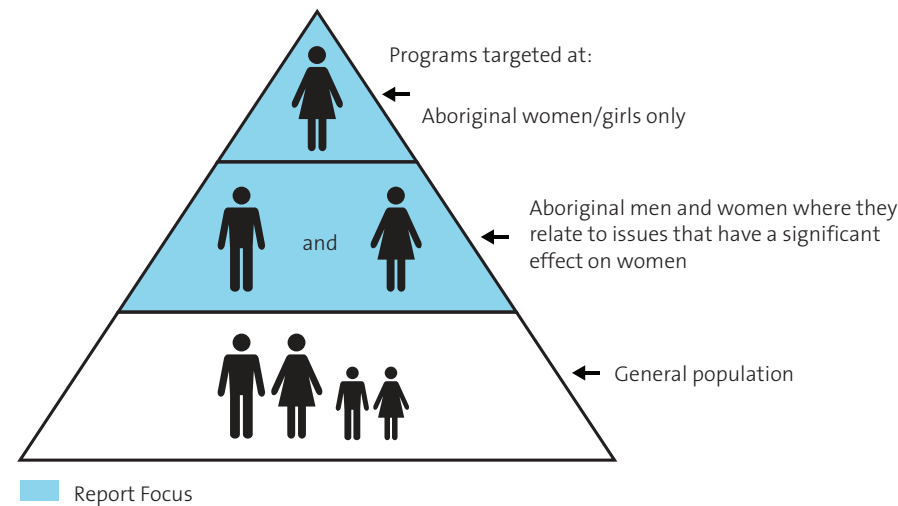


The Report explores what programs and supports can helpfully be provided to assist Aboriginal women and girls to access education, make a successful transition through school and get the knowledge, skills and qualifications that they need to realise their potential and pursue their life and career goals.

- The Report has a clear gender focus. It is specifically interested in programs and supports that are either:
- specifically aimed at supporting Aboriginal women or girls, or
  - work with both men and women on issues that have a positive effect on women and girls and their ability to access education and employment and realise their life and career goals.

The Report does not cover programs that are targeted at the general Aboriginal population or broader Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population.

Figure 3 – Program focus<sup>8</sup>



While there is obviously a range of more generally targeted programs that Aboriginal women and girls can usefully access, the intention in adopting a more limited scope has been to identify initiatives that are tailored to support the specific needs of Aboriginal women and girls and help them to become drivers for change in their own communities, their own lives and their own futures.

8. Life stages mapping [www.coachr.org/growth\\_and\\_development.htm](http://www.coachr.org/growth_and_development.htm); ABS Cat. No. 4704.0 2010.



## 1.3 Methodology used to prepare this Report

A five stage process has been used to prepare this Report.

### Stage 1 – Literature review and interviews with subject matter experts

A detailed literature review was undertaken and interviews were conducted with Aboriginal women, research and program experts. These provided an understanding of the role that Aboriginal women and girls are playing in the community, the goals and aspirations that they have for themselves, their families and communities, the factors that currently constrain them from pursuing those goals and aspirations and the types of programs or supports that can usefully be provided to help them to overcome those barriers.

### Stage 2 – Program or response identification

A program review was conducted to identify the types of programs or supports that are currently being provided to help Aboriginal women and girls to realise their potential and the service providers delivering them.

This involved consultations with research and program experts, internet-based research, a review of recommendations in research and policy papers and contact with Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Departments and Aboriginal and not-for-profit organisations including:

- Departments of Education (Commonwealth, States and Territories)
- Departments of Indigenous Affairs (Commonwealth, States and Territories)
- Departments for Women (Commonwealth, States and Territories)
- Councils for Social Services (National, States and Territories)
- Youth Councils (National, States and Territories)
- Aboriginal Youth Councils (National, Victoria and the Northern Territory)<sup>9</sup>, and
- Aboriginal Health Service Peak Bodies (National, States and Territories).

Effective Philanthropy also contacted a range of philanthropic foundations that fund in this area.

The above consultations covered approximately 80 organisations to identify programs or services that might be relevant and a further 60 service delivery organisations. A list of the organisations that have been consulted as part of the above research is provided in Appendix 1.

### Stage 3 – Program or response investigation

Targeted interviews were then used to build an understanding of each of the above program categories and to identify key success factors associated with the delivery of those programs.

The case studies provided in this Report are based on some of the programs that were investigated. Those case studies are provided by way of example only; their inclusion in the Report should not, therefore, be seen as a recommendation for funding. Many good or promising programs were identified during research; only some of them are included in this Report.

### Stage 4 – Framework development and Draft Report preparation

The information collected in Stages 1 to 3 was then used to develop the conceptual and program frameworks set out in Section 6 of this Report and a Draft Report was prepared.

### Stage 5 – Peer review and Report finalisation

The Draft Report was then reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts. The feedback and views of the Review Panel were used to inform the structure and content of the Final Report.

9. Note: Like organisations do not exist in the other States and Territories.

## 1.4 How the Report is structured and can be used

The Report has been structured in eight sections. This section provides a general introduction to the Report. It explains what the Report covers, how it has been prepared and how it can be used to inform program design, funding and delivery to support Aboriginal women and girls.

Section 2 discusses why it makes sense to invest specifically in Aboriginal women and girls to help them to achieve their full potential and build positive life outcomes for themselves, their families and communities.

Section 3 explores the context in which Aboriginal women and girls live, study and work and identifies some of the barriers that hold them back from being able to realise their full potential. It looks at how the current day experience of Aboriginal women and girls is influenced by the past. It does that on the basis that, without an appreciation of Aboriginal history and culture, it is not possible to fully understand the ways in which Aboriginal women and girls experience, relate to and engage with mainstream education and employment systems.<sup>10</sup>

Section 4 specifically looks at how current mainstream education, employment and career development systems often operate to limit Aboriginal women and girls from being able to engage effectively in education and pursue their career goals.

Section 5 identifies how Aboriginal women and girls can overcome those barriers and negotiate mainstream systems.

Section 6 identifies programs or supports that can help Aboriginal women and girls to do that and discusses the approach that philanthropists can take in order to fund effectively in this area.

Section 7 provides case study examples of the types of programs identified in Section 6. It is important to note that the case studies in Section 7 are provided by way of example only. The programs set out in those case studies have not been independently reviewed or audited as part of this research. Their inclusion in the Report should not, therefore, be seen as a recommendation for funding. As a matter of good practice philanthropists interested in funding programs such as those identified in Section 7 should undertake appropriate due diligence prior to any investment to make sure that the programs they invest in align with their funding strategy and meet appropriate investment criteria.

Section 8 draws together the key themes in the Report by way of conclusion.

10. Dudgeon et al 1990, p.77.

## 2. Why is investing in Aboriginal women and girls a good idea?

There are significant cultural, social, economic and civic benefits for Australia in being able to draw on and learn from the different perspectives, experiences and skills that Aboriginal people bring to Australian society. There is an onus on us to make sure that all Aboriginal people have the opportunity to participate fully in Australian society. Supporting Aboriginal women and girls is an important part of that as they are a valuable untapped resource.

This section discusses the potential that Aboriginal women and girls have to achieve and create positive life outcomes for themselves, their families and communities and why investing in them is a good idea.

Investing in Aboriginal women and girls can help promote:

- **social justice**—by working to address past and present inequities in the treatment and status of Aboriginal people within Australian society
- **gender equity**—by confronting direct and indirect forms of discrimination that prevent Aboriginal women and girls from accessing opportunities that are available both to men and non-Aboriginal women, and
- **social change**—by supporting Aboriginal women and girls to realise their potential and act as leaders in the community and drivers for social change.

*“Prior to colonisation, Aboriginal women played significant roles within their communities. They provided most of the family’s food through their hunting of small game and gathering skills. They also taught the children, were responsible for healing and participated in the spiritual life of their people. Gendered knowledge and practices were known as women’s business. With the arrival of the Europeans, women’s life roles and responsibilities changed dramatically. Through loss of land and being forcibly removed onto missions and reserves under Protection laws introduced in the late 19th century, women found they were unable to practice their traditional duties. Their education was restricted to year four level as it was believed that Aboriginal people were academically inferior and therefore only suited to labouring jobs such as stockmen and domestic servants. Aboriginal children were not allowed to attend school with white children and therefore had little opportunity to transition into non-labouring jobs.*

*The 1967 Referendum gave Aboriginal Australians the same rights and opportunities—in theory—as other Australians.*

*In 2012, it is clear that we have simply not succeeded in making significant progress in addressing the disadvantage of Aboriginal people. For Aboriginal women, this is extremely discouraging. Women continue to be the backbone of their communities and families. Visit any Aboriginal community or community organisation and you will find Aboriginal women leading the efforts to make improvements, initiating and managing projects, whilst carrying the burdens of family life.”*

**Professor Nereda White, Director of The Centre for Indigenous Education and Research, Australian Catholic University**

While gains have been made in addressing the disadvantages and challenges that Aboriginal people face, much more remains to be done.

International studies indicate that women have a particular propensity to lead improvements in the health and wellbeing of their families and communities and act as catalysts for social change. Because of that, investments in programs that help improve the health, education and wellbeing of women are often described as having a significant ‘multiplier effect’ based on the cross-generational benefits that those investments support.<sup>11</sup>

Studies have shown that where women have access to education they tend to:<sup>12</sup>

- have fewer and healthier children, who are themselves more likely to go to school
- participate more in paid work, and
- invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than their male counterparts.

The above effects tend to be magnified the higher the level of education obtained.<sup>13</sup>

11. WHO 2012, p.1.

12. OECD 2010, pp.1, 2 and 4.

13. OECD 2010, p.4.

Aboriginal women and girls have played, and continue to play, an important part as role models and drivers for change in their families and communities.

Statistically, Aboriginal girls are more likely to complete school than their male counterparts. They are also more likely to participate in higher level tertiary study. Compared to their non-Aboriginal peers, however, their overall school participation and completion and post-school qualification rates remain low.

**Table 2 – Comparative education statistics**

Parameters (percentage of group population) <sup>14</sup>	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Apparent retention rate Year 7–12 <sup>15</sup> (2010)	50.4%	44.1%	83.2%	73.0%
Education participation 15–19 years <sup>16</sup> (2011)	54.1%	50.4%	74.5%	70.3%
Percentage of population 15 years and over with a Year 12 or equivalent qualification <sup>17</sup> (2011)	25.7%	21.9%	51.1%	47.0%
Attainment of a non-school qualification (15–64 years) (2008)	33.5%	32.3%	52.6%	55.3%
– Degree, Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate	1.2%	1.0%*	3.5%	4.2%
– Bachelor Degree	4.0%	2.8%	2.9%	1.7%
– Advanced Diploma or Diploma	5.1%	2.8%	17.0%	14.5%
– Certificate III or IV	12.3%	14.6%	10.4%	7.4%
– Certificate I or II	6.5%	5.9%	10.8%	21.5%
Without a non-school qualification (15–64 years) (2008)	66.5%	67.7%	47.4%	44.7%
Number of people awarded tertiary degrees (2001–2010)	8,610	4,251	950,564	669,926

\* Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

While there are a number of general programs that seek to support Aboriginal students' engagement in education and their transition through school and into further study and work, there has been a tendency when tailoring programs to focus on activities to help Aboriginal boys to engage at school and learn. The Clontarf Football Academies are an example of this.

There is a clear need for general programs and ones specifically tailored to support Aboriginal boys; however, there is also much that can and should be done to develop tailored programs to help Aboriginal girls to access education and employment opportunities so that they can realise their potential. This Report explores those opportunities. It starts by identifying the factors that hold Aboriginal women and girls back from realising their potential and it then identifies things that can be done to help them to overcome those barriers.

14. ABS. Cat. No. 4125.0 2011, Tables 2, 7, 8, 14 – 17, Award Course Completions 2010, Table 15.

15. Year 7–12 apparent retention rates refer to the Year 12 enrolment of students in full-time school education (FTE) expressed as a proportion of Year 7 FTE enrolments five years earlier. Because apparent retention rates are derived from school enrolment information they do not include young people undertaking secondary studies in non-school locations such as TAFE colleges or the Centres for Adult Education. Apparent retention rates do not track individual students nor do they take into account changes due to students repeating year levels, interstate and overseas migration, transfer of students between schools and returning students. Nevertheless these rates are a commonly used indicator of underlying progression rates in school.

16. ABS. Cat. No. 2002.0, Tables I01a and I01b.

17. ABS. Cat. No. 2002.0, Tables I01a and I01b.

### 3. What holds Aboriginal women and girls back from realising their potential?

*“Indigenous women are deeply committed to their personal and professional growth. However, there are enormous barriers, both personal and institutional, to their success. Vestiges of colonialism such as racism, sexism, socio-economic and educational disadvantage remain. Despite those obstacles Indigenous women through their strength, resilience and determination, strive to make better lives for themselves, their families and communities.”<sup>18</sup>*

The challenges faced by Aboriginal women and girls in dealing with issues such as poverty, poor health, domestic and family violence and lateral community violence<sup>19</sup>, in accessing mainstream education and work and in balancing family and work obligations are influenced by a number of factors that need to be understood in both an historical and cultural context.

The effects of colonisation are many and complex. In this section we try to provide some understanding of how the current day experiences of Aboriginal women and girls are informed by the legacy of colonisation and the present day challenges that flow from that.

#### 3.1 The role of women in traditional Aboriginal society

While there has always been considerable diversity amongst the Aboriginal groups that have lived in Australia, there has been commonality as well.<sup>20</sup> Prior to colonisation traditional Aboriginal societies were characterised by:

- strong kinship bonds and personal identification with family and clan<sup>21</sup>
- respect for Elders and Elder authority
- strong spirituality and connection with land and cultural lore
- strong community structures and laws
- gender equality
- prioritisation of family and community interests, reflected in principles of sharing and reciprocity
- independence or self sufficiency
- recognition of multiple literacies associated with language and broader based life skills, and
- holistic approaches to learning and development grounded in individual experience and the day to day transfer of knowledge and skills from older to younger members of the society.

Family and community structures were based on strong kinship systems quite different to western lineal models. Kinship relationships brought with them particular rights and responsibilities in relation to land and behaviour. They also provided guidelines for the establishment of inter-personal relationships that played an important role in preserving clan structures and avoiding near relatives from forming interpersonal relationships in what were often small nomadic communities.

Aboriginal people lived in extended family and clan groups and took responsibility for the care and protection of one another. Family structures helped to promote survival and sustain communal life.

Unlike many contemporary western societies, Aboriginal communities operated on a basis of gender equity. Women were valued and played an important role in society. Aboriginal men and women had separate, gender-specific roles and responsibilities. Women were the main food gatherers and carers, they taught children, practiced healing and played specific roles within the spiritual life of the community. Women’s roles were different from those of men; they were economically independent and operated autonomously, contributing to the wellbeing and leadership of their families and community.<sup>22</sup>

18. White 2007, p.iv.

19. The denigration or violence perpetrated within Aboriginal communities against each other.

20. Qld Govt. 2000, p.60.

21. Land owning unit in traditional society where members spoke the same language and identified with a common area of land for which they had responsibility. Presland 1994, p.39.

22. White 2007, p.35.; Bell 2002, pp.229–251.; Bell 2002, p.104.

Particular importance was placed on family and community. Notions of personhood, identity and wellbeing tended to emphasise the interconnectedness that individuals had with each other and their environment.<sup>23</sup> Being part of a broader group and meeting the roles and responsibilities that flowed from that was particularly important.

Leadership and authority came with age and the demonstration that an individual had the ability and wisdom to take on responsibility within the family and group. For women this was attached to family formation and taking on gender-based roles and responsibilities.

### 3.2 The impact of colonisation

Since colonisation there has been a range of settlement and dispossession, protection, assimilation and integration policies<sup>24</sup> that have resulted in “physical deprivation, decimation, dislocation and degradation on a massive scale”.<sup>25</sup> Aboriginal people have been, and continue to be, traumatised through the loss of their land, policies and practices that have taken away personal autonomy, the forced removal of children and the effects of institutionalised racism and discrimination that have resulted in an ongoing denial of basic human rights. The Northern Territory Emergency Response and income quarantining are current examples of practices that have been recognised by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission and the United Nations as taking away Aboriginal autonomy and being in breach of fundamental human rights.<sup>26</sup>

The legacy of trauma and disempowerment can be seen in the disadvantage and dysfunction that many communities experience today. In many communities that legacy is reflected in ongoing ‘lateral violence’ or harmful behaviours that Aboriginal people inflict on each other including bullying, shaming, physical and domestic violence.<sup>27</sup> It is also visible in the high suicide rate. This can be a response to feeling disempowered and powerless.

While it is clearly the case that modern mainstream Australian society has much to offer, and that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike are keen to make the most of that, it is also the case that the experience of colonisation, while part of our past, has had an ongoing effect on Aboriginal Australians.

Aboriginal people have been subject to the majority white, western culture and have been sidelined and required to ‘fit in’ with mainstream society. That has led to a process of transition and adaptation that, in many cases, has undermined traditional cultural and societal norms.

While some individuals and communities have demonstrated considerable resilience in the face of adversity and hardship, experiences of racism and discrimination, sexism, ageism, classism and poverty post-colonisation have undermined traditional social structures and have caused social and economic exclusion, disadvantage and dysfunction.<sup>28</sup>

23. Kirmayer et al 2009, p.64.

24. Eckermann et al 1992, pp.22–24.

25. Dudgeon et al 1990, p.75.

26. UN 2010.

27. AHRC 2011, pp.54 and 56.

28. Qld Govt. 2000, pp.60–63.

**Figure 4 – Adverse impact of western norms and post-colonisation experiences on Aboriginal people and culture<sup>29</sup>**

Traditional cultural strengths	Experiences of colonisation	Repercussions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strong kinship bonds and personal identification with family and clan</li> <li>– Prioritisation of family and community interests</li> <li>– Respect for Elders and Elder authority</li> <li>– Spirituality and connection with land and lore</li> <li>– Strong community structures and laws</li> <li>– Gender equality</li> <li>– Independence or self-sufficiency</li> <li>– Recognition of multiple literacies that went beyond language and included a broader range of skills, and</li> <li>– Holistic approaches to learning and development grounded in individual experience and the day to day transfer of knowledge and skills from older to younger members of the society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Racism</li> <li>Discrimination</li> <li>Sexism</li> <li>Ageism</li> <li>Classism</li> <li>Poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Physical and mental trauma</li> <li>– Loss of or removal from land</li> <li>– Family fragmentation</li> <li>– Breakdown of cultural systems and leadership structures</li> <li>– Loss of language and erosion of traditional cultural practice</li> <li>– Erosion of respect for and authority of Elders</li> <li>– Loss of cultural identity</li> <li>– Tension between Aboriginal notions of personhood, identity and wellbeing linked to being part of a group and mainstream individualism</li> <li>– Introduction of gender inequality</li> <li>– Reduction in female authority and participation in community leadership</li> <li>– Formal and informal exclusion from mainstream education</li> <li>– Devaluing of multiple literacies or skills, and</li> <li>– Unemployment or under-employment and increased reliance on welfare.</li> </ul>

A number of the factors relating to family connectedness, identity and cultural formation that researchers have identified as being linked to individual and community resilience have been undermined, including:<sup>30</sup>

- knowledge of language, history and tradition
- cultural and collective identity
- development of traditional skills and know-how
- maintenance of kinship and connection, and
- spirituality.

Due to the process of colonisation many Aboriginal people's connections with their culture and cultural identity, once a source of strength and pride, have been diluted or lost. Many Aboriginal people are trying to reclaim and reinvigorate those connections.

*“For individuals living in a remote community, many elements of tradition are embedded in their way of life; for urban Aboriginal people, many expressions of tradition must be actively sought and recreated.”<sup>31</sup>*

29. Draws on Qld Govt. 2000, p.59.

30. Kirmayer et al 2009, pp.78 and 102.

31. Kirmayer et al 2009, p.85.

Today Aboriginal people are the most socio-economically disadvantaged group in Australia. Many families and communities are caught in a cycle of poverty, with poor health, high levels of single parenthood, low education, high rates of unemployment, low incomes, poor access to essential services and high levels of involvement in the justice system.

**Table 3 – Summary of socio-economic indicators<sup>32</sup>**

Parameters (percentage of group population) <sup>33</sup>	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Population (2011)	278,038	270,332	10,595,670	10,093,347
Estimated life expectancy at birth (2005–2007)	73 years	67 years	83 years	79 years
Percentage of population 15 years and over with a Year 12 or equivalent qualification (2011)	25.7%	21.9%	51.1%	47.0%
Proportion 20–64 year olds with or working towards a post-school qualification (PSQ) (2008)	34%		58%	
– Employment to population ratio (2008)	54%		76%	
– Median household weekly income (adjusted for household composition) (2011)	\$991		\$1,241	
– Median personal weekly income (2011)	\$362		\$582	
– Children 0–14 years living in single parent families (2006)	42%		17%	
– Rate of young people aged 10–17 years in detention on an average day (# per 1,000 of relevant population) (2008–2009)	0.70	7.27	0.03	0.29
Number of people in detention (2010)	7,656		21,426	

Aboriginal students at all levels continue to experience worse education outcomes than non-Aboriginal students.<sup>34</sup> Aboriginal students have lower school attendance, retention and achievement than their non-Aboriginal peers across all age groups.<sup>35</sup> Their post-school qualification, labour force participation and employment rates are also lower.<sup>36</sup> Aboriginal employees are more likely to be employed in lower skilled occupations than non-Aboriginal employees, Aboriginal employees' incomes are likely to be lower,<sup>37</sup> their health is generally poorer, their life expectancy is lower and they are more likely to live in communities that are subject to social dysfunction.<sup>38</sup>

32. ABS. Cat. No. 2002.0, Tables I01a and I01b; SCRGSG 2011; AIHW Cat. No. JUV 6 2010, Table 4.2; ABS Cat. No. 4517.0, Table 2; Biddle & Yap 2010, pp. 149–150, Figs.9.2 and 9.3.

33. ABS. Cat. No. 4125.0, Tables 2, 7, 8, 14–17.

34. SCRGSP Overview 2007, p.4.

35. SCRGSP 2007, pp.13–14.

36. SCRGSP 2007, pp.14–16, 13.2, 13.11.

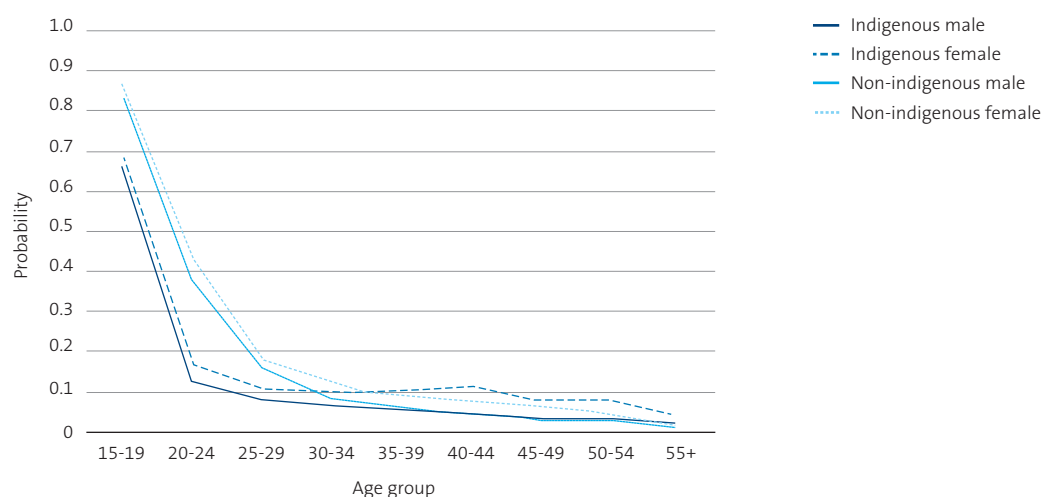
37. ABS Cat. No. 6287.0.

38. SCRGSP Overview, pp.12, 18–23; ABS Cat. No. 4704.0.

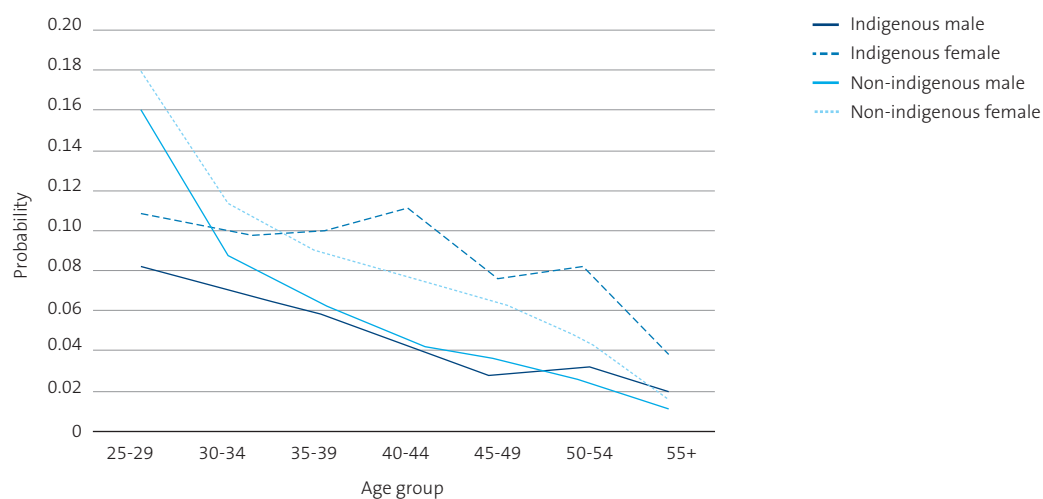


**Figure 5 – Comparative life course analysis based on 2006 Census Data (ABS 5% Census Sample File)<sup>39</sup>**

**Probability of participating in education including high school, VET and university age 15 years and over (2006)**



**Probability of participating in education age 25–55 years and over (2006)**



Research indicates that there are substantial benefits to completing Year 12 and are often higher for the Aboriginal population than the non-Aboriginal population. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal females tend to have higher attendance and participation rates than their male counterparts. Non-Aboriginal participation rates are higher up until the mid-thirties. The highest level of participation is in the 15–19 year age group. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participation rates decline over the 20–24 year age group. Differences in participation rates decline substantially from 25–29 years.

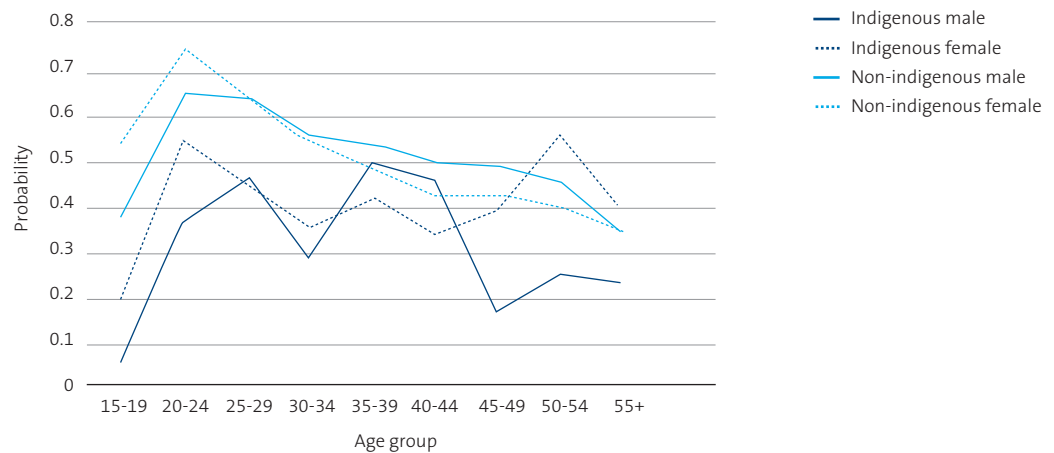
39. Biddle & Yap 2010.

Aboriginal women have a higher rate of participation in further education from their mid-thirties than Aboriginal men or non-Aboriginal men and women. This trend needs to be interpreted with caution, however, as anecdotal evidence suggests that participation rates include a mix of groups, including Aboriginal women who are participating in further education to:

- help them access employment or progress or redirect their career, and
- meet welfare eligibility conditions that require women with children over school age to be engaged in work or further education or training to be eligible for financial support.

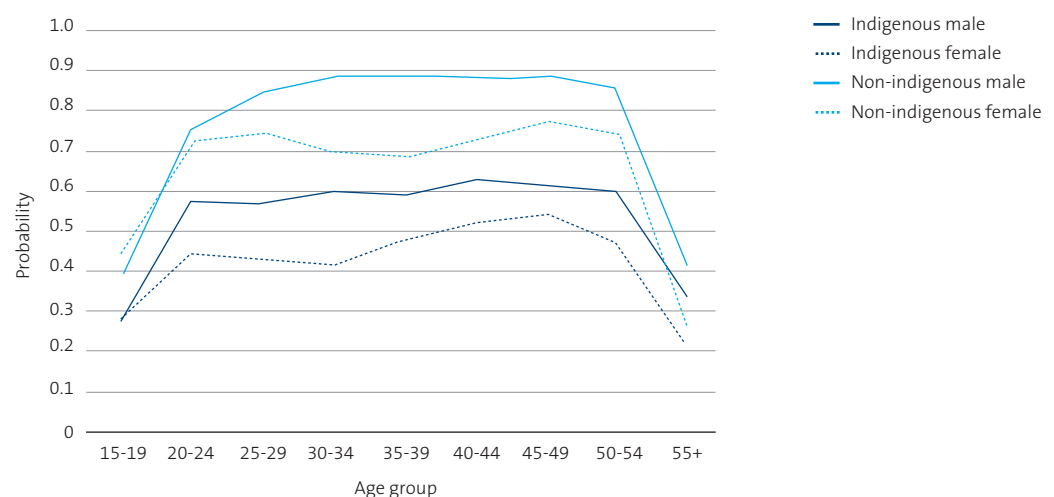
High non-attendance and non-completion rates give weight to that anecdotal evidence.

#### Probability of a tertiary student participating in university education (2006)



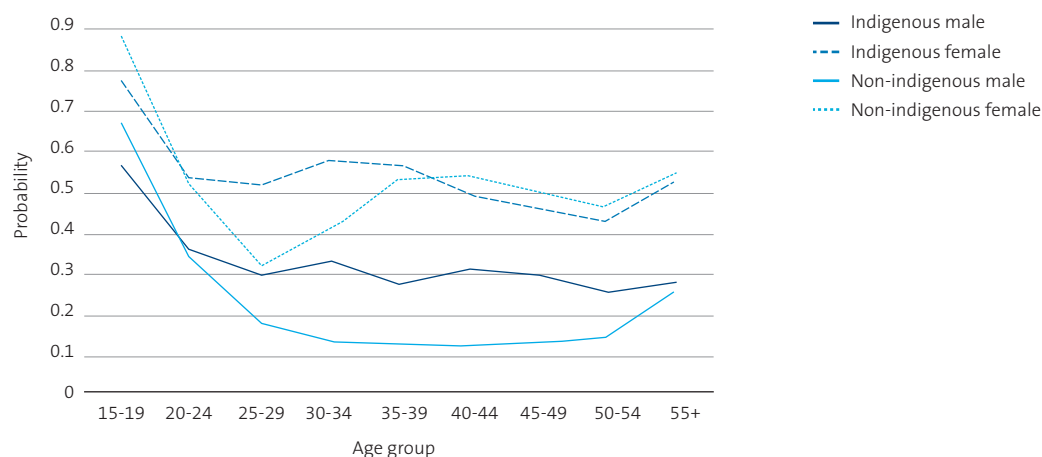
Non-Aboriginal male and female participation in university peaks between 20–24 years of age in the period immediately after school. Aboriginal participation is more volatile across the life course.

#### Probability of being employed aged 15 years and over (2006)



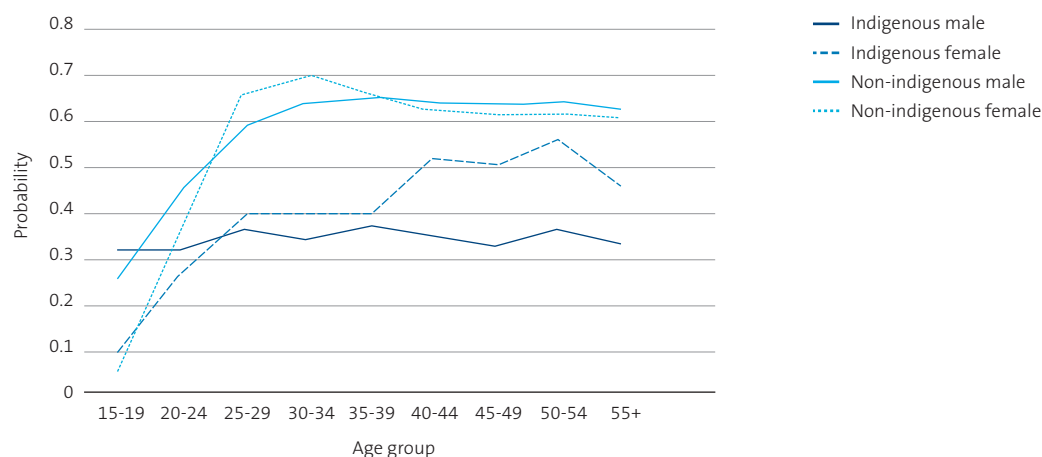
Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal males and females have a similar pattern of engagement in employment across the life course. There is a slightly earlier divergence between male and female participation rates in the Aboriginal population which is likely to be related to early family formation (higher fertility rates). The overall rate of participation for the Aboriginal population is lower than the non-Aboriginal population across the life course. The lower participation rate appears to be linked to education level.

### Probability of being employed part-time (as a percentage of employed population aged 15 years and over) (2006)



Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal females are more likely to be employed part-time than their male counterparts. Aboriginal Australians are more likely to be employed part-time than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Aboriginal people who have not completed Year 12 or a post-school qualification are more likely to work part-time than those who have completed such a qualification.

### Probability of being employed as a manager or professional (as a percentage of employed population aged 15 years and over) (2006)



Aboriginal Australians are less likely to be employed as a manager or professional than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. The lower participation rate appears to be linked to education level.

In comparison to their non-Aboriginal peers, Aboriginal people lack political, economic and social power or status. Although more Aboriginal people are pursuing and succeeding in a range of careers, in general Aboriginal people continue to be subject to systemic bias and discrimination that inhibits their ability to access and leverage mainstream education and employment.

Aboriginal women have had to try to sustain themselves and their families in the face of poverty, disadvantage, racism and sexism that has come as a consequence of colonisation.

*“Indigenous people are not represented in... general employment. They are mainly found in ‘identified’ positions in government departments, related agencies and Indigenous community organisations. If they do find employment, Indigenous people are... often relegated to less skilled jobs and are subjected to discrimination, racist attitudes and practices by staff and their employers.”<sup>40</sup>*

Although there is growing understanding of the historical connection between the past treatment and current status of Aboriginal people (eg through the Bringing Them Home Report,<sup>41</sup> the National Apology to the Stolen Generations and the recent focus on Closing the Gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal life outcomes) mainstream Australian society is still learning about and trying to understand that legacy.

There continues to be a lack of understanding and respect for Aboriginal identity and culture and a tendency to acknowledge Aboriginal culture in a superficial or tokenistic rather than a substantive way.

Institutional and community based discrimination and racism is still an everyday occurrence. Surveys conducted as part of a national study into the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians in 2010 indicated that around 7 in 10 Australians believe that the prejudice towards Aboriginal people is ‘very high’ or ‘fairly high’. While both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents agree that previous race-based policies continue to affect some Aboriginal people today, in general non-Aboriginal respondents identified Aboriginal people as being responsible for their own disadvantage.<sup>42</sup>

The result is that Aboriginal people continue to experience a number of challenges on a day to day basis:

Lack of understanding of or respect for cultural <b>Difference</b>	Reflected in a lack of understanding and accommodation of the different frames of reference and life course decisions that Aboriginal people make (eg relating to early family formation, prioritisation of family and community in making education, employment and career decisions).
Socio-economic <b>Disadvantage</b>	Reflected in poor Aboriginal health, housing, low life expectancy, low economic participation or income levels.
Community and family <b>Dysfunction</b>	Reflected in things such as the high incidence of domestic and family violence, alcohol and drug misuse and imprisonment.

### 3.3 The experience and response of Aboriginal women to colonisation and its legacy

The dual experience of racism and sexism has had a particular impact on Aboriginal women.

It has meant that Aboriginal women have felt the adverse impacts of racism and poverty and that they have also been affected by western gender-based norms that have eroded their positional authority and status with respect to Aboriginal men. Where western gender-based roles have been adopted within Aboriginal community structures this has meant that Aboriginal women have tended to move from having an equal status with their male peers to being considered to be both *“less than Aboriginal men and inferior to white women”*.<sup>43</sup>

40. White 2007, p.54.

41. Commonwealth 1997.

42. The Australian Reconciliation Barometer 2010, [www.reconciliation.org.au/home/archived-pages/barometer2010](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/archived-pages/barometer2010)

43. White 2007, p.47.

During the protection and assimilation policy period (1890s–1960s) Aboriginal women’s ability to fulfil their traditional roles was often taken from them as they were removed from their land and sent away to work or allocated to mission land. They became reliant on government or mission food supplies, their children were removed or placed in children’s dormitories, education was provided through mission schools rather than through day to day family instruction and Aboriginal people were forbidden to speak their language or practice their culture.<sup>44</sup>

Aboriginal women have had to try to sustain themselves and their families in the face of poverty, disadvantage, racism and sexism that has come as a consequence of colonisation. The legacy of that is that Aboriginal women today have to deal with the effects of poor health, low life expectancy, drug and alcohol misuse, domestic and family violence, lateral community violence, high rates of youth and adult incarceration, single parenthood (often linked to young or early parenthood, family breakdown, parental incarceration or early death), family and community trauma and suicide that affect their communities. Many Aboriginal women live with this every day, generally without respite.

Aboriginal women also have to deal with institutionalised racism, discrimination and sexism, particularly in the workplace. In many cases this discrimination is so embedded in day to day practices that organisations and employers are not aware of how they limit the involvement and career progression of Aboriginal women in employment. In other cases, it is identified as being an Aboriginal worker issue rather than a workplace issue.

Many Aboriginal women have noted that the experience of discrimination and sexism is not limited to mainstream employment and career development opportunities but is also particularly prevalent within the Aboriginal service and employment sector, where less qualified Aboriginal men are often given precedence over their more qualified female peers.

Aboriginal women have had to learn how to live and survive within two cultures, trying to maintain their own cultural identity and strength while learning how to negotiate and operate within the mainstream culture. They need to be able to “*talk white but think black*”.<sup>45</sup>

Today the role that Aboriginal women are required to fill has not changed substantially from the one that they have traditionally held within their families and communities, although the challenge involved in fulfilling that role has increased significantly. At the same time, the resources that women have available to them to fulfil their role and meet those challenges have declined. Gendered models of leadership have undermined their positional authority and the breakdown of traditional family and cultural networks has reduced their ability to draw strength from their cultural identity or access family and community resources for support.

**Figure 6 – Aboriginal women’s paradox**

Role – maintained	Challenge – increased	Resources – declined
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– resource gatherer (income earner)</li> <li>– carer</li> <li>– teacher</li> <li>– spiritual guide</li> <li>– family and community leader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– institutional racism and discrimination</li> <li>– poor health</li> <li>– poor or overcrowded housing</li> <li>– low employment or income</li> <li>– alcohol and drug misuse</li> <li>– domestic violence</li> <li>– high imprisonment</li> <li>– single parenthood</li> <li>– low life expectancy</li> <li>– increased care responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– unreliable or inadequate resources to meet basic needs</li> <li>– reduced positional authority (due to redefined gender structures)</li> <li>– weakened cultural identity</li> <li>– reduced family or support network (due to social dislocation and or dysfunction)</li> </ul>

44. White 2007, p.47.

45. Garvey 2000 quoted in White 2007, p.65.

The consequence for this generation of Aboriginal women is that they not only need to learn, work and live within two cultures, they also need to deal with the challenges of sexism, discrimination, disadvantage and dysfunction.

*“[W]e need to walk in both worlds, retaining our Aboriginal culture, our ways of being, our special sense of humour whilst functioning successfully in a predominantly white world.”<sup>46</sup>*

While operating in two cultures is a challenge, it can also bring great benefits. Being able to draw on the wisdom, traditions and resources of two cultures creates the possibilities of different and better outcomes for both individuals and the communities in which they live.

Many Aboriginal women see education and employment as a key step towards being able to operate successfully in both cultures.<sup>47</sup>

*“For many years, Aboriginal women have sought education and employment to build better lives for themselves.*

*We know that education is critical for an individual’s success in life. If you don’t do well at school, you can’t get a good job or take up further studies and subsequently your career prospects may be severely limited. This may translate into less disposable income and reduced quality of life. But having a good job or career is more than having enough money or a good lifestyle. Education endows people with important life skills, personal confidence and aspirations to help them reach their full human potential.*

*Education remains the best investment for developing individuals as significant contributors to our rapidly changing and complex world.*

*In Australia, Aboriginal education has been identified as a priority within the Council of Australian Government’s Closing the Gap Strategy. However, the separate educational needs and aspirations of Aboriginal women and girls have not been considered. Past research has focused on examining the educational experiences of Aboriginal students generally and comparing the educational achievements of Aboriginal students with non-Aboriginal students. Information about the experiences of Aboriginal women and girls have been sadly lacking—their voices have often been excluded from important dialogue and decision-making.*

*Today, Aboriginal women and girls continue to engage in educational opportunities at a greater rate than Aboriginal males as a pathway to jobs and careers. Many Aboriginal women are returning to study after having families to increase their job opportunities, to obtain recognised qualifications and to increase their confidence and skills. But they are not just doing it for themselves. They want their kids to have the same opportunities as other Australian children, to be safe and healthy, to grow up strong in their cultures whilst finding a respected place in our modern world.*

*Aboriginal women are the mothers of tomorrow’s leaders. When we invest in the education of Australian Aboriginal women and girls we are investing in the leadership capacity of future generations and a more inclusive Australian society.”*

**Professor Nereda White, Director of The Centre for Indigenous Education and Research, Australian Catholic University**

46. White 2007, p.19.

47. White 2007, p.54.

Balancing family and community responsibilities, negotiating mainstream education and employment systems and dealing with gender and race based discrimination often makes it difficult for Aboriginal women and girls to pursue their education and career goals.

Aboriginal women can be limited in their ability to access employment and pursue their career goals because of a lack of education or formal qualifications, family obligations, parenting and child care responsibilities, geographical location (which is often linked to the desire to remain close to family and community), racism and discrimination.<sup>48</sup>

*“[C]areer paths are not easily achieved by women from minority groups trying to succeed in a dominant society.”<sup>49</sup>*

*“White women are limited by a glass ceiling, which can be broken, but black women face an unbreakable plexiglass.”<sup>50</sup>*

Non-Aboriginal women can also be a party to maintaining the systemic racism and discrimination against Aboriginal women, or keeping the ‘plexiglass’ in place.<sup>51</sup>

Although few in number, Aboriginal women and girls aspire to, and have achieved, remarkable outcomes and are holding responsible positions in the mainstream economy. These women are important role models.

Aboriginal women consulted as part of this research consistently noted the strength that comes when women are able to link into their cultural identity and draw on their culture and cultural networks effectively to help them to operate in two cultures successfully.

48. White 2007, p.56.

49. White 2007, p.62.

50. Simpson 1996, p.186.

51. Simpson 1996, p.186.

## 4. How do mainstream education, employment and career development systems inhibit Aboriginal women and girls from realising their potential?

Australian education, employment and career development systems are largely designed to support mainstream participation. They do not tend to take into account or accommodate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples' life experiences and the frames of reference that many Aboriginal people have or the different life course decisions that they often make as a result of those different experiences and perspectives.

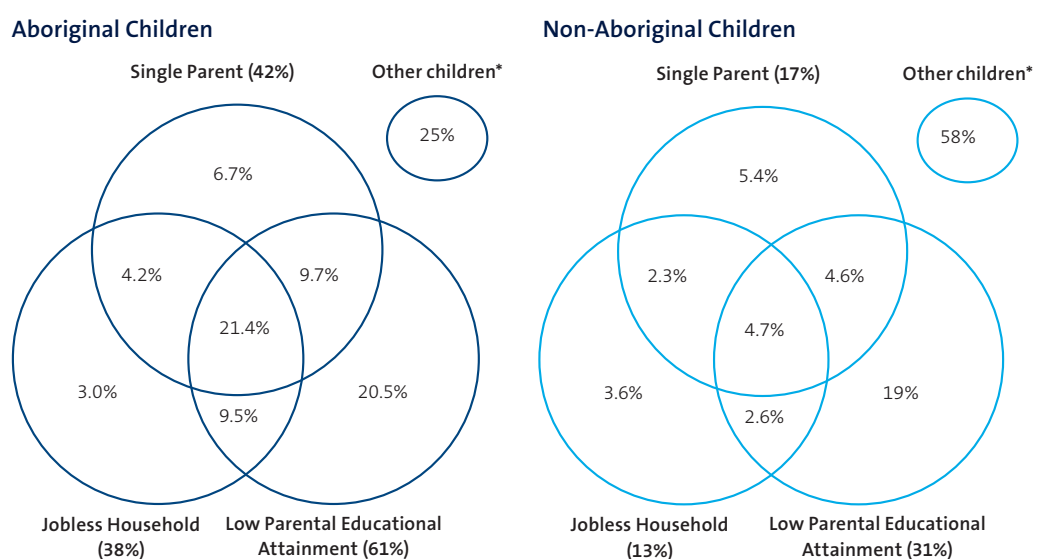
This section explores how the underlying design and operation of mainstream education, employment and career development systems (and supporting policy and program frameworks) inhibit Aboriginal women and girls from engaging in education and work. It explores how the different life experiences and frames of reference that many Aboriginal people bring influence the life course decisions that they make. It also identifies a range of other factors that hold Aboriginal women and girls back from achieving the goals and aspirations that they hold for themselves, their families and communities.

Researchers have identified a number of factors that influence Aboriginal engagement in the education system. Some of those factors relate to Aboriginal people's historical exclusion from education both formally under past regulation and informally based on socio-economic disadvantage and cross-cultural and institutional barriers such as those described in Section 3.<sup>52</sup>

Many Aboriginal students have a very different lived experience to that of their non-Aboriginal peers. They also often have a different view of the mainstream education system and what it has to offer.

Many Aboriginal children live in single parent families where the adults have low formal education levels/ are unemployed. The life course norms or options that they see as being available to them are often limited to the home and community context in which they live. The benefit of school, the connection between school and work, the value of further education or training and the ability to access and maintain steady employment and develop a career can sometimes be difficult to see. Where those benefits are seen, the ability to balance the challenges and responsibilities that come with living in a disadvantaged home environment while trying to study can be particularly difficult.

**Figure 7 – Distinctions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children's lived experience (percentage of child population aged 0–14 years)<sup>53</sup>**



\* Other children are those who do not live in a family or household with any of the three attributes listed (single parenthood, low parental educational attainment or joblessness).

52. See Doyle and Hill 2008 for a more detailed discussion of these factors.

53. Biddle & Yap 2010, pp.149–150, Figs. 9.2 and 9.3.



Aboriginal women and girls can face particular challenges when they engage with mainstream education linked to early family formation, the assumption of extended carer responsibilities linked to poor parental health, family fragmentation or dysfunction and lateral and domestic and family violence.

How individuals manage those challenges is influenced by the personal and cultural values and skills that they might apply when making decisions. The way that Aboriginal women and girls view and engage in mainstream education, employment and career systems is reflective of their lived experience and the personal and cultural values and skills that they bring to that endeavour.

Many Aboriginal students have a very different lived experience to that of their non-Aboriginal peers.

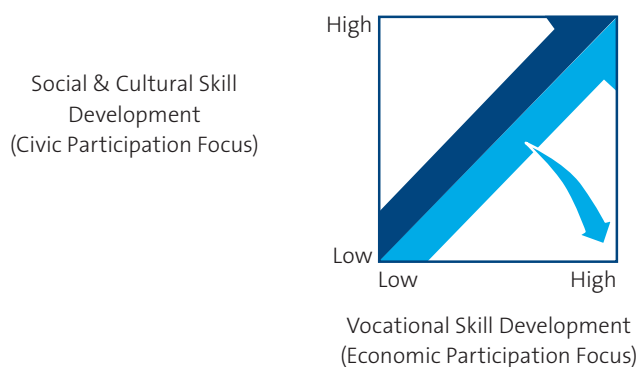
#### 4.1 Mainstream education, employment and career systems

Mainstream Australian society places a high priority on economic participation. Although education is about more than preparing students for work,<sup>54</sup> the primary lens through which (particularly secondary) education tends to be viewed and student success measured is through its ability to prepare students to make a successful transition from school into further study or work.

In mainstream Australian society getting a 'good education' is generally linked to being able to get a good job and earn a good income.

While schooling is structured to help students to develop the attitudes, values, knowledge and skills that they need to operate effectively in society, in practice the primary focus of mainstream education tends to be on developing the academic and vocational skills required to participate in the workforce.

**Figure 8 – Economic bias in mainstream education system design and focus**

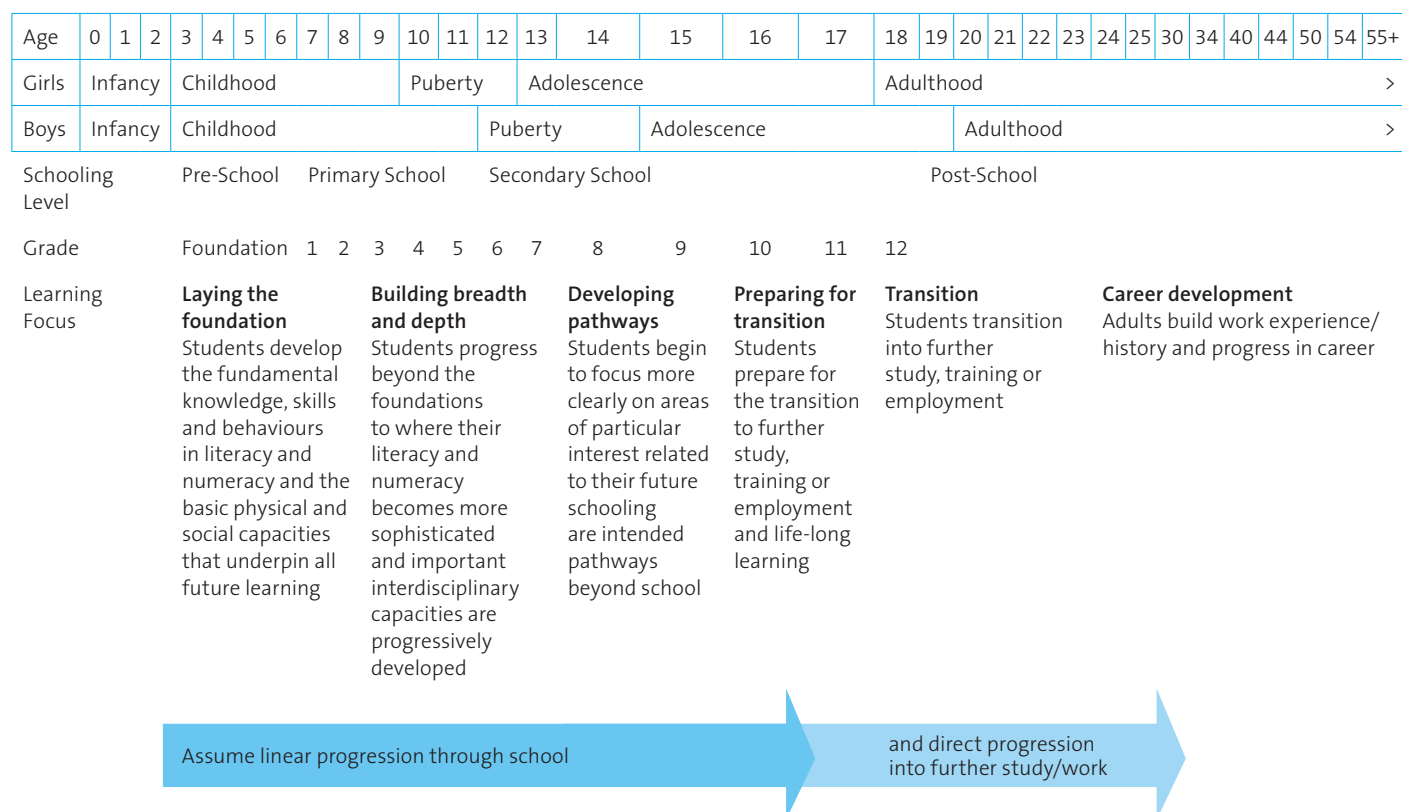


*Western education system has a bias towards developing the knowledge and skills needed to make the transition from school into further study/work*

Education tends to be viewed as a linear pathway through school and into vocational training, further education or work. Policy and programs aimed at supporting individuals to make the transition into further study and or work tend to be based on this assumption and so tend to be targeted at people in the 18–24 year age group. Programs targeting older age groups tend to either assume that those individuals have exited school early or are framed as supporting career development, re-training or re-entry into the workforce.

54. CAF 2007, p.27.

**Figure 9 – Linear pathway model**



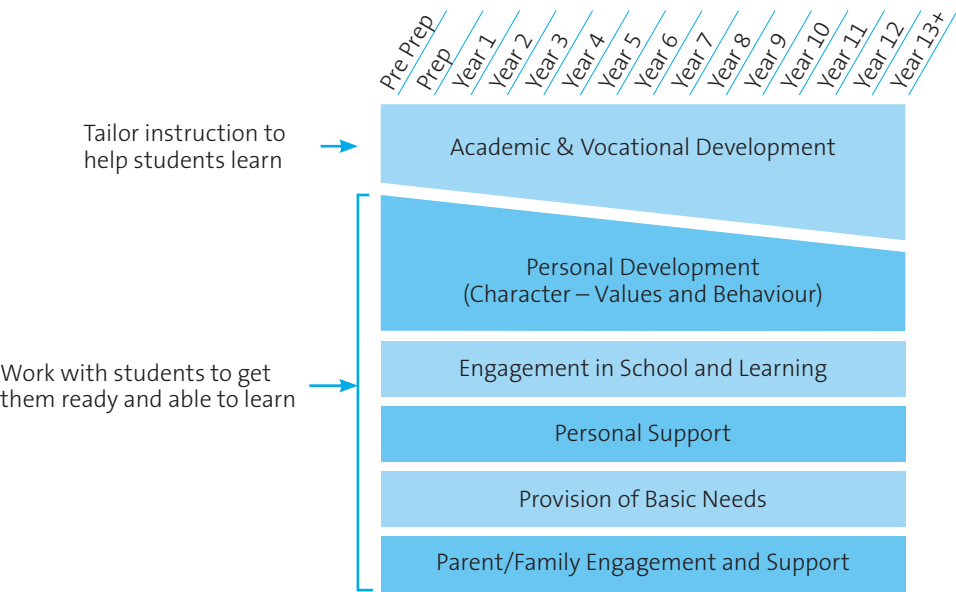
While the linear trajectory applies for many students, it is often not true for students that come from disadvantaged backgrounds or who otherwise struggle to engage at school and negotiate the mainstream education system. It also often does not apply for women who choose to have children in early adulthood rather than defer family formation until after they have completed study and or established themselves in work. Given that Aboriginal women often have children at a younger age, the bias in the education system towards later family formation has a particular impact on them.

The focus of the schooling and further education system tends to be on individual achievement within standard mainstream (English literacy and numeracy based) learning constructs.

Many schools do try to make sure that school curriculum is culturally and contextually appropriate and that courses are structured to support different learning styles and academic and vocational preferences. Their success in doing that varies. Tertiary education providers have not generally tended to be as successful in tailoring their curriculum in that way.

In many cases, the mainstream schooling system and further education is not structured to provide the holistic support that students from disadvantaged or non-English speaking backgrounds need to engage effectively and learn.

**Figure 10 – Holistic education model**



In the absence of such support students can disengage from learning and exit the education system. At a tertiary level a number of further education providers (both TAFEs and universities) have tried to address this by setting up Aboriginal Student Support Units to help Aboriginal students to navigate the system and help them to access support to complete their certificates, diplomas and degrees.

## 4.2 Barriers to engagement in education and employment and career development

There is a range of factors that influence how Aboriginal women and girls view and engage in education and work and how they build their careers.

### 4.2.1 Peer, family and community influence

Research indicates that Aboriginal students (both male and female) often form a positive or negative attitude towards school early in life. Those attitudes are likely to be influenced by:

- students' experience of school (whether they feel safe, cared for and respected)
- their self-assessed ability and formal test scores or performance
- their motivational response to those assessments, and
- peer and community factors that influence their experiences, attitudes and behaviours.<sup>55</sup>

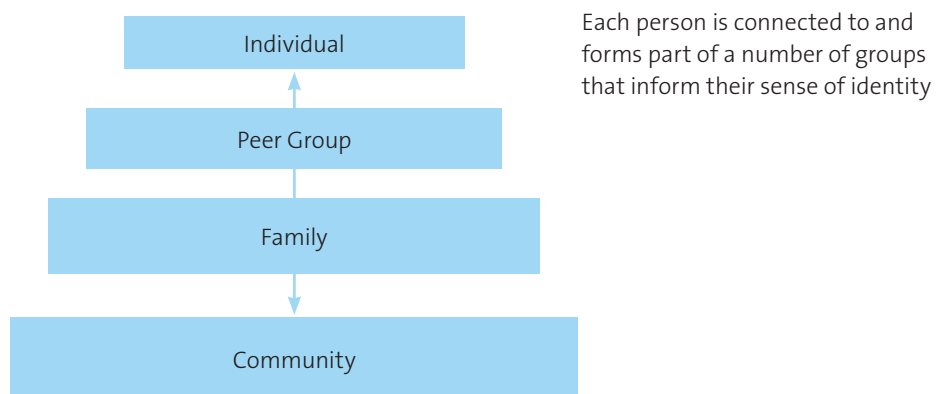
Family and cultural factors can play a significant role in each of those areas.

As noted in Section 3, Aboriginal culture and identity have historically been based on strong kinship bonds and personal identification with family and clan. Notions of personhood, identity and wellbeing have tended to emphasise the interconnectedness that individuals have with each other. That focus on connectedness has important implications for how Aboriginal people see the world and the 'mental models' that they apply when assessing information and making life course decisions.

At a very basic level it can influence how Aboriginal people value and balance individual versus group interests, with Aboriginal people often tending to place greater weight on family and community considerations.<sup>56</sup>

Family and peer group influences appear to have a strong influence on how Aboriginal students, and Aboriginal girls in particular, engage in education.

**Figure 11 – Peer, family and community influence framework**



Research suggests that Aboriginal students are more likely to attend school when their parents have a positive attitude towards education and encourage them to attend and try hard. Research also suggests that students in early secondary school are more likely to remain in school and complete

55. Dudgeon et al 1990, pp.78–79.

56. Dudgeon et al 1990, p.78. As with all cultures, different Aboriginal people define their cultural and personal identity in different ways. As a result any generalised description of identity will not be reflective of all Aboriginal people. Having said that, it is helpful for non-Aboriginal people to try to get a sense of some of the key similarities and differences between the ways that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people “see” the world and the effect that has on the priorities that they place on things and the decisions that they make. The discussion in this Section is provided on that basis.

Year 12 if they have a positive attitude towards school and they attend a school where their peers have a positive attitude towards school and expect to complete Year 12.<sup>57</sup>

The importance of staying connected with their family and peer group can mean that students are less prepared or comfortable leaving their community to attend school, pursue further education or access work opportunities. In some cases it can lead individuals to forego career opportunities to remain close to, or return to, their home community. This issue takes on a particular significance when the student lives in a remote or regional community.

It can also lead students to 'cap' their aspirations or performance at school and not pursue further education or career options on the basis that they do not want to build up a knowledge or skill base that distances or moves them away from their family or peer group.

In the course of undertaking this research a number of Aboriginal women described situations where young girls had mirrored the behaviour of their peers in becoming pregnant and or dropping out of school.

The need to meet home or family based responsibilities can also influence Aboriginal women's and girls' ability to participate in education and work. For example, girls can often be called on to provide support at home to help look after younger siblings or help care for parents and family members who are unwell or need support to negotiate mainstream service systems (eg because they do not speak English or are not familiar or comfortable dealing with those systems). Broken attendance at school because of this can make it difficult to learn, reduce performance and inhibit further education, employment and career options.

The need to support the family by exiting school early and moving into (often low paid) work or staying in lower paid positions rather than pursue further education can also 'cap' Aboriginal women's and girls' options. An example of how these dynamics come into play would be when a woman from a regional area who has a family takes a low-paying job and rejects opportunities for skills training or career advancement (eg a course being run in a city) because it would mean being away from her children who cannot reasonably be looked after by anyone else while she's gone.

Researchers note that Aboriginal women and girls can face a significant conflict between retaining their family and cultural connection and "getting ahead in the modern world".<sup>58</sup>

*"Even confident and academically able students, who have coped with most pressures on them, find peer group pressure an insurmountable pressure. It means rejection (by) the group they identify with. ...Not standing out in the group, but sharing and moving as one, is a strong emphasis in Aboriginal society and one particularly relevant (when considering) mainstream classroom expectations. Aboriginal people who achieve individual success as defined by white mainstream (educational) values can at times be seen as a threat".<sup>59</sup>*

Understanding the importance of family and peer group dynamics in this way puts into perspective how important it is to work at a broader family and community level when seeking to support Aboriginal students to engage in education and access further education, employment and career development opportunities. It also reinforces how important it is to work not only at an individual but also at a peer group or cohort level when working with Aboriginal students and to look for ways to allow students to stay connected with their peer group.<sup>60</sup>

It also emphasises the importance of providing support to help Aboriginal women and girls to maintain and or reinforce their cultural identity and connections with their families and communities so that they can achieve their education and career goals without having to sacrifice their cultural ties.<sup>61</sup>

57. Biddle 2010, pp.18–22.

58. Kenny 2002 quoted in White 2007, p.63.

59. Dudgeon et al 1990, p.81.

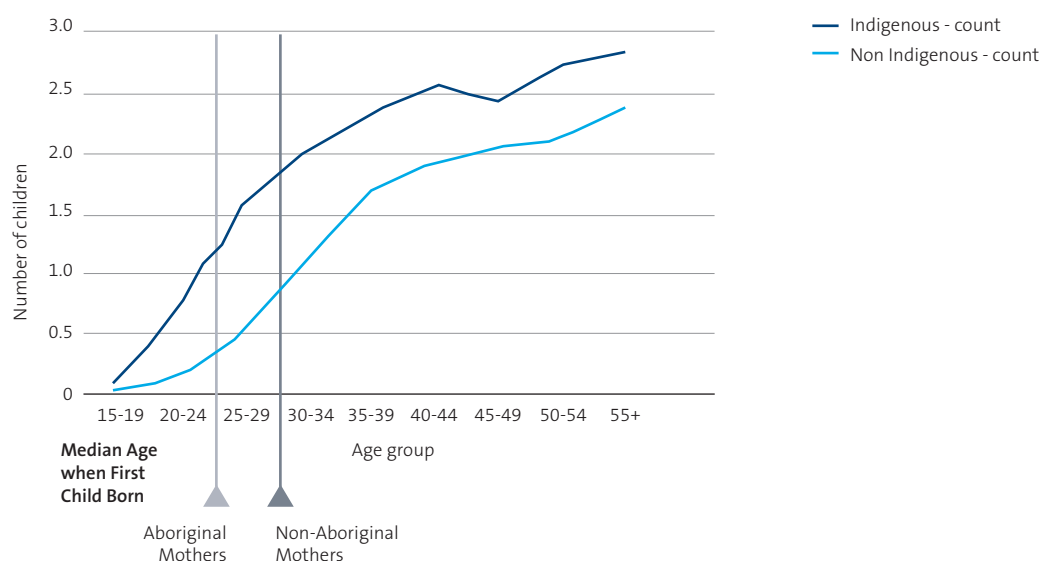
60. Dudgeon et al 1990, p.79.

61. White 2007, p.63.

#### 4.2.2 Early family formation and carer responsibilities

As a population, Aboriginal women tend to have larger families than their non-Aboriginal peers.<sup>62</sup> They also tend to have children earlier, rather than defer family formation until after they have completed study and or established themselves in work.

**Figure 12 – Life choices and family formation (number of children born to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women on average up until current age 2006)<sup>63</sup>**



The move to early family formation often means that Aboriginal women defer their move into further education or work until their children have started (or in some cases completed all or part of their schooling). The decision to remain at home and care for children is often influenced by a range of personal, cultural and economic factors.

The challenges associated with balancing family work and or study responsibilities can make it difficult for Aboriginal women to engage in further study and work. They can also hold women back from pursuing management level positions.

While the above challenges apply to many families, researchers have noted that the challenge can be particularly significant for Aboriginal women who often need to balance extended family and kinship responsibilities.<sup>64</sup>

Aboriginal women will often choose to prioritise taking care of their children (and sometimes the children of their siblings) over participating in study and work. The cost and availability of culturally appropriate child care can play a significant role in this decision. Researchers have noted that the lack of appropriate, affordable child care is a major factor in Aboriginal women's low participation in the workforce and has implications for their ability to participate in further education and pursue career development and leadership opportunities.<sup>65</sup>

Statistics indicate that Aboriginal women have a higher rate of participation in further education from their mid-thirties (after they have had their children and those children have started school) than Aboriginal men or non-Aboriginal men and women.<sup>66</sup>

62. Biddle & Yap 2010, pp.31 and 33, ABS Cat. No. 4704.0 2010.

63. Biddle & Yap 2010, p.32, Fig.3.3 (2006).

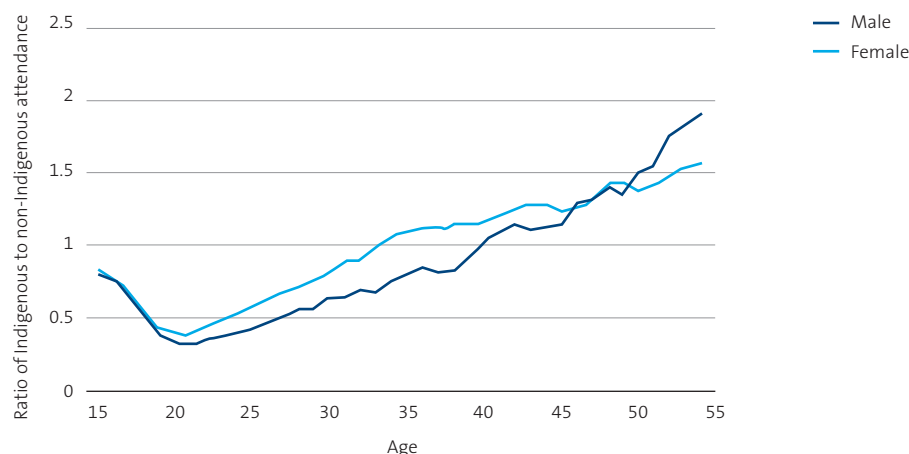
64. White 2007, p.61.

65. White 2007, p.57.

66. ABS. Cat. No. 4125.0, Tables 14–15.

**Figure 13 – Ratio of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal education participation by age (2006)<sup>67</sup>**

(A ratio of less than 1 indicates that on average Aboriginal participation is less than that of non-Aboriginal participation, a ratio of more than 1 indicates that on average Aboriginal participation is higher).



**Note:** Because of the relatively small Indigenous populations for certain age groups who have completed Year 12, the above graph represents a three-year moving average. For example, the data point for those who are aged 20 represents the difference for those who are aged 19, 20 and 21.

**Source:** Customised calculations based on the 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

The above statistics need to be interpreted with caution, however, as anecdotal evidence suggests that participation rates include a mix of groups, including Aboriginal women who are participating in further education to:

- help them access employment or progress or redirect their career, and
- meet welfare eligibility conditions that require women with children over school age to be engaged in work or further education or training to be eligible for financial support.

High non-attendance and non-completion rates give weight to that anecdotal evidence.

The move to enrol in further education or training to access welfare support often reflects the resourcefulness of women in supporting their families. It needs to be viewed in the context of how difficult it can be to balance the benefit of working long hours in a low paid job(s) and paying for child care. Often the combined financial and social trade-offs that families face at low income levels can make the decision to access welfare rather than move into or remain in work a pragmatic choice.

Understanding these factors can help explain why the provision of more flexible education models and access to affordable transport and culturally appropriate child care can make such a difference to women's ability to access further education and pursue work and career opportunities.

The fact that some Aboriginal women have children at a particularly young age means that it is important for them to be able to access the support that they need as young parents to parent well and to stay engaged with the education system so that they do not 'close off' their future learning and employment options.

67. Biddle 2010, p.15, Fig.6.

### **4.2.3 Extended family obligations**

Aboriginal people usually have strong links to their extended family. Where Aboriginal people complete further education and or move into higher paying employment the responsibilities that they have within their extended family can mean that they will often be called on to spread that income across not only their own immediate family but also their broader extended family base. As a result, despite their income increasing they remain unable to build up financial savings or establish an asset or capital base in the same way that other higher earning workers might be able to do.

In addition to that, Aboriginal people often do not have the same understanding of the financial system and are not as well placed as their non-Aboriginal peers to access the financial management advice that could help them to manage and grow their available financial resources. Although financial programs are available to assist Aboriginal people to manage their money, those services tend to be based around basic budgeting rather than investment and money management strategies (eg in relation to tax, investments, superannuation and insurance) aimed at building long-term financial stability and (inter-generational) wealth. Where financial products and advice are provided they often do not take into account the different frames of reference that Aboriginal people bring to family and caring responsibilities and the realities that they currently face in terms of reduced life expectancy and health compared to their non-Aboriginal peers (they are not designed in a culturally and contextually appropriate way).

The above factors mean that Aboriginal people generally are not as well placed as their non-Aboriginal peers to leverage their earnings. That has implications for their ability to break out of the low income or poverty cycle and build their financial security.

Given that women often earn less than men and have a shortened employment life span because they take time out of the workforce to raise children and often bear the bulk of the responsibility for child care, the above factors can have a particular impact on their ability to achieve financial security. This is particularly true for single mothers.

Although there are many programs and services that are provided to help Aboriginal people at the lowest end of the income spectrum, there is not as much support available to help Aboriginal people who are moving up the income cycle to link into the sorts of information and services that their non-Aboriginal peers take for granted. Anecdotal evidence indicates that there is often a 'pull' effect within communities whereby individuals and families build up financial assets and then (re)invest in their communities as well as acting as positive examples or role models.

Understanding that dynamic, and the gaps that currently exist in the access that Aboriginal people have to mainstream information and services, can help to identify areas for further investment and potential market development.

### **4.2.4 Access to information and networks**

Often Aboriginal people lack exposure to many of the life experiences and formal and informal information networks that mainstream Australians take for granted. Hence, they often are not aware of many of the education and career options available to them and or do not have access to the information or networks that they need to be able to pursue those options as effectively as their non-Aboriginal peers.



As noted in the introduction to Section 4, in many Aboriginal families parents and adult family members have limited education, some have low literacy and may or may not be involved in the workforce. As a result, the breadth of life and career options that Aboriginal children are exposed to is often limited to a relatively narrow range of (often low income) careers. Aboriginal students often have limited career based role models within their family and community.<sup>68</sup> They also often do not have access to the same sorts of information and networks that are available to their non-Aboriginal counterparts to help them negotiate mainstream education and employment systems and build their careers.

The fact that many Aboriginal women and girls are still the first members of their family to complete school or enrol in tertiary education means that they do not have anyone in their immediate family who can help them navigate the transition through school and into further study or talk to them about what it is like to go to university. They often need to work out how the education system works and how to navigate it on their own. They also often need to move to a new place that is away from their family and community to access further education and employment opportunities, taking them away from their established support networks.

Researchers have identified the lack of access to information as a significant barrier to women being able to complete further study and proactively manage their careers.<sup>69</sup>

Many Aboriginal women and girls have noted that the experience of participating in tertiary study can be a particularly isolating experience. The need to balance home, work and study requirements can be challenging, as can the experience of coming into what is often a foreign learning environment and being the only Aboriginal face in the room. The above observations can also apply to the experience that Aboriginal women have within the workplace and the challenges that they often face as they develop and manage their careers.

Aboriginal women consulted as part of this research who had participated in tertiary study consistently noted the importance of having peer and family networks that they could draw on for support during their study and the value of being able to establish personal and professional networks to draw on as they negotiated the workforce and managed their careers. Such networks can provide material, economic and informational resources, assist with problem solving and provide emotional and other types of support in everyday life and in times of need.<sup>70</sup>

They also noted the important role that university based Aboriginal Support Units had played in their being able to complete their studies and the benefits of being able to access bridging and away from base courses to help them to make the transition into further study and balance their home, work and study responsibilities.

Understanding the above factors can help explain why it is important to 'build in' opportunities for Aboriginal girls to get exposure to a range of career options early in their education to help them to set their life and career goals.

It also demonstrates the importance of making sure that Aboriginal women and girls have access to information and support networks to help them identify, access and negotiate education and training options to help them pursue those goals, as well as personal and professional networks to support them as they progress through their study and build their careers.

68. White 2007, p.64.

69. White 2007, p.72.

70. Kirmayer et al 2009, p.74.

## 5. How can Aboriginal women and girls be supported to negotiate and leverage those systems?

This section explores the role that positive life goals and aspirations and strength in cultural identity can play in helping Aboriginal women and girls to operate across two cultures and better negotiate mainstream systems.

The importance of maintaining family and community connections and the need to take on extended care and support responsibilities and deal with issues such as poverty, domestic and family violence, lateral community violence and single parenthood, have often meant that Aboriginal women who have made the transition into further study and work have taken a non-linear path through education. They have tended to view education as a resource to be tapped in and out of to help them to realise their personal and career goals while balancing their involvement in education with their changing family, work and community responsibilities.

Many women have exited school early and returned to study through bridging courses or deferred making the transition into further study until later in their family or work life as a means of helping them to progress or change their career.

Compared to their non-Aboriginal peers, Aboriginal women tend to enter tertiary study at a later point in their life course; they often enter through bridging, enabling or tailored courses and adopt more flexible modes of study to allow them to balance their home, work and study responsibilities.

**Table 4 – Attributes of typical Aboriginal tertiary students<sup>71</sup>**

- more likely to be female
- likely to be older than a non-Aboriginal student
- less likely to have previous qualifications
- more likely to be admitted through special entry schemes
- more likely to study in a mixed mode capacity (mixture of internal and external study such as away from base courses)
- likely to take longer to complete their degree.

The drive for many Aboriginal women undertaking further education appears to be grounded in their having a clear vision of what they want to achieve and a determination to work hard to make that happen.

Many women who have completed further study have noted the importance of having:

- pride in their culture and identity
- strong, female role models to draw on
- the aspiration and self-belief to pursue their goals
- the support and encouragement of immediate and or extended family and or community members to do that
- a network of peers that they can draw on for support.

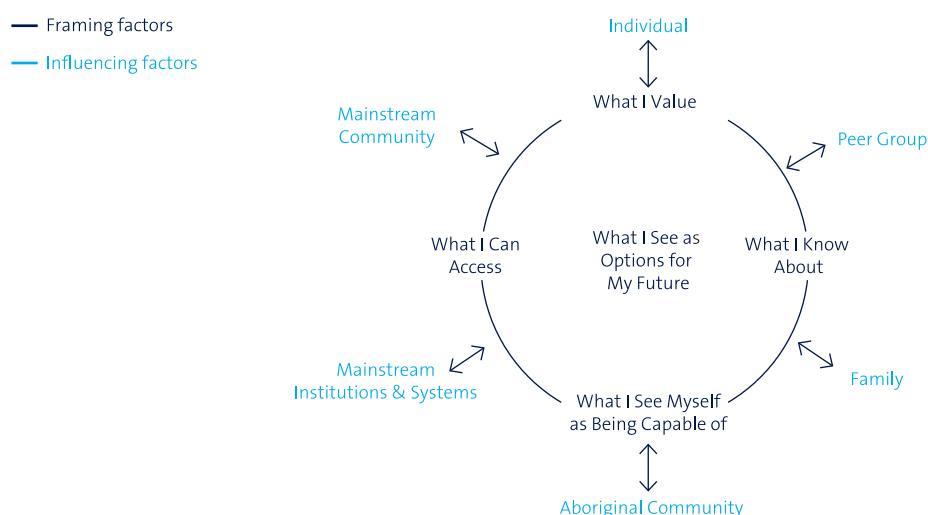
### 5.1 Tapping into and fostering Aboriginal women's and girls' aspirations

How Aboriginal women and girls view and engage in education and employment appears both to influence, and be influenced by, how they frame their life goals and aspirations and the role that they see education and work as playing in helping them to achieve those goals.

How Aboriginal women and girls (and people generally) frame their goals and aspirations is usually linked to what they see as being options for their future, which is in turn informed by what they value, what they have exposure to or know about, what they see themselves as being capable of and what systems and or supports they have access to (Framing Factors).

71. Encel 2000 quoted in White 2007, pp.71–72.

**Figure 14 – Life goal and aspiration setting framework (framing and influencing factors)**



Those Framing Factors are influenced by the attitudes, attributes and skills that the individual women or girl has. They are also influenced by the individual's family, peers and community, as well as the systems and broader society that they live and operate within (Influencing Factors).

Each of the above Influencing Factors can have a positive or negative effect on the aspirations that Aboriginal women and girls set for themselves and their ability to pursue them.

The attitudes, attributes and skills that an individual has can have a significant impact on how they see themselves and what they are capable of. Where an individual has a positive view of what they are capable of and a core set of personal or life skills that arm them to learn and negotiate life they are more likely to set themselves ambitious goals and work to achieve them.

How an individual feels about themselves, and what they are capable of, is strongly influenced by the feedback and encouragement (or discouragement) that they receive.<sup>72</sup>

Family, peers and community can play a significant role in helping to frame the life goals and aspirations that individuals set for themselves and the attitudes that they have to education and work. The importance of family and the strength of Aboriginal kinship ties means that families and peers are often an important source of support. Many Aboriginal women who have completed tertiary education comment on the support that they had from their family to complete school and pursue further study. In some cases this support was provided in contradiction to earlier negative feedback that they had had from teachers or career advisors at school who had 'capped' their expectations.

As noted in Section 4, however, the importance of connection with family and peer group can act as a 'double edged sword' and, in some cases, can hold women and girls back from pursuing life, education and career goals.

72. Dudgeon et al 1990, p.75.

It is in this context that many Aboriginal women who have completed further education have noted the importance of having strong female role models to draw on, the support and encouragement of immediate and or extended family or community members and a network of peers that they can draw on for support to help them work through and balance the pursuit of their personal goals with their family and community responsibilities.

The structure of mainstream education and employment systems also plays an important role in helping to frame an individual's awareness of what options are available to them and determining whether they can engage with them effectively to pursue their education and career goals.

While there have been significant improvements in the way that mainstream education systems are structured, much remains to be done to make sure that those systems are culturally safe and inclusive and are as accessible to Aboriginal students as they are to their non-Aboriginal peers. As noted in Section 3 much also needs to be done to address race and gender based discrimination in the workplace to support Aboriginal women to access employment opportunities and pursue career development and leadership roles.

## 5.2 Strengthening cultural identity

As part of fostering Aboriginal women's and girls' individual aspirations it is also important to reinforce and strengthen their sense of cultural identity.

Researchers have described notions of identity, self-concept and self-esteem as *"growing out of early physical competence (that is) later reinforced through 'tangible recognition' in interpersonal, social and cultural relations (leading to) ... a sense of general competence in life."*<sup>73</sup>

Aboriginal women consulted as part of the research consistently re-iterated the importance of culture and cultural identity. They have noted the need to make sure that Aboriginal women and girls are supported to strengthen and reinforce their cultural identity to help them be able to operate in two cultures successfully and be able to live, study and work within mainstream educational and employment systems while maintaining their connection with their culture and community.

That can be done by doing things such as:

- providing opportunities for Aboriginal women to meet one another, talk and learn about their cultural heritage and practice their culture
- affirming the relevance of cultural values, knowledge and experience, and
- supporting the adoption of two-way learning practices and incorporating Aboriginal history and culture studies in mainstream school and tertiary curriculum.

73. Erikson 1963 quoted in Dudgeon et al 1990, p.75.

## 6. What types of programs or supports can help Aboriginal women and girls realise their potential?

This section identifies programs or supports that can help Aboriginal women and girls to overcome the barriers identified in Section 4 and realise their potential.

It is critical that Aboriginal women and girls are encouraged to take a broad view of what they can be and do in their lives and are supported to develop the skills and networks that they need to realise their goals. An opportunity exists for grant-makers to support that by funding activities that work with individuals, families and communities, education providers and employers to:

- strengthen and or reinforce Aboriginal women's and girls' view of themselves and what they are capable of
- improve their awareness of and access to education, and employment options
- expand their cultural and professional networks, and
- address barriers to education, employment and career development.

This section identifies programs or supports that can help Aboriginal women and girls to overcome the barriers identified in Section 4 and realise their potential. It also identifies the key success factors that are a feature of well designed and implemented programs of that type.

### 6.1 Program or support categories

There are a number of activities that can help Aboriginal women and girls to address and negotiate the education system and pursue their career goals. Those activities can be divided into three broad groupings:

- **Foundation programs** – that help Aboriginal women and girls to broaden the range of life and career options that they see as being available to them, set themselves positive life goals and **aspirations** and develop the foundation **knowledge and skills** that they need to pursue those goals
- **Extension programs** – that work at an individual and organisational level to help Aboriginal women and girls build on the above skills and develop **capabilities and networks** that can help them to develop their careers and take up employment and leadership roles, and

**Figure 15 – Program or support categories**

	Pre-School	Primary School						Secondary School						Post-School	
Grade	Foundation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	PSQ / Work	
Age	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	19-24	25-34

Strength in Identity

Foundation Programs

Aspirations

Knowledge and Skills

Aspiration Setting

Embedded in all other program areas

Personal and Life Skills Development

Education and Vocational Development

Transitions into Further Education / Work

Career Development and Wealth Creation

Extension Programs

Capacity Building and Networks

Leadership Development and Personal / Professional Network Building

Strengthening Aboriginal Organisations

Enabling Supports

Resources

Environment

Transport / Childcare / Housing / Financial Support

Ensuring Cultural Safety

Improving Educational Systems

Building Understanding through Research

- **Enabling supports** – that help Aboriginal women and girls to access **resources** such as transport, child care, housing and financial support to help make it easier for them to balance family, work, study and community obligations. This category also includes programs that work to change the **environment** in which Aboriginal women and girls live, study and work by improving cultural safety and inclusionary practices, addressing systemic biases in the education system and supporting research to better understand what is needed to support Aboriginal women and girls to succeed.

The specific focus and design of individual programs or supports in each area will vary across the life course to match the age and experience profile of the women and or girls that it is designed to benefit.

The most effective programs are designed in a way that both:

- encourage Aboriginal women and girls to set themselves positive life and career goals, and
- reflect and reinforce Aboriginal cultural identity and connection.

This Report focuses on Foundation and Extension Programs. It will discuss a range of Foundation Programs that are designed to support:

- **Personal and life skills development**—these programs often focus on the development of a mix of personal and general life skills including things such as nutrition, physical, spiritual, mental and sexual health, healthy relationships and financial management. They are designed to help strengthen and or reinforce Aboriginal women’s and girls’ view of themselves and what they are capable of and build a core set of personal or life skills that arm them to engage in study and work and negotiate life.
- **Student engagement**—these programs focus on helping to link (hook) students into school and provide them with the support that they need to engage effectively at school and learn. They often include a mix of activities aimed at addressing students’ underlying material and personal support requirements, as well as their basic behavioural and skill development needs on the basis that, until those underlying needs are met, a student is unlikely to be able to effectively apply themselves to learning.
- **Vocational development**—these programs involve a mix of activities aimed at helping participants to broaden their perspective of what they can be, help them identify what they would like to be and develop the vocational and work-ready skills that they need to pursue their career goals.

The above programs cover a mix of age groups including both school and older age groups. They are often focused on supporting Aboriginal girls to make the transition through school and into further study or work.

Some programs will focus on specific target groups, such as young mothers. The importance of this group is such that we have identified it as a separate area for focus in this Report. Programs for **Young Mums** usually include aspects of all three of the Foundation Program areas.

The Report will also discuss Extension Programs that are designed to support:

- **Leadership and professional network development** – these programs focus on developing both personal and professional management and leadership skills and help Aboriginal women to link into peer and professional support networks to help them to develop and progress in their careers and balance their home, work and community (cultural) responsibilities.
- **Organisational capacity development** – these programs focus on Aboriginal organisations and work with them to improve their governance and operational capacity on the basis that such organisations can provide strong employment, career development and leadership opportunities for Aboriginal women.

The above programs tend to be targeted at the post-school age group and are focused on supporting Aboriginal women who are pursuing career development goals or are looking to take on leadership roles within their workplace or community.

## 6.2 Key program success factors

We have identified a number of key success factors that apply to each of the program or support categories explored in this Report. A summary of those key success factors is set out in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 – Key success factors (shaded parameters are program specific)**

Key success factor	Description	Personal & life skills development	Student engagement	Vocational development	Leadership & professional network development	Organisational capacity development	Young mothers
Aboriginal involvement in program design	Aboriginal involvement in program development to ensure culturally and contextually appropriate program design	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Culturally safe environment	Culturally safe environment where participants feel welcome and valued	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strengths-based approach	Program design and delivery builds on participants' capabilities and strengths (rather than taking a deficits-based approach)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promotion of cultural identity and strength	Program activities or learning opportunities are designed to reflect and reinforce cultural identity and strength	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Highly flexible program design and delivery	Program design and delivery structured to facilitate access and encourage participation, for example through factors such as: – timing – location – duration or participation requirements – curriculum structure and composition – language – teaching or learning approach	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Proactively addresses barriers to engagement	Program design and delivery takes into account potential barriers to participation and provides support to address those barriers (eg through provision of child care, transport, remote area access)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Encourages and reinforces positive aspirations and goal setting	Consistently maintains and encourages participants to set a high expectation of themselves and what they are capable of and set personal and professional aspirations and goals that reflect that	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Appropriately vocationally, culturally and emotionally qualified staff	Employs staff that are appropriately qualified both personally and professionally to meet program delivery requirements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quality participant-staff relationships	Recognises the importance of establishing strong participant-staff relationships and structures program or learning activities and timelines to support the development of those relationships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key success factor	Description	Personal & life skills development	Student engagement	Vocational development	Leadership & professional network development	Organisational capacity development	Young mothers
Appropriate network of collaborators	Delivering organisation is well connected with both Aboriginal and mainstream organisations, networks and systems and uses those networks to support program delivery	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develops participant skills and provides opportunities to build own networks (personal, peer, professional)	Programs are designed in a way that helps participants to develop skills as well as build personal, peer and support networks to help them to leverage those skills	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Provides information about vocational and career options	Program activities provide participants with exposure to and or information about a range of education, employment and career options			✓	✓		✓
Provides information about how to navigate the education and employment system	Program activities provide participants with information and support to help them (learn how to) navigate mainstream systems			✓	✓		✓
Understand/meet holistic needs	Program design and delivery takes into account participants' personal support and learning and development needs and structures programs to address or accommodate those needs	✓	✓				✓
Dual engagement + learning focus	Program activities or learning are designed both to engage participants and support them to learn	✓	✓				✓
Program or curriculum design tailored to target group (age, stage, need)	Program activities or learning are tailored to meet the specific needs of the target participant group	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Strong school leadership support	School-based programs have strong support from the school principal and leadership team		✓				✓
Clear behavioural guidelines	Expectations and guidelines for student or participant are clearly defined so that students understand what is expected of them		✓				✓
Community and parent engagement	Program or learning activities are designed to support, encourage and leverage parent and or community involvement		✓				✓



Well designed and delivered programs will meet the relevant key success factors identified in the table. Philanthropists should take those factors into consideration when assessing programs for funding in addition to standard organisational capacity and program delivery capability criteria. In doing this they should bear in mind the size and growth-stage of Aboriginal organisations as well as their familiarity with the philanthropic sector and experience in seeking funding.

There are real benefits in providing support to build the capacity of Aboriginal organisations and of the sector.

Standard organisational capacity and program delivery capability assessment criteria used when allocating philanthropic funds

Organisational Capacity:

- does the organisation have a clear mission and strategy?
- is its program execution well aligned with mission?
- does it have good governance structures in place?
- does it have a strong leader?
- does it have a capable senior management team?
- is its financial management sound and does it have good financial management controls in place?
- does it have a successful fundraising strategy?
- are its marketing and communications clear and consistent?
- does it have a strong organisational track record?
- does it have a track record of successful program delivery of the type being considered?
- does it have a track record of appropriately acquitting grants?

Program Delivery Capability:

- does the program have adequate staffing?
- is it aligned with the organisation's mission and strategy?
- does it have a logical program plan that is likely to achieve the desired outcomes?
- are sufficient resources allocated to the program for success?
- are all of the necessary stakeholders on board and engaged (or are they likely to be)?
- are effective performance evaluation/tracking processes in place to monitor program outcomes and assess delivery against program objectives?

### 6.3 Considerations when investing in programs to support Aboriginal people

Aboriginal organisations often do not have significant knowledge of, or experience working with, philanthropic organisations. They therefore often do not know how to go about engaging effectively with them. Similarly, philanthropic organisations often do not have significant knowledge of, or experience working with, Aboriginal organisations. Because of that philanthropists can find it difficult to identify, engage effectively with and fund Aboriginal organisations, particularly where Aboriginal organisations are small or resource constrained, or where capability gaps give rise to concerns about operational or governance capability. Major philanthropic organisations have found that in spite of having Aboriginal projects as a key focus area, in some years they have given away only a very small percentage of their available grant funds to only a very small number of their overall grantees.

Understanding some of the common difficulties that grant-makers experience, and learning from the experience of other philanthropists, can be particularly useful and lead to higher impact grants, less frustration for you and for the grantee, save a lot of time, and make it an enjoyable, rich and rewarding experience.

The first principle when funding in this area is to ensure that any grant is compliant with the philanthropic organisation's own trust deed and the requirements of the Australian Tax Office.

Some of the good grant-making principles that have been identified as leading to better granting, relationships and results are:<sup>74</sup>

- embrace long-term engagement and consider long-term funding
- be open to providing more than funding; access to networks, knowledge and other non-financial resources are also valuable
- recognise that there are cultural differences and sensitivities and make a point of learning about them
- be aware of the diversity of Aboriginal Australia and remember that 'one size does not fit all'
- take advice from the Aboriginal organisation or community you are working with about what programs or projects are appropriate and how they should be designed, as well as looking for the evidence base in design
- be flexible and collaborative
- be realistic about what outcomes will be achieved in the short term and what impact might come years after your grant has been made and used
- consider setting up and funding long-term evaluation, and
- listen and communicate clearly and be aware of differences in communication styles and protocols.

A suggested strategy for philanthropists supporting Aboriginal organisations is to have fewer, more in-depth relationships, as experienced philanthropists tell us that this allows resources (financial and non-financial) to be concentrated for greater effect and can allow the relationships between the grant-maker and grantee to develop and deepen in a way that is likely to lead to good grant-making and project outcomes.

An important point that is discussed widely in research in this area is the value in moving beyond program-based support. There are real benefits in providing support to build the capacity of Aboriginal organisations and of the sector. It will help to overcome resource gaps, develop staff, consolidate and strengthen internal operational processes, build robust governance systems and help to advocate for the policy and programs that will strengthen Aboriginal communities.

Many Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) organisations rely on, often tightly prescribed, government contracts to deliver specific programs and services and have little or no experience engaging with the philanthropic sector. This set of circumstances can lead to a situation where organisations do not pursue strategies or develop programs that they otherwise would because they do not have access to sufficiently flexible or patient funding to be able to do that. One of the main uses of philanthropic money is to support the trial of new ideas and innovations and it can be particularly relevant when funding to support Aboriginal initiatives.

Useful research and resources are available to help philanthropists support Aboriginal Australia more effectively. A recent report is *"A Worthwhile Exchange: A Guide to Indigenous Philanthropy"* published in 2010.<sup>75</sup> Another is Dr Wendy Scaife's *"Challenges in Indigenous Philanthropy: Reporting Australian Grantmaker's Perspectives"*.<sup>76</sup> Further information on the topic can also be found through Philanthropy Australia.

74. Scaife 2005; Smylie & Scaife 2010.

75. Smylie and Scaife 2010.

76. Scaife 2006.

## 7. Case study examples

This section provides case study examples of the types of programs identified in Section 6.

The case studies in this section provide examples of programs operating across the Foundation and Extension areas identified in Section 6.1:

- Personal development and life skills development
- School engagement
- Vocational development
- Young mums
- Leadership and professional network development, and
- Strengthening Aboriginal organisations.

Many of the programs discussed work across a number of the above areas; for example, a personal development program may also encourage school engagement and vocational development. In this Report we have included case studies in the category that is their primary area of focus.

A program review was conducted as part of the research for this Report to identify the programs or supports that are currently being provided to help Aboriginal women and girls to realise their potential and the service providers delivering them. This involved consultations with research and program experts, internet-based research, a review of recommendations in research and policy papers and contact with Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Departments, Aboriginal and not-for-profit organisations and a range of philanthropic foundations that fund in this area. The above consultations covered approximately 80 organisations to identify programs or services that might be relevant and a further 60 service delivery organisations.<sup>77</sup> Targeted interviews were then used to build an understanding of each of the above program or support categories and to identify key success factors associated with the delivery of those programs.

The case studies provided in this section are based on some of the programs that were investigated. Many good or promising programs were identified during research but only some of them are included.

The case studies in this section are provided by way of example only. The programs set out in the case studies have not been independently reviewed or audited as part of this research. Their inclusion in the Report should not, therefore, be seen as a recommendation for funding. As a matter of good practice philanthropists interested in funding programs such as those identified in Section 7 should undertake appropriate due diligence prior to any investment to make sure that the programs they invest in align with their funding strategy and meet appropriate investment criteria.

77. A list of the organisations that have been consulted as part of the above research is provided in Appendix 1.

## 7.1 Personalised life skills development

Response	Key Success Factors	Results
<p>Programs that develop a mix of personal and general life skills including things such as nutrition, physical, mental and sexual health, healthy relationships and financial management.</p> <p>They are designed to help strengthen and or reinforce Aboriginal women's and girls' view of themselves and what they are capable of and build a core set of personal or life skills that arm them to engage in study and work and negotiate life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Aboriginal involvement in program design</li> <li>– Culturally safe environment</li> <li>– Strengths-based approach</li> <li>– Promotes cultural identity and strength</li> <li>– Highly flexible program design and delivery</li> <li>– Proactively addresses barriers to engagement</li> <li>– Encourages and reinforces positive aspirations and goal setting</li> <li>– Appropriately vocationally, culturally and emotionally qualified staff</li> <li>– Quality participant-staff relationships</li> <li>– Appropriate network of collaborators</li> <li>– Develops participant skills and provides opportunities to build own networks (personal, peer, professional)</li> <li>– Understand or meet holistic needs</li> <li>– Dual engagement + learning focus</li> <li>– Program/curriculum design tailored to target group (age, stage, need).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stronger Aboriginal communities</li> <li>– Break poverty cycle</li> <li>– Heightened family and community aspirations for women and girls</li> <li>– Heightened personal goals or aspirations</li> <li>– Increased enjoyment of life</li> <li>– Stronger sense of cultural identity</li> <li>– Greater self-awareness</li> <li>– Increased confidence</li> <li>– Healthier relationships</li> <li>– Delayed family formation</li> <li>– Improved behaviour</li> <li>– Improved social skills</li> <li>– Improved emotional and or physical health</li> <li>– Improved life skills or ability to live independently</li> <li>– Improved decision-making capability</li> <li>– Improved financial skills</li> <li>– Improved literacy and or numeracy</li> <li>– Increased educational qualifications</li> <li>– Improved knowledge of and or access to available services</li> <li>– Improved communication skills</li> <li>– Increased personal and or peer networks.</li> </ul>

Personal and life skills development programs aim to build skills, knowledge and confidence in areas of everyday life. They particularly focus on areas that are relevant for participants according to their age and their personal circumstances (eg sexual health, healthy relationships, substance abuse) as well as providing activities that are engaging and fun to be a part of (eg art, excursions). Programs tend to be targeted by age and gender so that sensitive issues can be openly discussed. They can be school or non-school based. They usually take the form of a weekly get together and are facilitated by women with excellent inter-personal skills who bring in other programs, organisations and guest presenters as needed.

Programs of this nature are often described by the organisations that run them as 'Leadership' programs. This term does not refer to 'Leadership' in the same sense as is discussed in Section 7.5; rather it tends to be used as an alternative way of describing personal development.

### Koori Girls Youth Program – Ramahyuck Aboriginal Corporation, Sale, VIC

The Koori Girls Youth Program is a social, recreational and life skills program for Aboriginal girls aged 8–15. The program aims to engage girls who lack appropriate social and recreational opportunities. It uses mental health promotion strategies (eg building trusting relationships and providing a safe forum for discussing challenging issues) and practical skill building (eg healthy activities and assistance with homework) to increase confidence and life skills, heighten life goals and aspirations and improve health and wellbeing. It is also designed to provide some fun for participants. Its founder is Sandra Neilson, an Elder and Board Member of Ramahyuck, who created the program in response to her own foster-daughter's needs 11 years ago and it has been running ever since.

The program consists of weekly after-school or weekend group sessions that are organised informally and might include one or more of the following:

- a recreational activity such as bushwalking, swimming, arts and crafts
- guest speakers (eg health service providers, dentists or local Aboriginal role models)
- assistance with homework, cooking, gardening, personal training and sewing
- facilitated access to other personal, education or vocational support services, and
- an annual camp.

There has not been a formal evaluation of this program but anecdotal feedback from participants, ongoing and increasing demand, and referrals to it from other agencies suggests that participants benefit from it.

### **Deadly Sista Girlz – David Wirrpanda Foundation, WA, NSW, VIC**

Established in 2005, Deadly Sista Girlz works with Aboriginal girls aged 8–17 at risk of disengaging from school. The program aims to support personal development and heighten participants' aspirations.

Young, female, Aboriginal 'Role Models', predominantly from sporting backgrounds facilitate regular group sessions with groups of 15–20 participants. The sessions are run in two different formats. Most sessions run for 1.5–2 hours during school time on a weekly basis. In regional and remote areas (where Role Models are required to travel greater distances) sessions are run as full day sessions on a less regular basis (eg once per month). A number of curriculum or session plans (81) covering different topics have been prepared to support the delivery of the sessions. Sessions revolve around an activity and focus on topics such as healthy food, sexual health, relationships, identity, drugs and alcohol, team work, domestic violence, hair and make-up or financial literacy. The Role Models choose which sessions to deliver in response to the perceived needs and the interests expressed by each particular participant group.

Before they begin acting as facilitators, Role Models receive training on program, relationship and complex needs management (eg suicide prevention) to help them manage issues that might come up during sessions. They also get to participate in on-going group debriefings as well as having access to one-to-one support if required.

Participants must meet their commitments to school attendance and participation to stay in the program. The organisation would like to broaden the program to use a model similar to the Clontarf Football Academies. A pilot program trialling a more intensive approach is underway this year at Broome. That program has one full-time staff member on location who runs workshop activities and stays in regular contact with participants.

Deadly Sista Girlz was recognised as an example of good program practice in the *"Building Blocks: Best Practice Programs that Improve the Wellbeing of Children and Young People (Edition One)"* which formed part of a broader report tabled in parliament in February 2012 by the WA Children's Commissioner, Michelle Scott.

The program currently operates across 14 sites in Western Australia, two in NSW and one in Victoria. There has been strong demand for the project to be expanded to operate across other sites.

A 2010 external evaluation of the sessional program by Outcomes Project Evaluation found that participants attended the program regularly and that:

- 92% of participants surveyed felt the program had improved their self-esteem, and
- 62% said it had improved their motivation to complete school.

The David Wirrpanda Foundation has recently partnered with an Aboriginal research organisation (Koya Aboriginal Corporation) to set up an ongoing evaluation of its programs.

## 7.2 Student engagement

Response	Key Success Factors	Results
Programs that focus on helping to link (hook) students into school and provide them with the support that they need to engage effectively at school and learn. They often include a mix of activities aimed at addressing students' underlying material and personal support requirements, as well as their basic behavioural and skill development needs on the basis that, until those underlying needs are met, a student is unlikely to be able to effectively apply themselves to learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Aboriginal involvement in program design</li> <li>– Culturally safe environment</li> <li>– Strengths-based approach</li> <li>– Promotion of cultural identity and strength</li> <li>– Highly flexible program design and delivery</li> <li>– Proactively addresses barriers to engagement</li> <li>– Encourages and reinforces positive aspirations and goal setting</li> <li>– Appropriately vocationally, culturally and emotionally qualified staff</li> <li>– Quality participant-staff relationships</li> <li>– Appropriate network of collaborators</li> <li>– Understand or meet holistic needs</li> <li>– Dual engagement + learning focus</li> <li>– Program or curriculum design tailored to target group (age, stage, need)</li> <li>– Strong school leadership support</li> <li>– Clear behavioural guidelines</li> <li>– Community and parent engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stronger Aboriginal communities</li> <li>– Break poverty cycle</li> <li>– Heightened family and community aspirations for women and girls</li> <li>– Heightened personal goals or aspirations</li> <li>– Stronger sense of cultural identity</li> <li>– Greater self-awareness</li> <li>– Increased confidence</li> <li>– Healthier relationships</li> <li>– Delayed family formation</li> <li>– Improved behaviour</li> <li>– Improved social skills</li> <li>– Improved emotional and or physical health</li> <li>– Improved life skills or ability to live independently</li> <li>– Improved decision-making capability</li> <li>– Improved financial skills</li> <li>– Increased family engagement in education</li> <li>– Improved literacy and numeracy</li> <li>– Increased attendance</li> <li>– Increased retention</li> <li>– Improved school performance</li> <li>– Increased educational qualifications</li> <li>– Improved vocational or work readiness skills</li> <li>– Improved ability to access a broad range of jobs</li> <li>– Increased employment in better or higher paying jobs</li> <li>– Improved knowledge of and or access to available services</li> <li>– Increased personal and or peer networks.</li> </ul>

There are a number of programs through which Aboriginal girls are supported to access education, including a range of scholarship programs, one of which is the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation Scholarship Program. The best scholarships provide not only financial assistance but ensure that students are given the social and emotional supports they need to make the most of the opportunity to study provided by the scholarship.<sup>78</sup> There are also specialist schools for Aboriginal girls, such as Worawa Aboriginal College in Victoria.

Student engagement programs are designed to promote student attendance, retention and performance. They target students who are disengaged, or at risk of disengaging, from school.

There are well known school engagement programs targeted at boys. For example, the Clontarf Foundation runs successful school retention programs for boys. Their program uses football as an engagement activity and then sets targets for the individual participants in relation to school attendance and performance. Currently that program works with 2,850 boys in 53 schools across Western Australia, Northern Territory, Victoria and New South Wales.<sup>79</sup>

Our research suggests that there is no similar single activity that would successfully act as an engagement hook for such large numbers of girls. This is because the types of activities that might successfully attract a girl to school are likely to vary significantly from girl to girl.

While sport still appears to be effective as an engagement hook for many girls, it also appears that it is important to have access to a wide variety of recreational and personal development opportunities and experiences (one or more of which is likely to work as an 'engagement hook') for girls who aren't interested in or engaged through sport.

78. Doyle and Hill 2008, p.68–69.

79. [www.clontarffootball.com](http://www.clontarffootball.com) (May 2012).

The better programs in this category also involve some level of personal and vocational development. They tend to do this by having staff that can develop good one-to-one relationships with the girls, understand their needs and interests and encourage them to set high expectations and goals for themselves. The staff can then facilitate access to appropriate support, learning and development opportunities so that basic material and personal needs are met and interests encouraged.

Once students can see a positive future for themselves, they are more likely to engage with learning for its own sake and the risk of disengagement decreases.

#### **Girls @ The Centre – The Smith Family, Alice Springs, NT**

Girls at the Centre is a partnership program run by The Smith Family in collaboration with the Centralian Middle School in Alice Springs. It is designed to improve school attendance, retention and performance, with the longer-term aim of improving further education and employment outcomes.

The target group is girls in Years 7–9 who are disadvantaged. It focuses on Aboriginal girls but is inclusive of all girls. Approximately 80% of the girls involved in it at any one time are Aboriginal.

The program is run out of a designated ‘Girls’ Room’ space at the school.

‘Girl Coaches’ facilitate personal and vocational development on both a group and one-to-one basis. They provide support including academic support, child, school and family liaison, vocational development (eg resume preparation and other job readiness activities including a work experience/shadowing component). Girls are also given help to meet basic needs (eg uniforms and equipment for sport) if required.

The program involves participants in:

- sport or arts activities after school on two days each week
- sessions during school time on topics including health, relationships, hygiene and vocational development
- weekly breakfast with mentors and guest speakers, and
- facilitated access to other services and to opportunities for extension where appropriate (eg visit to Melbourne girls’ schools, work-shadowing, participation in community events)

An evaluation of the program was recently conducted by Associate Professors Tess Lea and Catherine Driscoll from the University of Sydney, through funding provided by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Data included in the evaluation shows that:

- program participants consistently had average school attendance that was 15% or more higher than the average attendance of all Aboriginal girls at the school, and
- 90% or more of Year 9 students who participated in the program progressed to Year 10 and 90% of those who participated at Year 9 level in 2008 progressed to Year 12 in 2012.

Data collected by The Smith Family also indicates that all Year 9 girls who participated in the work shadowing component in 2011 secured part-time employment.

The evaluation concluded that the program:

- is highly valued by school staff, participants and their families
- positively impacts on life goals and skills in demonstrable ways
- appears to positively impact on Year 12 retention
- clearly impacts on community engagement with the school, especially through families, and
- significantly impacts on school attendance.

#### **Joodoogeb-be-gerring Werlemen – Wunan Foundation, Kununurra, WA**

In the language of the Traditional Owners – the Miriwung Gajerrong people – Joodoogeb-be-gerring Werlemen means ‘setting girls on a straight path’. The program builds off two school engagement programs (‘Youth Connections’ and ‘Bridging’) that have operated in Kununurra since 2008. The Werlemen program began in 2010 and is both a merger and development of these two programs.

The program is run in partnership by the Wunan Foundation, the Kununurra District High School, the Gelganyem Trust and the MG Ord Enhancement Scheme (which is itself a partnership between the Yawoorroong Miriwung Gajerrong Yirrgeb Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation and the WA State Government).

Werlemen helps Aboriginal girls who have dropped out of school to re-engage in learning and education and gain skills that will lead to employment. The program has its own premises away from the school campus. It is designed to help girls in the area who are severely disadvantaged, have very low literacy and numeracy skills, limited finances and extremely tough and unstable home lives. The girls are often highly mobile and have not participated in school for a number of months and in some instances years.

The program is designed to be highly flexible with activities being located and tailored to meet the needs of the girls who are participating in it at any particular time.

Students are picked up at the beginning of the day to go to the program and dropped home again. They are provided with meals and access to clean clothes, showers and toiletries. They participate in daily literacy and numeracy lessons with individual program plans set by teaching staff. They also participate in life skill development activities (eg cooking, grocery shopping, health and hygiene), recreational activities (eg painting with Elders at arts centres), learning language and sports activities (eg a regular basketball game). Students are also helped to access vocational development activities (eg resume writing, guest speakers from TAFE). Staff also help students to access safe accommodation at a local Aboriginal hostel and other personal and support services if needed.

Student destinations have been tracked to some extent. Program staff estimate that of the approximately 50 students who participated in 2010 and 2011, approximately 10 students (20%) have re-engaged with mainstream school. Some have gone on to employment. The MG Corporation is putting in place systems to track local Aboriginal student destinations more effectively.

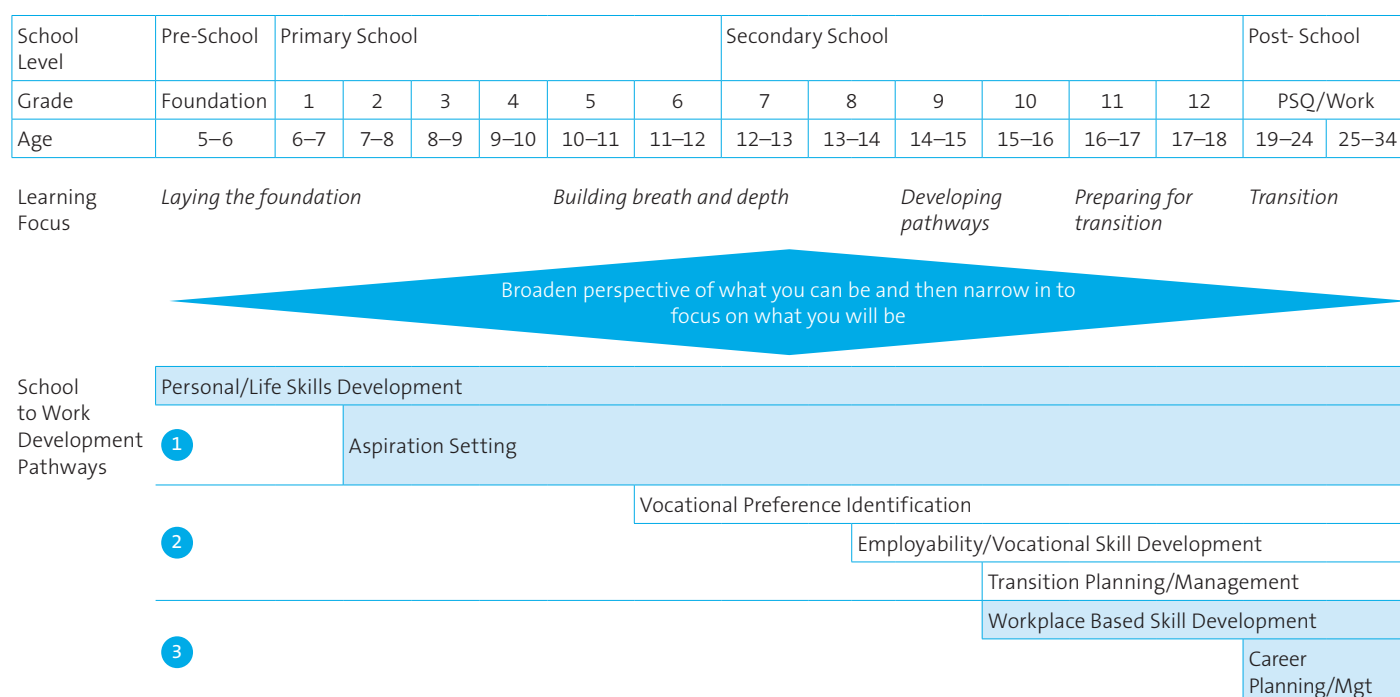


### 7.3 Vocational development

Response	Key Success Factors	Results
Programs that involve a mix of activities aimed at helping participants to broaden their perspective of what they can be, help them identify what they would like to be and develop the vocational and work-ready skills that they need to pursue their career goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Aboriginal involvement in program design</li> <li>– Culturally safe environment</li> <li>– Strengths-based approach</li> <li>– Promotion of cultural identity and strength</li> <li>– Highly flexible program design and delivery</li> <li>– Proactively addresses barriers to engagement</li> <li>– Encourages and reinforces positive aspirations and goal setting</li> <li>– Appropriately vocationally, culturally and emotionally qualified staff</li> <li>– Quality participant-staff relationships</li> <li>– Appropriate network of collaborators</li> <li>– Develops participant skills and provides opportunities to build own networks (personal, peer, professional)</li> <li>– Provides information about vocational and career options</li> <li>– Provides information about how to navigate the education and employment system</li> <li>– Program and curriculum design tailored to target group (age, stage, need)</li> <li>– Strong school leadership support for school based programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stronger Aboriginal communities</li> <li>– Break poverty cycle</li> <li>– Heightened family and community aspirations for women and girls</li> <li>– Heightened personal goals or aspirations</li> <li>– Stronger sense of cultural identity</li> <li>– Greater self-awareness</li> <li>– Increased confidence</li> <li>– Improved life skills or ability to live independently</li> <li>– Improved decision-making capability</li> <li>– Improved financial skills</li> <li>– Improved literacy and or numeracy</li> <li>– Increased educational qualifications</li> <li>– Improved vocational and work readiness skills</li> <li>– Improved ability to access a broad range of jobs</li> <li>– Increased employment in better or higher paying jobs</li> <li>– Improved career progression and employment in management level and leadership positions</li> <li>– Improved knowledge of and or access to available services</li> <li>– Improved communication skills</li> <li>– Increased professional and or personal and or peer networks.</li> </ul>

Vocational development programs provide a range of activities (eg resume writing, mock interviews, mentoring, work visits and work experience) aimed at helping girls and women broaden their perspectives about future careers, identify what type of career they might like and develop the vocational and work-ready skills that are needed to pursue their career goals.

**Figure 16 – Vocational development framework<sup>80</sup>**



Like Personal Development programs, they are often referred to as ‘Leadership’ programs although again, this is not meant in the sense that it is described in Section 7.5.

#### **Aboriginal Young Women’s Leadership Program – Young Women’s Christian Association of Adelaide Incorporated (YWCA of Adelaide), SA**

The Aboriginal Young Women’s Leadership Program (AYWLP) commenced in September 2011. It is a one-year program that involves mentoring, workshops and networking events. It is aimed at young Aboriginal women from 15–30 years of age from around metropolitan Adelaide and regional SA. Some participants are still in school while others are in higher education or employment. They have few options for professional development.

The program provides highly engaged support for ten women each year. Workshops and other events that lend themselves to group learning are open to larger numbers. YWCA estimates that during 2012 approximately 120 women will participate in the broader program.

The high engagement program provides some support for personal development needs identified by the participants (eg healthy relationships) but primarily focuses on their vocational interests and the development of professional networks.

Mentors for the participants in the program are identified through a partner organisation, Women’s Health Statewide’s State Aboriginal Young Women’s Committee.

80. DEEWR 2012 (Figure © Ganbina and Regina Hill Effective Consulting Pty Ltd).

Program activities include:

- one-to-one mentoring (usually weekly)
- workshops covering topics including board and governance training, personal and professional advocacy, leadership skills, healthy relationships
- informal networking sessions with guest speakers
- structured volunteering opportunities with the co-ordinating YWCA organisation, and
- access to employment services and supports.

The YWCA is currently developing a strategic partnership with Flinders University to support the progression of some program participants into higher education.

The program is relatively new and is currently being evaluated by the South Australian Community Health Research Unit at Flinders University. Anecdotal evidence is positive and program attendance and mentor and volunteer participation are high.

## 7.4 Young mums

Response	Key Success Factors	Results
Programs that focus on the personal development, educational and employment needs and interests of the mother as an individual (eg family violence issues, low level education or work skills, interest in working in child care) and provide parenting skills development activities. Programs are usually designed in a highly flexible way and provide participants with access to a broad range of supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Aboriginal involvement in program design</li> <li>– Culturally safe environment</li> <li>– Strengths-based approach</li> <li>– Promotion of cultural identity and strength</li> <li>– Highly flexible program design and delivery</li> <li>– Proactively addresses barriers to engagement</li> <li>– Encourages and reinforces positive aspirations and goal setting</li> <li>– Appropriately vocationally, culturally and emotionally qualified staff</li> <li>– Quality participant-staff relationships</li> <li>– Appropriate network of collaborators</li> <li>– Develops participant skills and provides opportunities to build own networks (personal, peer, professional)</li> <li>– Provides information about vocational and career options</li> <li>– Provides information about how to navigate the education and employment system</li> <li>– Understand or meet holistic needs</li> <li>– Dual engagement + learning focus</li> <li>– Program or curriculum design tailored to target group (age, stage, need)</li> <li>– Strong school leadership support</li> <li>– Clear behavioural guidelines</li> <li>– Community and parent engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stronger Aboriginal communities</li> <li>– Break poverty cycle</li> <li>– Heightened family and community aspirations for women and girls</li> <li>– Heightened personal goals or aspirations</li> <li>– Heightened aspirations for children</li> <li>– Increased enjoyment of life</li> <li>– Stronger sense of cultural identity</li> <li>– Greater self-awareness</li> <li>– Increased confidence</li> <li>– Healthier relationships</li> <li>– Improved behaviour</li> <li>– Improved social skills</li> <li>– Improved emotional and or physical health</li> <li>– Improved life skills or ability to live independently</li> <li>– Improved decision-making capability</li> <li>– Improved financial skills</li> <li>– Improved parenting skills</li> <li>– Retention of care for own children</li> <li>– Improved household management skills</li> <li>– Increased family engagement in education</li> <li>– Improved literacy and or numeracy</li> <li>– Increased attendance</li> <li>– Increased retention</li> <li>– Improved school performance</li> <li>– Increased educational qualifications</li> <li>– Improved vocational or work readiness skills</li> <li>– Improved ability to access a broad range of jobs</li> <li>– Increased employment in better or higher paying jobs</li> <li>– Improved knowledge of and or access to available services</li> <li>– Increased personal and or peer networks.</li> </ul>

Young mums programs are often run by community organisations with access to a broad range of welfare and other supports and or schools. Programs are usually designed in a highly flexible way and provide participants with access to a broad range of supports. They focus on the personal development, educational and employment needs and interests of the mother as an individual (eg family violence issues, low level education or work skills, interest in working in child care) and provide parenting skills development activities. The level of support provided to participants varies across different types of programs. The better programs in this category take a holistic approach, supporting the mother to meet her basic material and personal needs as well as helping her to engage in further education, training and employment and become a better parent.

### **Rumbalara Parenting Program – Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, Shepparton, VIC**

The Rumbalara Parenting Program is run through the Family Services division of the Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative.

The Parenting Program takes a holistic approach to supporting young mothers who have had, or are at risk of having, their children removed. Participants have a range of difficulties which commonly include experiences of domestic or family violence, substance abuse, limited parenting skills, legal and health problems and limited knowledge and understanding of Koori culture. The program aims to build young mothers' skills, knowledge and confidence as individuals and parents so that they can successfully live independently and care for their children.

Support is provided through program activities two days per week during school term time. Those activities often draw on other Rumbalara and local support services. Program staff pick-up and drop-off participants and their children. Children over two are placed in child care while the mums attend the program. The program includes:

- one-to-one consultation and or case management and planning to identify and address participant needs and interests
- group activities and training including:
  - TAFE courses (eg First Aid, Responsible Service of Food and Alcohol)
  - short training-modules or workshop activities that build knowledge and skills (eg financial literacy, nutrition, cultural knowledge and strength, managing child behaviour, early literacy and numeracy)
- family therapy, and
- supported referral to other support services.

Rumbalara does not formally track the progress of participants after they exit the program but on an informal basis staff are generally able to keep abreast of their progress through ties with the local community. Anecdotal evidence from staff suggests that most participants go on to manage well after they leave the program. The program allows participants who are not managing well to re-enrol if required.

### **Strong Young Mums – Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes, NSW**

Strong Young Mums is a program run by the Family and Community Services arm of Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes in three communities, Bourke, Lake Cargelligo and Narromine. The program is soon to be extended to run in Parkes and Peak Hill.

Strong Young Mums focuses on helping young Aboriginal mums to develop their parenting, personal and vocational skills. At any one time, the program works with approximately 55 mums and pregnant women (usually aged 15–24 years) who have issues including a lack confidence in parenting, a lack of education or training and difficulty in accessing services to meet their basic material and personal needs. The period of engagement varies from a few months to up to five years, with some accessing the program periodically when a new child is born. The program aims to develop participants into employable, active parents who are involved in their children's education. It aims to improve social skills, physical and emotional health and knowledge of available services and how to access them.

The program operates four days per week. Program staff pick-up and drop-off participants and their children. Program activities include:

- home visits to participants on Mondays to identify new issues and talk about what is coming up in the program that week
- group activities including:
  - a fortnightly playgroup
  - guest speaker sessions involving staff from other local support services
  - TAFE courses (eg First Aid, Responsible Service of Food and Alcohol, Certificate I–III courses)
  - short training modules or workshop activities and
- supported referral to other services.

Centacare put a new evaluation process in place for the program 12 months ago. Results from that evaluation were not yet available at the time this Report was written.

Data collected internally by Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes shows that since 2005 it has engaged with almost 100 young mothers. All of these women have received regular home visits. Participation data indicates that of those participants:

- 51% have attended a playgroup
- 58% have participated in guest speaker sessions
- 27% have completed one training event
- 21% have completed multiple training events
- 28% have been actively involved in family focused community events, and
- 22% have connected with other services including health and early childhood services.

#### **Canberra College Cares – Canberra College, Canberra, ACT**

Canberra College is a school for Year 11 and 12 students. Canberra College Cares (CCCares) is a program run by the College for students (both male and female) who are either pregnant or parenting. The program evolved in response to the need to better support students with children to stay engaged with education. It seeks to support students to complete Year 12, secure sufficient relevant qualifications to earn a living wage and develop personal and parenting skills to a point where they can successfully live independently and raise their children.

The CCCares program currently caters for 142 students from the ACT and NSW who are pregnant or parenting and their 135 children. Fifteen of those students are Aboriginal, fourteen of those are girls. Although the program is not specifically designed to support Aboriginal girls, the structure and implementation of the program aligns with good practice for supporting the needs of that group.

The program operates on a separate campus and uses a holistic education and support model to provide students with access to Years 11 and 12 and vocational education and training (VET) classes. Coursework can be completed over an extended five year period. Students have tailored individual learning programs that allow them to attend school on a flexible basis and complete learning activities in class and online.

The program has a transport scheme that picks up and drops off students and their children each day. Children can be brought to school where adjunct care (care provided with the parent still on the premises) is available. When at school students spend part of their time studying and part of it caring for their children.

In addition to providing Year 11 and 12 education the program also provides:

- access to health care and social and emotional supports and supported referrals to other services
- vocational development, and
- driver-training.

An external evaluation completed in 2010 showed that of the students surveyed:<sup>81</sup>

- 100% bring their child to school with them

- 100% said it was very important or important to have their children at school with them
- 57% said that they would not attend the program if they could not bring their child with them to school
- 100% said that they thought the educational opportunities provided by the program were very important
- 100% said that they intended to achieve a Year 12 Certificate before leaving the program
- 100% reported that the information and support that they received to help with child health, parenting skills and managing a home was useful or very useful
- 93% said that the relationships and social networks that the program provided were important or very important, and
- 100% of students rated the program staff as outstanding or very good.

Approximately 10% of students each year receive their Year 12 Certificate. Some students will also receive Certificate II or III qualifications each year.

## 7.5 Leadership and professional network development

Response	Key Success Factors	Results
Programs that focus on developing both personal and professional management and leadership skills and help Aboriginal women to link into peer and professional support networks to help them to develop and progress in their careers and balance their home, work and community (cultural) responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Aboriginal involvement in program design</li> <li>– Culturally safe environment</li> <li>– Strengths-based approach</li> <li>– Promotion of cultural identity and strength</li> <li>– Highly flexible program design and delivery</li> <li>– Proactively addresses barriers to engagement</li> <li>– Encourages and reinforces positive aspirations and goal setting</li> <li>– Appropriately vocationally, culturally and emotionally qualified staff</li> <li>– Quality participant-staff relationships</li> <li>– Appropriate network of collaborators</li> <li>– Develops participant skills and provides opportunities to build own networks (personal, peer, professional)</li> <li>– Provides information about vocational and career options</li> <li>– Provides information about how to navigate the education and employment system</li> <li>– Program or curriculum design tailored to target group (age, stage, need)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stronger Aboriginal communities</li> <li>– Break poverty cycle</li> <li>– Improved policy and program design and implementation</li> <li>– Greater understanding of the role and context of Aboriginal leadership</li> <li>– Heightened family and community aspirations for women and girls</li> <li>– Heightened personal goals or aspirations</li> <li>– Stronger sense of cultural identity</li> <li>– Greater self-awareness</li> <li>– Increased confidence</li> <li>– Increased educational qualifications</li> <li>– Improved ability to access a broad range of jobs</li> <li>– Increased employment in better or higher paying jobs</li> <li>– Improved career progression and employment in management level and leadership positions</li> <li>– Improved knowledge of and or access to available services</li> <li>– More Aboriginal women leaders (community, business, public office)</li> <li>– Gender balance in leadership and governance of Aboriginal organisations</li> <li>– Improved leadership skills</li> <li>– Improved communication skills</li> <li>– Improved stakeholder management skills</li> <li>– Increased advocacy skills</li> <li>– Increased knowledge of and ability to access political and decision-making systems</li> <li>– Improved project development and or management skills</li> <li>– Improved governance</li> <li>– Increased professional and or personal and or peer networks.</li> </ul>

Leadership and professional network development programs are not usually gender specific; however, as discussed earlier in the Report, supporting girls and women into leadership is helpful both at an individual and community level.

These programs focus on developing both personal and professional management and leadership skills and help Aboriginal women and girls to link into peer and professional support networks that help them to develop and progress in their careers, as well as balance their

home, work and community (cultural) responsibilities.

There are a number of excellent general leadership courses in Australia that encourage the participation of Aboriginal people in them but that are not specifically Aboriginal leadership courses. The participation of an Aboriginal girl or woman in any good leadership course will be useful. It should be noted, though, that there is a distinct cultural context to Aboriginal leadership which involves leaders using knowledge of leadership from within their own culture as well as western culture. This means using processes that are culturally well-understood and models of leadership that are strongly relationship based and that allocate responsibility for decision-making as close as possible to the people affected by a decision (based on the principle of subsidiarity) and take factors such as the impact of decisions on the land and community more strongly into account.<sup>82</sup>

An over-arching purpose of training Aboriginal people as leaders is to enable them to help create the social change that is needed to address the issues that face Aboriginal Australia.

Programs that support the development of the next generation of Aboriginal leadership are important because there is a high proportion of Aboriginal people who are under 25 years of age. It is important that as the current generation of leaders age, knowledge is passed on and leadership skills are developed in the next generation of leaders who will need to represent and inspire an increasing Aboriginal population.

At the time of writing this Report a new organisation called the National Indigenous Youth Leadership Academy has just been formed with the intention of developing the next generation of Aboriginal leaders. It is a partnership between The Stronger Smarter Institute, The National Centre of Indigenous Excellence and The Foundation for Young Australians. It has not been included in this Report as a case study because it is at such an early stage in its development and the structure and scope of its operations are still being defined.

### **Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre, National**

The Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre (AILC) is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). It was incubated at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) as a result of research showing a gap in culturally and contextually appropriate leadership training. The AILC provides accredited training (currently Certificates II and IV) and short-courses in Indigenous leadership to Aboriginal people. It caters for Aboriginal Australians 18 years and over from remote, regional and urban areas.

The AILC generally runs intensive residential programs but is highly flexible and can also deliver outreach based programs in remote areas and to non-English speakers. The AILC also runs a Leadership Plus program for its alumni which includes regular regional meetings, online discussion forums, networking meetings with industry and an annual national conference.

The main activities of the AILC are:

- short-courses and accredited training in Aboriginal leadership focusing on areas including leadership, Aboriginal leadership, governance, relationships and networks, engagement and participation, enterprise and technology
- an alumni network and professional networking activities
- research into and publications on leadership in an Indigenous context to promote greater understanding and develop thinking in that area, and
- activities to advance and promote the value of Aboriginal leadership in addressing issues that confront Aboriginal Australia.

Programs that support the development of the next generation of Aboriginal leadership are important because there is a high proportion of Aboriginal people who are under 25 years of age.

82. Draws on Hunt and Smith 2007, pp.xv–xvi.

An external evaluation of the AILC over the last 10 years conducted by KPMG (that surveyed approximately 12.5% of participants over that period) found that:

- 79% of participants surveyed said that their involvement with the AILC had contributed to their being able to access enhanced leadership roles
- 50% of participants surveyed said that the AILC had influenced or contributed to their obtaining additional TAFE and post-graduate qualifications
- 59% of participants surveyed said that their involvement with AILC had contributed to their being able to secure an increase in salary (with average salary levels increasing from approximately \$56,500 prior to participation to \$70,350 after attending the course).

### **Straight Talk – Oxfam, National**

Straight Talk is a leadership program for Aboriginal women. The program is designed to give women who are involved in the program the tools and confidence to participate in political and public life and institutions, leading to better representation, policy and practices for Aboriginal communities.

Its main feature is a Summit in Canberra where approximately 55 Aboriginal women have the opportunity to learn about the political system and how to engage with it. Women come from across Australia and from urban, regional and remote communities. The 2012 program will also involve seven similar regional events on a state and territory basis. The program also includes the coordination of an alumni network and associated activities.

Sessions at the Canberra and regional summits focus on learning how to create change and build networks with peers and with female parliamentarians and advisors. The women meet with female parliamentarians from all parties and their advisors (approximately 25 at the Canberra summit) and participate in short experiential skill based training sessions covering topics including getting your message across, how the system works, how to make change at community and other levels, utilising cultural roles of women of varying ages (young women, Elders), preparing for meetings, how to best present yourself and your community, power analysis, as well as reporting and developing social change strategies. In addition there are talks by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal role models.

Anecdotal evidence is positive although Oxfam points out that ‘success’ stories are likely to be attributable to more than just participation in the program. Some examples of the sorts of outcomes that participants have achieved include:

- follow up contact between participants and parliamentarians and or their advisors
- two participants commenced internships with parliamentarians
- two participants stood as candidates in WA in the last Federal election, and
- a number of participants have presented submissions to Senate Inquiries.

There is currently a three-year evaluation underway and the program also forms part of a larger international Oxfam study on women’s leadership development.

### **Change Course – Oxfam, National**

Change Course is a leadership program for thirty 18–25 year old Aboriginal people from urban, regional and remote locations, at least 50% of whom are young women. The program aims to develop a life-long value of, and commitment to, constructive change in the next generation of Aboriginal leaders by developing their skills, knowledge, networks and vision.

The program commences with a gathering where participants are linked with young Aboriginal mentors (who have done accredited mentoring training) and develop their skills and ideas for change in their own communities. Participants are then encouraged to act on those ideas, with the opportunity to apply for a small grant and to access other training and capacity building opportunities. Ongoing support is provided in project planning, management, reporting and evaluation by mentors and Oxfam program staff and presenters. There is a final gathering to debrief and make plans for further community development activity and there is ongoing access to the network of program participants and the Oxfam network once the program has been completed.



Oxfam acknowledges that there are multiple factors involved when a young person goes on to create change in their community but believes that the number of young people who have continued quality engagement as active citizens in their communities following the program is reflective of its effectiveness. Examples of things individual participants have gone on to do include:

- setting up a community permaculture and garden project as well as an annual youth festival in the Torres Strait Islands
- becoming a community leader in health promotion and convening the local health council in Doomadgee
- participating in a youth delegation at the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous People
- participating in Oxfam International's Youth Partnerships Program in Delhi, and
- participating in an Oxfam cultural exchange with Adivasi (Indigenous) Youth from Southern India.

## Professional Network Development

Professional network development programs help Aboriginal women to link into peer and professional support networks to help them to develop and progress in their careers and balance their home, work and community (cultural) responsibilities.

Peer, personal and professional networks play an important role in the development of individual girls' and women's careers, the development of good practice approaches and efficiencies across sectors and the development of Aboriginal communities more broadly. The following examples refer to programs that have been run but are no longer current. The descriptions provided here are less detailed than those that appear in the other sections.

### Tiddas: Indigenous Women and Educational Leadership, National

Tiddas "Showin'Up, Talkin'Up and Puttin'Up" was a project funded by The Australian Learning and Teaching Council<sup>83</sup>, which was an initiative of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. It began in 2007 as a two-year project led in partnership by Flinders University and the Australian Catholic University. It engaged approximately 40 Aboriginal women participants from universities around Australia.

The project promoted and supported strategic change in higher education by strengthening the participation and leadership, capacity of Aboriginal women academics.

Key elements of the 2007 and 2008 project included:

- four workshops with one held at the end of each semester
- development of key concepts of Aboriginal women's leadership and
- establishment of an Aboriginal women academics network and supporting website.

Through "Showin'Up, Talkin'Up and Puttin'Up" the need to strengthen the participation and profile of Aboriginal women in academic publication was identified and an extension project was developed that involved a further workshop "Tiddas: Writin'Up" that was held in 2010.

Tiddas was able to further good individual and institutional practice in learning and teaching in the higher education sector and improve knowledge of the processes and techniques that are important in academic publishing.

*"It is important to sit down with intelligent, humorous, wonderful women and have the chance to discuss issues in a safe space. To hear the voices of women in leadership roles and to learn from their experiences."* – Tiddas Participant.<sup>84</sup>

83. Now the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

84. Bunda and White 2009.

### Indigenous Roundtable: Relationship and Engagement Models – Social Ventures Australia, National

This 2008 roundtable was conducted as part of a broader initiative to support the development of best practice and collaboration among organisations that deliver ‘school to work’ transition programs for Aboriginal young people. Over 25 organisations were represented.

The focus of the round table was on relationships and engagement models, which had been identified as a priority during earlier work. Participants came together in a facilitated discussion to identify ways in which they could effectively form and evaluate partnerships.

### National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Skill Training Network – Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF), National

In June 2008 DSF hosted a national roundtable meeting with 35 people from Aboriginal early childhood training and community organisations as well as representatives from universities, education unions and state and federal government departments.

The roundtable was convened to explore the need to strengthen skills training in the Aboriginal early childhood area with the ultimate aim of improving services, attendance and outcomes for Aboriginal children.

A network was established and working groups continued on the project for approximately a year. Ultimately no one organisation wished to take on the running of the network on an ongoing basis and it was discontinued.

Anecdotal feedback indicates that the roundtable and subsequent activity was successful in helping participants to establish peer relationships and networks and that a number of people have stayed in contact since the event.

## 7.6 Strengthening Aboriginal organisations

Response	Key Success Factors	Results
Programs that focus on Aboriginal organisations and work with them to improve their governance and operational capacity on the basis that such organisations can provide strong employment, career development and leadership opportunities for Aboriginal women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Aboriginal involvement in program design</li><li>– Culturally safe environment</li><li>– Strengths-based approach</li><li>– Promotion of cultural identity and strength</li><li>– Highly flexible program design and delivery</li><li>– Proactively addresses barriers to engagement</li><li>– Encourages and reinforces positive aspirations and goal setting</li><li>– Appropriately vocationally, culturally and emotionally qualified staff</li><li>– Quality participant-staff relationships</li><li>– Appropriate network of collaborators</li><li>– Develops participant skills and provides opportunities to build own networks (personal, peer, professional)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Stronger Aboriginal communities</li><li>– Break poverty cycle</li><li>– Improved policy and program design and implementation</li><li>– Heightened family and community aspirations for women and girls</li><li>– Stronger sense of cultural identity</li><li>– Increased employment in better or higher paying jobs</li><li>– Improved career progression and employment in management level and leadership positions</li><li>– More Aboriginal women leaders (community, business, public office)</li><li>– Gender balance in leadership and governance of Aboriginal organisations</li><li>– Improved leadership skills</li><li>– Improved communication skills</li><li>– Improved stakeholder management skills</li><li>– Increased advocacy skills</li><li>– Increased knowledge of and ability to access political and decision-making systems</li><li>– Improved project development and or management skills</li><li>– Improved operational management</li><li>– Improved financial management</li><li>– Improved governance</li><li>– Increased professional networks</li></ul>

Organisational capacity development programs focus on Aboriginal organisations and work with them to improve their governance and operational capacity. Such organisations can provide strong employment, career development and leadership opportunities for Aboriginal women.

Aboriginal women have higher representation in management positions than Aboriginal men, but both are still significantly under-represented compared to their peers.<sup>85</sup> Anecdotally girls and women report that there continue to be issues of gender discrimination in the workplace and it is recognised across the sector generally that there are gaps in organisational capability at a management and governance level. With the increase in funding that is flowing into organisations as a result of Native Title, and the increasing involvement of Aboriginal organisations in community and commercial activities, those capability gaps need to be closed.

## Governance

It is widely acknowledged that as with leadership, there is a distinct cultural context to Aboriginal governance.

Research indicates that to be most effective the governance of Aboriginal communities and organisations needs to take into consideration cultural factors that influence traditional authority and decision making structures as well as complying with regulatory governance requirements.

Research undertaken by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic and Policy Research (CAEPR) indicates that those factors can be translated into specific principles and practices. They include:<sup>86</sup>

- using networked governance arrangements that include the multiple groups or layers within an organisation and or community that clearly define each group's own roles, authority and responsibilities
- recognising and investing in relationships across the network to support ongoing engagement
- locating decision-making responsibility at the closest possible point of connection to the people affected by that decision (based on the principle of subsidiarity)
- building a strong internal 'culture of governance' to co-ordinate activity
- using 'nodal' leadership models through which different individuals or leaders are able to mobilise and leverage different groups or networks, and
- supporting the capacity, role, and responsibility of all the layers and nodes in the governance network, not just the 'top' or central levels.

There are a number of organisations that carry out governance training that Aboriginal women and girls can access but the training is not gender specific.

The Australian Institute of Company Directors is well recognised for its training. Some Aboriginal organisations choose to make it a requirement that their board members undertake the AICD training within a certain time-frame after their appointment to the board.

The Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations (ORATSIC), the independent statutory body that administers the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act) and guides how Aboriginal corporations are run, also runs governance training that helps Aboriginal organisations meet governance requirements.

A major initiative in the governance area is the "*Indigenous Community Governance (ICG) Research Project (2002–2008)*" which involved Reconciliation Australia and was led by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University. It was an extensive project that explored the nature of Aboriginal governance to understand "*what works, what doesn't and why*".<sup>87</sup>

As part of its work in this area, Reconciliation Australia went on to develop the Indigenous Governance Toolkit, an online resource.<sup>88</sup>

85. Biddle and Yap 2010, p.97.

86. Draws on Hunt and Smith 2007, pp.xv–xvi.

87. Hunt and Smith 2007.

88. [www.reconciliation.org.au/home/projects/indigenous-governance](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/projects/indigenous-governance)

There is currently interest in the creation of specific Aboriginal Governance training and it is widely acknowledged that this would be a useful contribution to strengthening Aboriginal organisations.

There are also Indigenous Governance Awards held by Reconciliation Australia, one function of which is to promote and encourage the importance of good governance.

### **Operational Capacity**

#### **Woor-Dungin, VIC**

Woor-Dungin (meaning 'share') is a capacity building initiative to help Aboriginal and philanthropic organisations engage with each other effectively. A pilot program was established in 2010 after Aboriginal participants in a one-off capacity building program in 2006 expressed a desire for further support. Some ad hoc activities took place between 2007 and 2010 before the pilot was set up. The pilot was run as a project of The Koori Heritage Trust. That pilot has now been completed and Woor-Dungin is in the process of becoming an independent organisation which will take on the ongoing running and development of the program.

The new Woor-Dungin organisation plans to undertake capacity building with Aboriginal organisations as well as provide mentoring and training to philanthropic organisations.

It will seek to address the issues that arise when Aboriginal organisations can't access philanthropic funds. This can lead to receiving only government funds with a prescribed use, which restricts the organisation's ability to determine the programs and services offered in their own communities.

The organisation intends to undertake a long-term (approximately 3–5 years) capacity building program with a small number of Aboriginal organisations. It intends to use a 'learn by doing' approach in which they build skills and knowledge about governance and leadership for individuals from the Aboriginal organisations by including them in the governance and leadership of Woor-Dungin itself. Those individuals can then use what they have learnt and, with support, begin to strengthen those functions in their own organisations.

It is then intended that Woor-Dungin will support organisations to develop evidence-based programs, facilitate access to funding and support them to manage relationships with funders.

Separate to this, they will provide professional development to philanthropic organisations to help them choose and manage their relationships with Aboriginal organisations better.

An evaluation of the pilot is currently being completed and will be used to inform the design of the new program.

## 7.7 Program and funding gaps

As well as identifying a number of programs that can help support Aboriginal women and girls to realise their potential, research and consultations undertaken in preparing this Report have identified areas where there appear to be particular gaps in activity that would benefit from additional focus and or funding. They include:

- investment in **research** to further explore factors that influence Aboriginal women's and girls' involvement in education and work and how best to support them to achieve their aspirations and full potential (such as the work that is being undertaken by organisations like the recently established Koya Aboriginal Corporation research organisation)
- **program evaluation**
- provision of culturally appropriate and affordable **child care** to support Aboriginal mothers to better balance their home, study and work responsibilities and to take advantage of available education, employment and career development opportunities
- further investment in **programs and activities to support young Aboriginal mums** to stay engaged in education and or work and or to re-engage after having time out to have a baby, both through activities that directly support young mothers and ones that help to improve paternal parenting and home based skills
- access to **financial support** and other enabling factors such as **transport** to help women and girls take up education and employment opportunities
- improved access to **career advice, career guidance and professional networking and mentoring** to help Aboriginal women and girls set and pursue ambitious personal and professional development and career goals
- provision of **financial programs that focus on wealth generation, investment and money management** strategies (eg in relation to tax, investments, superannuation and insurance) aimed at building long-term financial stability and wealth)
- additional investment in **organisational capacity development and governance training** programs to help strengthen Aboriginal organisations, both as a means of supporting the delivery of community programs and providing local employment and career development pathways, including sustained place-based support and not just one off training<sup>89</sup>
- investment in Aboriginal **education and support services at universities** to help Aboriginal women to negotiate the tertiary education system, complete their studies and transition into appropriate employment post-degree
- improved access to **multi-mode and away from base vocational and tertiary education programs** and courses to make it easier for Aboriginal women to access further study and
- investment in **programs to help support women and girls undertaking distance or external study programs**.

89. Hunt and Smith 2007, p.xiv.

## 8. Conclusion

Aboriginal women and girls aspire to and achieve remarkable things. They are often role models and drivers for change in their families and communities. Investing in Aboriginal women and girls is an important part of helping to break the cycle of poverty, supporting cross-generational change and helping Australia to realise its potential.

There are a number of areas that grant-makers can invest in to help Aboriginal women and girls to address and negotiate the education system and pursue their career goals:

- **Foundation programs** – that help Aboriginal women and girls to broaden the range of life and career options that they see as being available to them, set themselves positive life goals and **aspirations** and develop the foundation **knowledge and skills** that they need to pursue those goals.
- **Extension programs** – that work at an individual and organisational level to help Aboriginal women and girls build on the above skills and develop **capabilities and networks** that can help them to develop their careers and take up employment and leadership roles, and
- **Enabling supports** – that help Aboriginal women and girls to access **resources** such as transport, child care, housing and financial support to help make it easier for them to balance family, work, study and community obligations. This category also includes programs that work to change the **environment** in which Aboriginal women and girls live, study and work by improving cultural safety and addressing systemic biases in the education system and supporting research to better understand what is needed to support Aboriginal women and girls to succeed.

There is also particular value in looking to invest in areas where there are gaps in activity such as those identified in Section 7.7.

When investing in this area grant-makers should look for well designed and implemented programs that have the following features:

- Aboriginal involvement in program design
- provision of a culturally-safe environment
- use of a strengths-based approach in program design and delivery
- active promotion of cultural identity and strength
- flexibility in delivery to support participation
- awareness and management of any potential barriers to engagement
- encouragement and or reinforcement of participant aspirations and goal setting
- use of appropriately vocationally, culturally and emotionally qualified staff
- investment in quality participant-staff relationships, and
- engagement with an appropriate network of collaborators.

It is important for grant-makers to think beyond supporting individual program responses and to consider investing in activities that will support broader based organisational and sectoral capacity development and influence policy settings to better support Aboriginal women and girls to realise their potential.

Funders that are prepared to invest the time and effort to educate themselves not just about what types of support Aboriginal women and girls are looking for and what programs are working well to respond to those needs, but also to learn how to engage well with communities and organisations as part of their grant-making strategy, have the potential to make a significant impact.

There is a great opportunity for good grant-makers and good grant-making to make a big difference to Aboriginal women and girls, their families and communities and the broader Australian society of which we are all a part.

# Bibliography

ABS. Cat. No. 2002.0 2011	ABS. Cat. No. 2002.0 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Indigenous) Profile, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2011.
ABS. Cat. No. 4125.0 2011	ABS. Cat. No. 4125.0 Gender Indicators Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2011.
ABS. Cat. No. 4517.0 2011	ABS. Cat. No. 4517.0 Prisoners in Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2011.
ABS Cat. No. 4704.0 2010	ABS Cat. No. 4704.0 The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2010.
ABS. Cat. No. 4713.0 2006	ABS. Cat. No. 4713.0 Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2006.
ABS Cat. No. 6287.0 2006	ABS. Cat. No.6287.0. Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2006.
AHRC 2011	Australian Human Rights Commission, Social Justice Report 2011, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Australian Government, Canberra, 2011.
AIHW Cat. No.JUV 6 2010	Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, Juvenile Justice in Australia 2008 – 09: Interim Report Main Tables, Juvenile Justice Series No.6, AIHW, Canberra, 2010.
ACER 2011	Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Evaluation of the Sporting Chance Program for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra, 2011.
Award Course Completions 2010	Award Course Completions 2010: Selected Higher Education Statistics Tables, <a href="http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Publications/HESStatistics/Publications/Pages/Students.aspx">www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Publications/HESStatistics/Publications/Pages/Students.aspx</a>
Bell 2002	Bell, D., Daughters of the Dreaming, Spinifex Press Pty Ltd, Victoria, 2002.
Behrendt 2003	Behrendt, L., Achieving Social Justice: Indigenous Rights and Australia's Future, The Federation Press, Sydney, 2003.
Biddle 2010	Biddle, N., A Human Capital Approach to the Educational Marginalisation of Indigenous Australians, CAPER Working Paper No.67/2010, ANU, Canberra, 2010.
Biddle 2011	Biddle, N., Measures of Indigenous Wellbeing and their Determinants Across the Life course: 2011 Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) Online Lecture Series Lectures 1 – 13, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences, 2011.
Biddle & Yap 2009	Biddle, N. and Yap, M., Towards a Gender-Related Index for Indigenous Australians, CAPER Working Paper No.52/2009, ANU, Canberra, 2009.
Biddle & Yap 2010	Biddle, N. and Yap, M., Demographic and Socioeconomic Outcomes Across the Indigenous Life course: Evidence from the 2006 Census, Research Monograph No.31, ANU E Press, 2010.
Bin-Sallik 2000	Bin-Sallik, M., Aboriginal Women by Degrees: Their Stories of the Journey Towards Academic Achievement, University of Queensland Press, Qld, 2000.
Bin-Sallik 2003	Bin-Sallik, M., "Cultural Safety: Let's Name It!" in Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, Vol.23, 2003, pp.21-28.
Bunda & White 2009	Bunda, T. and White, N., Final Project Report: Tiddas Showin'Up, Talkin'Up and Puttin'Up: Indigenous Women and Educational Leadership, 2009.
CAF 2007	Council for the Australian Federation. The Future of Schooling in Australia. Federalist Paper 2, April 2007.
Commonwealth 1997	Commonwealth of Australia, Bringing Them Home Report: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, Australian Government, Canberra, 1997.
Commonwealth 2010	The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Senate, Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, Indigenous Australians, Incarceration and the Criminal Justice System: Discussion Paper Prepared by the Committee Secretariat, Canberra, March 2010.

Commonwealth 2011	The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Doing Time – Time for Doing: Indigenous Youth in the Criminal Justice System, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Canberra, June 2011.
Commonwealth 2012	Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2012, February 2012.
DEEWR 2012	Sporting Partnerships Supporting Aboriginal Student Transitions through School to Work prepared for the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations by Effective Philanthropy, May 2012.
Doyle and Hill 2008	Doyle, L. and Hill, R., Our Children, Our Future: Achieving Improved Primary and Secondary Education Outcomes for Indigenous Students: An Overview of Investment Opportunities and Approaches, AMP Foundation, NSW, 2008.
Dudgeon et al 1990	Dudgeon, P., Lazaroo, S. and Pickett, H., "Aboriginal Girls: Self-esteem or Self-determination?" in Kenway, J. and Willis, S. (Ed.), Hearts and Minds: Self-esteem and the Schooling of Girls, Deakin Studies in Education Series 6, The Falmer Press, Bristol P.A, 1990, pp.71–96.
Eckermann et al 2006	Eckermann, A., Dowd, T., Chong, E., Nixon, L., Gray, R. and Johnson, S., Binan Goonj: Bridging Cultures in Aboriginal Health (2nd Edition), Elsevier Australia, NSW, 2006.
Encel 2000	Encel, J., Indigenous Participation in Higher Education, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Higher Education Division, Canberra, ACT, 2000.
Erikson 1963	Erikson, E., Childhood and Society, Second Edition, Orton, New York, 1963.
Fogarty & Schwab 2012	Fogarty, W. and Schwab, R., Indigenous Education: Experiential Learning and Learning Through Country, CAPER Working Paper No.80/2012, ANU, Canberra, 2012.
Gale et al 2010	Gale, T., Tranter, D., Bills, D., Hattam, R. and Comber, B., Interventions Early in School as a Means to Improve Higher Education Outcomes for Disadvantaged (Particularly Low SES) Students: Component A: A Review of the Australian and International Literature, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Commonwealth of Australia, ACT, 2010.
Galloway et al 2008	Galloway, A., Burrow, S. and Payne, R., Gelganyem Girls' Programs: A Report Prepared for the Gelganyem Trust, Kununurra, Centre for Indigenous Australian Knowledge, Edith Cowan University, WA, October 2008.
Garvey 2000	Garvey, G., Factors Affecting Career Progression of Australian Aboriginal Doctors, Unpublished Masters of Education Thesis, University of Newcastle, 2000.
Hay 2010	Hay, I., Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Young People to Continue with Education: What Works: National and International Research Perspectives. A Report Prepared by the Australian Institute for Sustainable Communities, Faculty of Education, University of Canberra for the Canberra College, University of Canberra, ACT, 2010.
Henry 2001	Henry, M., Policy Approaches to Educational Disadvantage and Equity in Australian Schooling, International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, December 2001.
Herbert 1997	Herbert, Jeannie, Gender Issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Girls, from Papers Presented at the Promoting Gender Equity Conference, February 1995. MYCEEDYA ACT 1997. <a href="http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/default.asp?id=11952">www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/default.asp?id=11952</a>
Hunter et al 2002	Hunter, B., Kennedy, S. and Biddle, N., One Size Fits All?: The Effect of Equivalence Scales on Indigenous and Other Australian Poverty, CAPER Working Paper No.19/2002, ANU, Canberra, 2002.
Hunt & Smith 2007	Hunt, J. and Smith, D., Indigenous Community Governance Project: Year Two Research Findings, CAEPR Working Paper No.36/2007, ANU, Canberra, 2007.
Jordan et al 2010	Jordan, K., Bulloch, H. and Buchanan, G., "Statistical Equality and Cultural Difference in Indigenous Wellbeing Frameworks: A New Expression of an Enduring Debate." In Australian Journal of Social Issues, Vol.45 No.3, Spring 2010, pp.333 – 362.
Kenny 2002	Kenny, C., North American Indian, Metis and Inuit Women Speak About Culture, Education and Work, Status of Women, Ottawa, Canada, 2002.



Kirmayer et al 2009	Kirmayer, L., Sehdev, M., Whitely, R., Dandeneau, S. and Issac, C., "Community Resilience: Models, Metaphors and Measures." in <i>Journal of Aboriginal Health</i> , November 2009, pp.62 – 117.
McCarthy 2010	McCarthy, H., <i>Backboards to Blackboards – Rebounding from the Margins: A Critical Auto/Ethnographic Study of the Struggle for Culturally-sensitive Educational Pathways for Aboriginal Girls</i> , School of Education, Curtin University, Perth WA, November 2010.
McDonald & Scaife 2011	McDonald, K. and Scaife, W., 2011 <i>Mapping Australia's Philanthropic Investment in Women and Girls</i> , Australia, 2011.
NSW 2011	NSW Parliamentary Library Research Service, <i>Indigenous Disadvantage: Can Strengthening Cultural Attachment Help Close the Gap?</i> , E-brief 13/2011, NSW, 2011.
OECD 2010	OECD, <i>Investing in Women and Girls: The Break Through Strategy for Achieving All the Millennium Development Goals</i> , based on a speech by Jon Lomoy, Director of the OECD's Development Co-operation Directorate, at the Helsinki High-level Symposium, United Nations 2010 Development Co-operation Forum, 4 June 2010.
Presland 1994	Presland, G., <i>Aboriginal Melbourne: The Lost Land of the Kulin People</i> , Harriland Press, Melbourne, 1994.
Purdie & Buckley 2010	Purdie, N. and Buckley, S., <i>School Attendance and Retention of Indigenous Australian Students</i> , Closing the Gap Clearing House, ACT, 2010.
Qld Govt 2000	Queensland Government Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development, <i>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report</i> , The State of Queensland, March 2000.
Scaife 2006	Scaife, W., <i>Challenges in Indigenous Philanthropy: Reporting Australian Grantmaker's Perspectives</i> , Australian Journal of Social Issues, 2006.
Simpson 1996	Simpson, G., "The Plexiglass Ceiling: Careers of Black Women Lawyers.", <i>Career Development Quarterly</i> , Vol.45 (2), 1996, pp.173–188.
Smylie & Scaife 2010	Smylie, S. and Scaife, W., <i>A Worthwhile Exchange: A Guide to Indigenous Philanthropy: Research Findings and Success Stories from Philanthropy Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People</i> , The Christensen Fund, Rio Tinto and the Greenstone Group, Australia, 2010.
SCRGSP 2007	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. <i>Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007</i> . Canberra: Productivity Commission SCRGSP, 2007.
SCRGSP Overview 2007	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. <i>Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007 Overview</i> . Canberra: Productivity Commission SCRGSP, 2007.
SCRGSP 2011	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, <i>Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2011 Overview</i> . Productivity Commission, Canberra, 2011.
White 2007	White, N., <i>Indigenous Women's Career Development: Voices that Challenge Educational Leadership</i> , School of Educational Leadership, Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, Victoria, February 2007.
White & Fredericks 2012	White, N. and Fredericks, B., <i>Final Report, Tiddas Writin' Up: Indigenous Women and Educational Leadership</i> , Australian Catholic University and Queensland University of Technology, Australia, 2012.
WHO 2012	World Health Organisation, <i>Investing in Women and Girls: Progress in Gender Equality to Reap Health and Social Returns</i> , <a href="http://www.who.int/gender/mainstreaming/investing/en/index.html">www.who.int/gender/mainstreaming/investing/en/index.html</a>
UN 2010	United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People (James Anaya), <i>Observations on the Northern Territory Emergency Response in Australia</i> , United Nations, February 2010.
Ziller & Delaney 2012	Ziller, A. and Delaney, E., <i>Background Paper 3: Inequality and the Lives of Aboriginal Women and Girls</i> , Prepared for the Sydney Women's Fund, NSW, January 2012.
<a href="http://www.reconciliation.org.au">www.reconciliation.org.au</a> <a href="http://www.coachr.org/growth_and_development.htm">www.coachr.org/growth_and_development.htm</a>	

## Appendix 1 – Consulted Parties

Additional subject matter experts	
Carolyn Atkins	Deputy Director, Victorian Council of Social Service
Professor Eva Cox AO	Research Fellow Jumbunna, IHL UTS at University of Technology, Sydney
Dr. Patrick Sullivan	Governance and Government Policy, AIATSIS
Not-for-profit organisation and program staff consulted for case studies	
Jason King	CEO, Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative Limited
Sandra Neilson	Board Member, Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation
Anton Leschen	Regional Programs Manager, Victoria, The Smith Family
Anne Hampshire	Head of Research and Advocacy, The Smith Family
Catherine Phillips	Regional Programs Manager, NT, The Smith Family
Karen Day Julian Roffe	Operations Manager, YWCA Adelaide CEO, YWCA Adelaide
Michele Pucci Jennifer Lipscombe	Manager Education Strategies, The Wunan Foundation Werleman Program Co-ordinator and Teacher
Moroni Pugh	Manager, North West Aboriginal and Islander Community Association
Christa Momot	Co-Chair, Woor-Dungin
Rhonda Dean Julieanne James	Co-ordinator, Parenting Program, Rumbalara Family Services Executive Manager, Rumbalara Family Services
Rachelle Towart	CEO, Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre
Fiona Moore	Manager, Strategy and Development, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Program, Oxfam
Dorothee Crawley Kate Gibson	Manager, Parent Child Services, Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes Director, Family and Community Services, Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes
Jan Marshall	Deputy Principal, Canberra College Cares
Lisa Cunningham Kodie Blay	CEO, David Wirrpanda Foundation Operations Manager, David Wirrpanda Foundation
Michael Traill	Social Ventures Australia
Teya Dusseldorp	Dusseldorp Skills Forum
Not-for-profit organisations consulted	
Andrea Goddard	General Manager Development, Clontarf Football Foundation
Dixie-Link Gordon	Office Manager, Mudgin-gal Aboriginal Corporation
Chris Kirby	Deputy CEO, Reconciliation Australia
Sascha Keesling	Assistant Manager, Youth Team, NPY Women's Council
Davina Edwards	Co-ordinator Ampe Akweke, Alice Springs Youth Accommodation Support Services
Liz Morcom	Administrator, Aboriginal Elders Council of Tasmania
Honi Graf	Business Manager, Role Models and Leaders Australia
Lois Peeler	Principal, Wowora Aboriginal College

Madelene McGrath	National Aboriginal Girls Circle Program Manager, NAPCAN
Walda Blow	Manager, Margaret Tucker Hostel
Tara Williams	Mentoring Project Co-ordinator, Women in Prison Advisory Network (WIPAN)
Nyoka Henry	Acting Volatile Substance Misuse Senior Support Worker, Darumbal Community Youth Service
Tess Strong	Community Health Co-ordinator, South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation
Sharne Dunsmore	CEO, The Fact Tree
Averil Scott	Program Office, Women's Health and Family Services
Sarah Holder	Manager, Waltja
Dr Cheryl Kickett-Tucker Juliette Hubbard	Director, Koya Aboriginal Corporation CEO, Koya Aboriginal Corporation
Benson Saulo	CEO, National Indigenous Youth Leadership Academy
Tanya Hosch	Executive Director, Indigenous Governance Project
Tony Driese	PhD Scholar, Australian National University, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
<b>Government representatives</b>	
Deborah Anstess-Vallejo	Senior Policy Officer, N.T. Department of Education and Training
Tim Fitzgerald	Wannik Project Director, Wannik Unit, Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Ian Mackie	Assistant Director-General, Indigenous Education and Training Futures, QLD Department of Education and Training

