TANGENTYERE COUNCIL INC

SUBMISSION TO THE

THE CHILD PROTECTION INQUIRY

IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

MARCH 2010

CONTENTS

Introduction

Tangentyere welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Child Protection System in the Northern Territory. Over the years, through Tangentyere, the residents of the Housing Associations have established a range of services in recognition of the needs of children young people and families. These services have widespread experience engaging with the Northern Territory Child Protection System.

The following submission presents the experiences of the different service areas within Tangentyere in relation to NTFC. It also presents some of the important initiatives that Tangentyere has established in efforts to create protection for children and young people, with a focus on child and family support, as well as protective care.

Tangentyere primarily works with people living in the Housing Associations (Town Camps) of Alice Springs. The submission will reflect experiences and knowledge gained working with this particular target group.

The information has been provided by the following Tangentyere Services:
- Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre (see attached Integrated Service Approach to Social Inclusion to provide an overview of the centre and the important role it plays in child and family safety)
- Safe Families (see attached overview of the Safe Families initiative)
- Ketye Program
- Hidden Valley Community Centre
- Individual Case Management Services
- Night and Youth Patrols
- Central Australian Youth Link Up Service (CALYUS)

Information was gathered via meetings as well as written accounts and case examples of staff member's experiences on the ground. Staff knowledge comes from their work within Tangentyere, as well as some staff who have previously worked within NTFC, and other NGO's.

The information is structured to reflect the guidelines for making submissions set down by the Inquiry. Some overarching conceptual and contextual issues will be touched on.

The current Child Protection system is failing children and young people and their families. There is little evidence of effective child protection occurring. Tangentyere believes that a shift to positive developments could be achieved by addressing specific practice areas as well as broader structural issues.

Child protection is a responsibility of the statutory body and the many organisations such as Tangentyere who work in this field. We believe that there are existing initiatives and protocols, which if adequately supported could bring about significant change. Most importantly we need to see a total shift by the department to an approach which is family strength based, inclusive and collaborative.

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1. Tangentyere - Organizational Background & Context

Tangentyere Council was established in 1977. Alice Springs had been a prohibited area for Aboriginal people until 1964. The repeal of the welfare ordinance act (1964) and the equal wages case (1968) resulted in many Aboriginal people living on the outskirts of the town with no provision for housing or accommodation. Tangentyere Council was formed to assist people to gain some form of legal tenure of the land they were living on in order to obtain water, electricity and housing. 18 Housing Associations (Town Camp communities) exist with Alice Springs. The conservative service population estimate for Town Camps is between 2500-3300, 70% are permanent residents and 30% are either visitors or homeless. [1]

Tangentyere Council is incorporated under the Associations Act (2008). The Housing Associations are individually incorporated and each has its own elected Executive. Representatives of each Housing Association sit on the Executive for Tangentyere Council. This proportional representation provides a strong model of governance, providing local voice and leadership.

Housing Association (Town Camp) residents have been largely neglected by the mainstream. Through Tangentyere residents are worked for 35 years to attain land, housing, services, and opportunities to address the devastating poverty and exclusion faced those living in Town Camps. Being one of the largest Aboriginal employers in the country, Tangentyere services include: aged care, youth services, Early childhood services such as mobile playgroups, family support services, Tenancy support services, Safe Families, family well-being, CDEP, night patrols, financial management assistance, consumer rights advocacy, banking, arts centre; municipal services, postal services, disability services, emergency relief, housing construction, housing repairs and maintenance, and legal and administrative management of the 18 housing associations. Tangentyere Council also has four not for profit enterprises comprising Tangentyere Employment Service- a job network service Tangentyere Constructions, Tangentyere Nursery and Tangentyere Design.

Waves of remote visitors, inadequate housing levels, social policy resulting in drinkers being pushed into Town Camps, inadequate visitor accommodation, lack of infrastructure and services has resulted in endemic poverty in town camps. To deliver all of the services outlined above and more, Tangentyere has been funded between $1,666 - $4,000 annually per head of population over the past 15 years (this is conservative as it does not include the town and remote area populations that Tangentyere also services). This level of funding has been totally inadequate to meet need.

While many residents of Housing Associations maintain safe family environments, there are others who struggle under the pressures of grief, trauma, poverty, overcrowding and alcohol. Town Camp residents have struggled to have their voices heard – in their efforts to create dry areas, reduce visitor numbers, and improve childhood education and family support. Government policy and neglect has led to conditions that place children, young people and families at risk.

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[1] Foster, D; Mitchell, J; Ulrik, J; Williams, R. (2005) population and mobility in the town camps of alice springs

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2. Overarching Issues

The Housing Associations (Town Camps) in Alice Springs are some of the most impoverished communities not only in Australia but also in the world. But at the same time they are socially and cultural rich and people living in these communities have strength and skills and voices that must be heard and included. Unfortunately too many of them have had an interface with the Child Protection system, either in the past or in more recent times.

The underlying feeling of Aboriginal people toward to the Child Protection System is one of fear and mistrust. History of the Stolen Generation, and protectionists systems are still present in the living history of our people. These traumas are experienced across generations. In many ways the contemporary 'child protection' system reflects the very system that traumatized many people and was in no way protective. Understanding this history is critical to creating a system that will work to protect our children and support our families.

The current system is failing. The only way for us to create protection for our children and young people is to start again and to build a system of protection with us, in a way that we know will protect our children.

Alcohol and Family Violence are endemic and place great risk to our children. At the same time there is great strength and ability in our community.

This submission focuses on the Child Protection System rather than the complex social, cultural, economic determinants that result in extensive alcohol, gambling and violence that we see too often in our communities. We believe that a focus on up-stream solutions, that build on the ability of our community and create effective prevention through early intervention, is the only long term answer.

2.1 Aboriginal Service Providers

Tangentyere has a long history in the provision of services to address the needs of Aboriginal children and their families and the risks faced by children and families as a result of disadvantage. In attempts to develop an integrated service delivery, Tangentyere has a range of services, from crisis response (night patrols) to early intervention (early childhood education).

The social services developed by Tangentyere to provide for the needs and protection of children and families include:
1. Employment and Income - employment service, banking service, financial counseling, centrelink
2. Youth Services – Youth Activities; Drum Atweme

3. Inhalant and other Drug programs – Central Australian Youth Link Up Service; Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre
4. Integrated Community Hubs – Yarrenyty Arltere Leaning Centre; Hidden Valley Community Centre; Karnte Community Centre
5. Educational services (child, youth and adult) – Yeperenye School (now independent); Irrkerlantye Learning Centre (now independent); Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre; Hidden Valley Community Centre
6. Community Patrolling – Night Patrol, Day Patrol, Youth Patrol
7. Child Protection – Safe Families
8. Early Childhood education – Ketye Program
9. Social and Emotional Well Being - Family Well Being

Best Practice in Child and Family Safety

Safe Families and the Community Hubs, are two critical programs that interface with the child protection system. These initiatives have both been developed by Indigenous families to address the safety and care needs of their children. The Community Hubs are a child and family support Best Practice model. Safe Families is a child protection model of Best Practice. They are both viewed as critically important in addressing the future safety and well being of our children.

Alice Springs Integrated Service Hubs:
Attachment 1 outlines the history and importance of Community Hubs in providing for child and family safety and wellbeing. Integrated Service Delivery for Social Inclusion presents international and national best practice; and a comprehensive overview of the Hubs, Yarrenyty Arltere Leaning Centre and Hidden Valley Community Centre. The paper presents an argument for expansion of these centres to provide for community safety and wellbeing. It also presents the need for comprehensive early childhood development and education as the long term answer to creating communities of safety. The document is the model that Tangentyere is seeking to establish to achieve universal education and to attempt to eradicate poverty. This is the underlying need if we are to achieve child protection and safety for all children.

In relation to the inquiry, Tangentyere presents the Community Hubs as; addressing and defining child wellbeing though community wellbeing; and providing a comprehensive model to family support and child wellbeing services, required to address child protection in the long term.

Safe Families:
Attachment 2 provides the program outline and development of Safe Families. Safe Families is an early intervention and crisis response model developed by Aboriginal people to address the needs of children aged 7-15 years who are homeless and/or at risk. The program outline presents original Safe Families mode, and the model that Tangentyere would like to see fully supported by the department to revitalize.

Tangentyere Council developed safe Families model, with local Aboriginal elders and local service providers. It is cultural safe and builds on the strength of parents, families and communities as well as providing safe accommodation options for children and young people at immediate risk.
Safe Families recognizes Aboriginal cultures have successful models of extended kinship family care and that family is intrinsic to the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of all children.

Safe Families seeks to support families to preserve their traditional obligations for the care and nurturing of children, ensuring their children grow up strong, safe, resilient and healthy in their transition to adult hood.

Over the past 4 years changes within the program have occurred as a result of staff changes in Tangentyere, and changed commitment from the Government. This has led to this model no longer being fully operational. Tangentyere believes that this model is the way forward, requiring a strong council of elders to guide its operations. The Government, Tangentyere and the broader youth sector need to work together to revitalize the original intent of the program.

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2.2 The Role of the Child Protection System with respect to child wellbeing

The need of children at risk in the Northern Territory is greater than any department can be resourced to address. In many ways the Child Protection System is set up to fail.

Child Wellbeing is the physical well-being, the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the child as well as that of the whole community.   This is the Aboriginal understanding I wellbeing as defined in many papers including Ways Forward (1995)[2].

To create safety for children and young people, the government must prioritise community wellbeing. Creating communities of safety requires cross-sectoral response i.e. community policing, education, child and youth services, child protection etc. Government ability to work across departments is limited. As a result there is a poor coordination of services and poor strategic community safety.

Child & family support

Tangentyere always advocates for upstream solutions to social issues. Prevention, community skills development, early intervention, should all be the core focus of child protection resources. This requires a greater injection of funding, however it also requires a more considered approach by Government.

In recent years, in response to media exposure of certain cases, a knee jerk reaction to funding family support services had occurred. The process has been poorly planned, has failed to assess the strengths and gaps in the community and has relied on Government bureaucrats dictating service approaches. In recent years services with no local knowledge and no sector experience have been funded. In the past 6 years there has been a huge increase in the number of NGO's receiving funding for family support type of services. This has led to the youth sector becoming more fractured and less easy to coordinate. Funding to national organisations and large medical services with no history in this area has contributed to poor resource allocation and coordination. The sector in Alice Springs used to be coordinated and jointly moving towards a shared practice and coordinated approach.

There is poor use of NGO expertise at policy and implementation levels. While the NGO sector do the core grass roots interface work, we have little authority or power over how issues are to be responded to systemically. As well as internal NTFC policy and frameworks being developed internally without consultation, we have significant concerns for example that Government responses to youth issues is seemingly being coordinated by NTPol and DOJ.

Local sector providers sit on a range of government interagency committees, but historically do not have their voices heard. Rather than build on their experience, Government continues to respond from bureaucratic policy frameworks, choosing the best submission writers over the best locally experienced services.

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[2] National Mental Health Strategy 1995; Ways Forward: National Consultancy Report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health

At Tangentyere we have been frustrated in the inability of Government to build on what works. Initiatives such as Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre (Community Hub – see attachment 1) have been an outstanding success in achieving child and family support. Despite Tangentyere's continual advocacy for this model, and widespread sectoral support for this model to be expanded to other town camps, Government fails to see its benefits. Recently the Federal Minister drove past the Centre despite being advised of its important role in child and family support. Because the Centre is not funded by her department she did not make this visit a priority. Rather than learn of established successes and expand on these, Government continues to work with blinkers, failing to learn from experience of those on the ground and continuing to run a political agenda through policy development.

Of great concern is the resistance for many years to establish comprehensive early childhood education on Housing Associations. This is core to future safety and wellbeing of children. Programs such as that outlined in attachment 1, are models that engages parents and teach child and family through parenting and education. This in our view is fundamental to the foundation of safety for children.

Effective child and family support is the core to child protection.

Protective Intervention

There is a need for protective intervention. However it is unlikely that this system will be able to cater for the level of risk in the community. This is why child and family support services are needed as a longer term strategy to reduce the high level of risk in the community.

The existing system is unhealthy and there is an enormous question as to whether children taken into care are at the same or greater risk than they were prior to the department becoming involved.

Importantly however there are things that can be done now to achieve a much more effective system based on existing resources. There are some fundamental failings in the current system that are outlined below, which if rectified could immediately improve the situation.

- The system must clearly provide for cases at immediate risk. The current system has a history however of acting on risk that is low and failing to act on risk that is high. In acting on risk the system has few resources dedicated to prevention or early intervention. The system focuses on statutory responsibilities and legal accountability (covering their tracks) rather than the ongoing care and interest of children. Duplication by FACS staff and poor use of existing NGO's makes the system ineffective.

- There is a lack of standardized risk assessment. Decisions can be subjective and based on the personal opinions of staff rather than pure assessment of risk. Decisions lack a cultural base. There have been numerous cases where NTFC staff have assessed risk on the location of a child (i.e. On the basis that they live in a town camp) rather than the actual care they are receiving. There is a lack of engagement or trust in Aboriginal families and a lack of respect for their interests

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in their children. There is poor communication within FACS leading to duplication and internal undermining of cases – which places children at risk.

- The system continually fails to use the resources and expertise of the NGO sector in its work. It duplicates services, re-assessing children and young people who are well known to NGO's. Rather than utilizing these assessments and knowledge, FACS repeats procedures, often in the absence of an established relationship with a child and families. Assessment is poor and outcomes fail to incorporate the previous case work of NGO workers. The refusal to use the Child Welfare Coalition/FACS Interagency protocol results in major failings.

- There is a concern that the model of engaging with families is highly reactive. While recognising the need for reactive aspects to improving family welfare, and seeing NTFC is best placed to provide this, there seems to be an underemphasise on the role of early engagement with families to provide comprehensive support. There is an evident lack of engaging with families in a proactive fashion to identify issues and collaboratively work towards strengthening the family's abilities to stay together.

- This works needs to be done in a way that responds to the physical, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual domains of people's lives

- The reactive model that is used has a bias of a punitive authoritarian approach whereby families are vilified. There seems to be no recognition of the harm done through this approach brought to the work. Though there is knowledge, not only with aboriginal families in past generations, but universally, that engaging with the community in only a negative fashion can be destructive

- Workers spend a disproportionate time engaging with their clients only at times of crisis, perpetuating the reactive stereotype of their work. There is insufficient supportive work that should be expected of a guardian. This appears to be resource limited and related to NTFC staff's perceived responsibilities.

- Poor communication exists within the department so that different teams do not communicate and work together as much as they should. For example an NTFC worker placed a child in the care of a particular family member, a week later another NTFC worker organized for this same family member to be flown to Darwin to support another child, leaving the original child unsupervised

- The function of a child protection system should be to allow a child to have better parenting than what was provided prior to entering the CP system. NTFC does not provide appropriate "parenting" or care. There is a lack of consistency, communication, respect and support for social and emotional needs.

The protective system needs to be a strengths based, holistic, family based model. The Safe Families model is a model that should be considered in this context.

All parts of the system need to realign to include Government and NGO's as jointly responsible for services that provide for the care and protection of children and young people.

2.3 Workforce and Workplace Issues

Workplace and workforce issues include:

a) Recruitment

b) Induction, training and supervision

c) Staff shortage

d) High turnover of staff

e) burn out - high client to staff ratio

f) Inexperience of staff

g) Poor managerial support

h) Demand outstripping capacity means staff are unable to work in a strength based approach

i) Inconsistent case worker allocation i.e. different workers for the same

j) Staff disillusionment

k) Lack of adherence to interagency protocols

Recruitment
Recruitment of staff members to the child protection system is an ongoing issue. The Department has engaged in an extensive recruitment process overseas to increase the workforce within the Department in the Northern Territory. However the representation of Indigenous staff members is quite low compared to the general representation. The Department needs to invest in this area. The conditions of employment (such as job sharing, child care arrangements, cultural leave), cultural supervision, career pathways and the organisational culture might need to be evaluated and looked at to increase the number of indigenous staff members. An Aboriginal career pathway would be expressing a strong commitment to support professional development of local Indigenous staff. This would entail a departmental framework, which incorporates financial and organisational support to assist staff to gain formal qualifications in work related areas. Furthermore it could mean establishing close links with tertiary institutions such as e.g Deakin University, which was set in motion a few years ago. Especially in light of an increase in the Indigenous population in the next decades it is crucial for the department to look at increasing the number of Indigenous staff rather then continuously employing non – Indigenous staff members from interstate or overseas. Recognition of cultural brokerage as a skill set in its own right is important. Local Aboriginal people with language and cultural knowledge can be employed to work side-by-side child protection workers. Outsourcing of services, such as to Safe Families, which has a strong indigenous workforce is also a consideration.

Induction

Induction of new staff members is another crucial aspect for the Department to address. It is well known that there is a strong correlation between inadequate induction and early resignations. The results of high staff turnover are obvious, including increased expenditure on recruitment, negative impact on departmental image and significant effect on the clients themselves and their case management. There appears to be no clear consistent process for inducting a new staff member. The process should incorporate familiarisation with the department, different roles and teams within the organisation and other government and non-government organisations. This will enhance professional networking and understanding of resources available to the clients.

Supervision

Supervision is the key to effective management of performance and practice. Supervision guidelines are identified in the departmental policies and procedures. It is not clear whether the department has identified a model that could be used by supervisors with their staff members. However this intent of good will and departmental direction does not filter through to the operational level. Lack of supervision and guidance was a major aspect identified in exit interviews conducted with FACS staff members between 2005 - 2007. This would need further elaboration within the department so all staff members have a mutual understanding of the focus of the supervision and what effective supervision means. It is well known that poor supervision undermines not only the quality of service delivery, staff competence but also agency cohesion and interagency working.

The issue and importance of cultural supervision is mentioned below. A Culturally competent approach will allow for a different perspective on expectations and an exploration of these differences. An open and sensitive approach to discuss cultural issues regarding the supervisor and supervisee relationship establishes a benchmark for the ongoing working relationship, which ultimately impacts on the service provision to clients. This process entails being aware of gender issues and how these can impact on the supervision process e.g. white female supervisor and Indigenous male supervisee. Flexibility needs to exist for alternative plans early in the supervision process so as to provide an avenue to be pursued. If a staff member is a new graduate from interstate, lacks sound knowledge in the child protection field and complexities of the local context supervision is even more crucial.

Case worker allocation & staff Shortages

The aforementioned issues often lead to a 'catch 22' in that staff shortage. Staff resignations lead to a high case load, which inhibits staff to work from a strength based approach, which in turn will lead to frustrations on part of the worker and contribute to staff disillusionment e.g.

- Over a summer holiday period there was one female youth worker n the NTFC Youth at Risk team, case managing and working with a large number of complex female youth cases (Attachment 3: case No 3)

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- For a few months YALC staff were informed by out-of-home team that there was no case worker for 3 children (Attachment 3: case No 3)

Staff Turnover

- Having different case workers for members of the same family has created intervention strategies that were not aligned at all. This indicates poor communication and collaboration between the different program areas within the local office, and a lack of overall assessment of the situation, eg. One caseworker for a client and another for their sibling. This is questionably ineffective for the staff, and clearly disruptive to the family. For example an NTFC worker placed a child in the care of a particular family member, a week later another NTFC worker organized for this same family member to be flown to Darwin to support another child, leaving the original child unsupervised.

- Too many case workers in a short period of time which make it difficult for young people to keep track of who their departmental representative or establish a trusting relationship with.

Training

It is unclear whether the Department is serious about the training and learning aspect and perceives itself as a learning organisation or whether training is seen as the "necessary evil". The Departmental training framework covers 5 broad areas of training which are Introduction to Child Protection, Introduction to Out O Home Care, Case Management, Aboriginal Cultural Practice in Care and Protection, Strengths Approach. Each of these sessions are scheduled for two days at a time. Frequently it has been argued by senior staff within the department that these 12 days (if staff do attend all of these) are taking staff members away from the actual work. Yet, the current training provided is only touching on the bare minimum required to familiarize new staff with the different legislative and contextual issues in the Territory. The training does not provide staff members with a comprehensive training in relation to risk/safety assessment and case management/ planning tools etc. It is believed that the training needs are not being met and appear to be a short cut version. Broadening the training for staff members as well as associated NGO staff is drastically required so as to provide ongoing consecutive training while staff are familiarizing themselves with their work environment and role expectations. In order to do this more successfully and to meet the needs of staff as well as the families the department needs to invest in the NTFC workforce development unit.

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3. Practices and Systems: Functioning of the Child Protection system

NOTE: Tangentyere recognizes the work of the FACS staff who operate under very difficult conditions due to systemic failures. While the following identifies serious issues with case work, attitudes and approaches we do not want to disregard those staff who have over the years provided a great standard of care to the community. Staff are often dedicated and work at the most challenging end of the child protection system.

3.1 Cultural competence and safety

The Northern Territory needs a child protection system that can be classified as culturally competent and safe. Cultural competent and safe practice is not just referring to and targeting the workforce level. An organizational commitment to cultural competence is a prerequisite to achieve best practice and make cultural competence possible.

> "New workers have no idea about cultural sensitivities, brokerage, and rules and often
> cause offence. Cultural obligation is often misinterpreted."
> Aboriginal Staff member

The department needs to provide a best practice framework within which to pursue and achieve cultural competence and safety. Cultural competence on the organizational level entails a reflection of diversity within the organization, its adopted policies, procedures, programs, standards and processes. It should be reflected in the mission statement, propagated values and action plans. This entails that cultural competence is not something that staff members solely have to take responsibility for. It is the organizational framework as well as its workforce- both, mutually conditional, which should ultimately reflect the provision of a culturally competent service. It is crucial that cultural competence permeates every facet of an organization. Cultural competence needs to become the red thread that infiltrates every organizational aspect, as the child protection service is provided within a socio –linguistic, socio – economic and cultural context that currently diverges greatly from the service provider.

Cultural safety is required in order to establish effective and positive working relationship with the wider community and to keep children and young people safe and protected from harm. It requires a mutual understanding of what constitutes wellbeing/ harm and subsequent course of action. The importance in defining child harm lies in finding a common ground of understanding and this should consider culturally appropriate factors. Currently the department is working from a very ethnocentric perspective that does not consider the cultural complexities experienced in practice. Korbin (1997,1999) has proposed three levels of consideration. Firstly, she deems cultural differences in childrearing practices and beliefs as important to bear in mind. These are practices which are viewed as acceptable in the culture where they occur, but are seen as abusive and neglectful by outsiders. Secondly, she stresses to consider idiosyncratic departures from ones cultural continuum of acceptable behaviour to children. While all societies vary in what they define as harm, all societies have criteria for behaviour that is outside the range of acceptability. This can not be done in isolation and requires a very good understanding of cultural issues.

Finally, she clearly includes societal harm to children. This relates to conditions such as poverty, lack of material resources, health care and nutrition, which seriously compromise the well-being of children and yet are beyond individual parental control.

A further area of consideration in relation to Aboriginal culture must be the cultural differences in parenting that provide for improved care, protection and development of children.

To address the above mentioned issue it is vital to involve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, because attempts so far have failed to adequately safeguard vulnerable children in the community. The Department and the Aboriginal communities share a mutual interest, that is, protecting the well being of children. This mutual concern should be capitalized on to reduce the number of children entering the system and to minimize the over representation of Aboriginal children in the Out of Home Care system. Review of Cultural Safety measures that have been successfully achieved in New Zealand, along with the Family Group Conferencing model should be explored. The aforementioned issues should inform statutory intervention.

Specific Practice issues

- Culturally competent assessment and intervention tools are non-existent at this stage. There are no tools for children and their family members to assist and facilitate the understanding of the likely legal issues to be encountered and options available. It is worth mentioning that Tracy Westermann (2003) developed an assessment tool in suicide prevention for Indigenous young people. This tool is pictorial, which seems to work very well with Indigenous youths "at risk" of suicidal behaviour or depression. The current departmental assessment tools and reports lack this approach, and the court reports are filled very much with jargon. Development of metaphorical stories and illustrations could be used to convey the meaning of child protection intervention rather than just the rational court report.

- Ongoing training which will enhance the skills, create a sound knowledge base and shift values which reflect cultural competence is required. The organization has a responsibility to provide avenues and pathways for this to occur. This is not happening at this point in time. It is worthwhile citing Mc Phatter (1997:259)at this point

  "Child welfare practitioners assume that competence with racially, culturally, and ethnically distinct groups can be achieved through short –term and often one-shot workshops and classes. This assumption reflects a short sighted, simplistic view of a complex process. Restructuring one's worldview and developing a sound base of knowledge and skills are long – term professional endeavours".

  The existing modules need to be refined to incorporate the cultural aspects. While the training framework is explicit about the strengths approach it is implicit about cultural components and only offers a one day module specifically related to this issue.

- Supervision of staff needs to encompass cultural aspects and should have different layers at which cultural matters might need to be addressed. This entails looking at the supervisor-supervisee relationship as well as consideration of cultural issues in the supervisee – client

interaction. The importance of avoiding an ethnocentric approach in the supervision process can not be understated

- To have a comprehension and knowledge of the different modes of discourse in the Northern Territory is important and has been written about by a number of researchers. Christie's (2002) identifies that

" in Yolngu discourse, the question and answer approach is complicated by factors such as cultural restrictions on who may ask for, or give specific information. It is generally considered impolite to contradict or to respond negatively, particularly in encounters of unequal power or when the participants lack a close relationship" (Christie 2002)"

If these issues are not considered, a perpetual cycle of misunderstandings and blaming can occur and do not result in ethical best practice situations. This has been observed in various situations and one particular example is: the case worker stated in anger and frustration
"but she said yes when we asked her".
The family member might have appeared to agree when in fact she was not agreeing to what was said. She might have just provided a perceived expected response in order to please staff. Christie refers to this as *"gratuitous concurrence" (Christie 2002).*

- Looking at the intercultural communication in Child Protection, situational factors are included in the wider sense. Issues such as the use or lack of interpreters, (who decides whether an interpreter is required), the timeframe, the location of a meeting (who decides this), structure and agenda all have a bearing on the communication process

- Family Group Conferencing as a means to assist in decision making processes can be seen as a model worthwhile exploring. It presents an avenue for participative decision making compared to previous adversarial decision making processes. Ban (2005) describes the intention of the model as "to transfer the power and authority of decision making for children into the hands of people who have a life long connection with them and who have to live with the outcome of the decisions made. The process acknowledges the strengths of the family and Merkel – Holguin (2005) characterizes it as a strengths –based, family-based, community based cultural competence based approach.

- Recruitment and employment of Aboriginal staff members

- A standing elders committee, to provide cultural advice relating to case work, and to assist with supervision and training.

Aboriginal Child Placement principle was recently identified by the National Child protection Framework, which was endorsed by COAG, as needing strengthening and compliance with the Child protection system in all jurisdictions. Not an either or decision. Tangentyere strongly support the ACPP.

3.2 Intake and Assessment

a) Cases falling through gaps

    a. Notification was made to NTFC by staff regarding two siblings. CP informed staff that children were not high enough risk for them to investigate, staff requested Targeted Family Support Scheme TFSS pick up the case and we were informed that children were too high risk for their team, resulting in no service delivery and an non-actioned notification. Children fell through the gap

b) Over reactive responses (see Attachment 3)

c) Assessment does not appear to be satisfactorily engaging with all family members and other services with a solid understanding of the child and the family (see Attachment 3). The national Placement Principle and principle 8(2) in part 1.3 of the Care and Protection of Children Act were not complied with. The non compliance with the section of the Act and the Placement Principle raises ongoing concerns and in a number of situations this was only pursued when external parties advocated strongly for this to happen. The placement principle should not under any circumstances compromise the safety and wellbeing of the child but it should be considered, which appears to be happening haphazardly and not as a matter of fact.

d) Centralised intake system:

    i. takes a long time for a notification to get back to Alice Springs from Darwin, as a consequence, no quick response and child wellbeing and safety is jeopardized, (see case 4)

    ii. Intake staff have no local knowledge or experience and therefore assessment for Alice Springs clients is poor, for example they may not prioritise cases due to lack of local knowledge and then high risk cases fall through the gap.

    iii. Response times are a real issue, FACS can be called and the Night Patrol is unable to go on with their core tasks because FACS has not arrived to pick up a child at risk.

    iv. Having to go through Darwin after hours is unsatisfactory. They don't understand local context and issues of child at risk and sometimes assess a situation as not urgent and leave the patrols having to come up with alternative and unsatisfactory solutions.

    v. There is no information freely available about local after hour on call service.

e) Mandatory reporting

    i. A number of times staff have made notifications to NTFC and have not had a response from NTFC regarding whether and how the notification will be actioned. Staff members have had to contact NTFC to be informed regarding the follow up and outcome.

    ii. Minimal training provided to the community in relation to the current Mandatory reporting responsibilities in the community. This leads to ill informed reporting processes at times.

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Especially health and educational staff need to be trained more intensively re child protection matters.

iii. Current Mandatory reporting needs to be reviewed

f) Discrimination

Of serious concern are repeated experiences of families being told that they would not have their children returned to them while they were living on a Town Camp. This is discrimination at its worst and is the product of subjective opinion rather that objective assessment. While Town Camps may have social issues, there are many people who reside on town camps and live in safety. That a person lives in a Housing Association does not make them neglectful or abusive parents. Many outside services make judgements about families based on the physical circumstances they are living in rather than their ability to care for their child.

g) Young People

A recent Interagency Service Delivery Model (ISDM) was welcomed by the Patrollers as an opportunity to network with FACS (and to clarify the role of FACS). It would be useful for a skilled youth worker to be embedded with the Youth Patrol and this would also clarify the after-hours issues.

3.3 Out of Home Care Services

- There is Insufficient support provided for foster carers by the department

- Foster parents are often poorly supported by case workers at all hours. If kids abscond it is difficult for those carers with other children to go looking for the child and the after hours response is frequently poor.

- Carers need to be better informed about the circumstances of the kids, the family networks they belong to.

- Placements do not appear to be reviewed regularly enough

- Many carers do not see support workers for months and many feel they are not listened to in relation to their knowledge and experience of the child.

- There is Insufficient and sporadic access provided between children in care and their families, generally access is only provided to parents and siblings. Once children are in care there is insufficient work to ensure an ongoing connection to culture and family. Re-connection to family is not prioritised. This would assist in over-demand on foster carers and an improved system for families and children. Efforts must be made for children in care to have regular access with their extended families.

- There is a reticence to use bush/community placements that are in our assessment legitimate e.g. a placement had been secured with a family member in a remote community in Central

Australia. The family member already provided care for some of the Childs siblings. NTFC management would not allow the placement arrangements to proceed due to a team's leaders personal judgement on the bush/family placement. Their communication implied that the child could do better and go further in life, if they were placed in town, rather than a family community placement. The team leader was suggesting that town based accommodation and potential schooling will bring a more productive live, than having stronger kinship ties and a stronger sense of culture. Ironically the child has not demonstrated any regular school attendance, is putting herself at extremely high risk, including Volatile Substance Abuse and sexual activity, she has had limited parenting provided to her, among other things.

- Placing Indigenous kids outside their culture places the continuance of culture at great risk; this is particularly so where the placements go on for extended periods.

  NOTE: some of the following comments are direct from staff who have had both personal and professional experiences within the system

- Too little effort goes into keeping kids in care within their extended family.

- Too Little effort goes into investigating the circumstances of the family before a kid is taken away.

- The easy way is to take a kid away rather than to support the family to provide the care the child needs

- Breast fed children have been taken away from their mothers…forced onto formula where it would again be better if the mother were supported to provide the range of care the child needs.

- Too many grandmothers are overloaded with kids to care for and are used as a dumping ground by FACS and there is a chronic failure to support the grandmothers, provide the financial assistance they need and monitor their need for respite.

- There is little or no work going into training parents and placing expectations on parents to learn and step up.

- FACS processes supports the continuation of poor parenting by failing to provide support and guidance to parents.

Tangentyere fully supports the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. The comments of the Bath report that "in some cases (the Aboriginal child placement) principle appears to be given primacy over basic child protection considerations" are unhelpful and do not explain the real picture. Aboriginal children are not at placed at risk because of this principle. They are placed at risk because of bad case management and assessment, poor cultural competence and cultural safety practices. Findings such as this can contribute to an unfair attack on Aboriginal cultural and ultimate protection of our children.

3.4 Case management

Case management issues with NTFC have been an area of concern in the different program areas operating at Tangentyere. The failure of NTFC to abide by the overarching Protocols Between NT Family And Children's Services (FACS) and Central Australian Community Organisations is of greatest concern and this is elaborated upon later.

- It appears that effective case management does not occur. The ongoing issues experienced by Tangentyere staff include inadequate co-operation, collaboration, and communication

- Clients of the Town camps report that they have attempted to contact case workers several times via phone but to no avail only be told afterwards they should have contacted them. The means to contact the case workers are often provided via the Tangentyere case workers at the Community centres or mobile phones of Family support workers.

  "I felt really sad when my kids went away. Congress came to Hidden Valley to check all babies health. My 2 babies weight was really low, even though I was feeding them. Congress reported to FACS. They didn't tell me. I was at my partners families house in Yuendemu. I was eating some breakfast in the morning and we saw FACS and the police from Yuendemu to go my kids at a family house. They took me and my 2 kids away from Yuendemu. All the families in Yuendemu were really sad when they took the kids away. FACS took me back to Hidden Valley. When I got out of the car, my 2 kids were crying for me. FACS told me they were taking my kids to a carer. They didn't tell me how long my kids would be away. That was a long time ago. They didn't tell me anything. They didn't talk to me. I felt really sad." – Hidden Valley Resident

  Another example to highlight this and how it can lead to drift in care, is the 14 months long stay of a young teenage girl in a short term (6weeks) residential setting. Attempts by Tangentyere staff to have case planning meetings to progress the case management satisfactorily have been postponed/ stalled and no proactive actions to change this situation for the young girl have been taken by the departmental staff members.

- Case management - support fro those leaving care, or transitioning to independence are often poorly handled. Case workers are not preparing the young people in care for independent living. There appears to be no or very limited transition support and planning. To hear a case worker state *"oh he is turning 18 tomorrow and no plan in place'* is grossly neglecting the duty of care the CEO has for children and young people in his/her care. This process should start well before the young person is to leave the care of the CEO and should start building bridges to support systems after they have left care.

- Case planning appears to be neglected and this experience is unfortunately shared by a number of Tangentyere case workers in different program areas. Section 70 under part 2.2 of the Care and Protection Act which refers to the preparation of the care plans for young people in care. However this is rarely occurring at this stage. Staff made the following observation:

  "It appears that Department staff do not have a clear sense of goals and a direction for cases. Or if there are case plans documented, there seems to be a poor ability to adhere to it."

There is for example a consistent lack of information provided to the residential program in relation to young people being placed with the service. Staff members regularly have to follow up in relation to medical information, access/contact with family members and arrangements and information in relation to 'at risk' youths and their safety plan.

Best practice and the agreed to protocols stipulate the development of case plans with all relevant parties concerned including the young person. This will ensure that everyone is clear on what the issues are, which goals need to be achieved, by whom and when. While this is part of the Departmental strength based training the actual implementation of developing case plans in collaboration with others is seldom initiated by departmental staff members or consistently followed through in case of change of case worker.

The following illustrates concerns regarding continuity of case planning and care e.g.. a 12 year old female client with severe attachment and behavioural issues, was provided intensive therapeutic intervention at one stage during her care with NTFC, however after there was a change in caseworker for this client, this was dropped and not seen as a priority.

- The Departmental training framework includes case management training as well as case planning but this does not seem to filter through to the practice and operational implementation. The training provides a tool to be used for case planning but it appears this tool is not being utilised at all. The reasons for this are probably manifold and can only be assumed and would need further investigation. However it is recommended that if a tool is provided in training that it will be utilised and implemented on the organisational level and thereby providing consistency throughout the Department i.e. from Service System Improvement Unit through to the operational area. This lack of consistency not only leads to lack of consistent approach in case management/ case planning but also to confusion for new staff members.

- The lack of case plans is particularly noticeable around safety plans in times of crisis. It at times appears that safety plans are non-existent. It is recognised that the lack of secure accommodation in town plays a role here, however the seemingly lack of a plan is likewise implicated.

- The inability to plan for and provide long term safe accommodation for young people under guardianship has been clear (see case study No.). Children being placed under orders due to safety and parenting concerns, and living at the same address years later highlights points above.

- The lack of residential options for children under guardianship in Alice Springs, is partnered with a lack of residential options for at risk children not under NTFC care. When NGOs have concerns about short term safety matters for children not under the care of the department, there are limited options available.

- When kids have been case managed by FACS in the past and there is a need for them to go back on to case management, the process is as long and convoluted as the first time.

- At times the response to a notification has been so "collaborative" that our service wonders whether FACS was just happy to let another agency do the work. There is no real partnership. Where FACS takes a role in the case, there is little engagement or partnership work with other agencies – where FACS seeks engagement with another agency often this means that FACS

becomes highly disengaged. The off-again on-again nature of their engagement in some cases is also difficult for families, young people and service providers.

- There is often an authoritarian approach rather than one of 'care'. This authoritarian approach is most likely to be ineffective with a teenage population where there are already behavioural concerns demonstrated, arising from complex family scenarios. Generally children who come into the care system during adolescence already have issues with authoritative figures, which limits the effectiveness of this approach. If children do need to be placed in the care system during adolescence a more engaging and less punitive approach needs to be developed and it needs to be more complex and holistic.

- Staff have found that NTFC provide very limited, if any, aftercare or exit planning, with other services or clients. Clients appear to be "dropped" once they have turned 18.

3.5 Early intervention

The current intervention places a strong emphasis and almost sole resources on the tertiary response and less on early prevention and strengthening the community. Substantive early intervention models are required in the Northern Territory to shift this emphasis. The integrated Community Hubs and Universal Early Childhood Education (attachment 1) is one of these models.

Much has been written in recent years about the benefits of investing in preventative models. Amongst others CAFWAA (2007) called on the government to increase the service provision in early intervention and prevention programs for families as it is seen as a major investment in relation to the development of social capital and healthy communities. Investment in supporting families and their children before reaching a major crisis point should attract greater attention in program funds, which are outsourced to the community sector. An increase in funds will create a supportive pathway for families who have shown resilience in extreme circumstances and are struggling to pursue the wellbeing of their children and family members.

3.6 Interaction between Government and Non government agencies

Protocols Between NT Family And Children's Services (FACS) and Central Australian Community Organisations .

The difficulties experienced by various agencies in working with the department led to the development of an Interagency protocol. The FACS/Child Welfare Coalition Reference Group first devised the protocols in 2003. After they failed to be integrated successfully into practice, the protocols were reviewed by the sector and implementation guidelines were developed. The protocol and guidelines were re- implemented in February 2007. This protocol was intended to bring best practice across the sector, raising the standards of how we deal with children and young people. It was to set a benchmark for all service providers. It was to ensure a transparent and shared understanding of expectation and practices for effective joint case management.

The apparent refusal of the department and its workers to abide by the document undervalues the work put into this collaborative approach to improve outcomes for children in the region. It is a cause of frustration that FACS staff appear to have no working knowledge of this document. This document states that from the investigation stage onwards, the department will be calling upon the expertise and experience of other providers. In practice it appears to be based upon the worker, and the workers attitude at the time, as to whether or not these principles of joint case management, shared service delivery and open channels of communication are adhered to. Though there is frank admission that department staffing resources do not match the volume of the demand, and some recognition of the role that other services play, there is reluctance of staff to build effective, meaningful and respectful relationships with other service staff to achieve goals for the child and family. It is either not valued, or not prioritised.

Currently the document and the guiding principles are brought to the attention of new staff via an irregular training process. It is recommended that this document and its guidelines should be an integral part of an induction and initial training process to enhance the working relationships and ultimately the outcomes for the young people and their families.

Us and Them Approach

The issues of concern here could be summed up as the two-fold 'us' and 'them' attitude that departmental workers display. This describes how workers delineate the work they do being clearly separated from

> a) the children and their family they are serving, and

> b) from the other agencies involved in a case

There is a disempowering attitude when working with families and other services. Departmental staff believe that expertise for all things related to family welfare is held within the department. There appears to be a lack of respect for the skills and experience that families have, as well as recognising

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the value of other services. This naivety or arrogance leads to incomplete assessments of children's scenarios, poor relationship building, lack of coherent planning and potentially poor outcomes for families. The lack of respect shown to family members and NGO staff, who have solid working relationships with families, and a wealth of experience, is undermined and undervalued in the process.

It is the perception of NGO staff that departmental staff only recognise the shortcomings of families, hold disrespectful attitudes towards them, and only have negative interactions. This leads to a distrust of families, and repercussions on children's attitudes towards a service that maligns their family.

3.7 Ideal ways of NTFC working / when it is going well

There are times when cases are well managed. The following is an overview from staff of what makes this work:

- Investigation stage engages with families in a sensitive fashion

- Investigation utilises experience of YALC and other services

- As the major case working service engaging with families, YALC is involved with all stages of case planning

- NTFC respond in a timely fashion to notifications

- If time is limiting immediate investigation, NTFC still inform notifier they have received the notification and the time frame as to an expected investigation

- Regular, frequent and appropriate case meetings with families occur throughout investigation, and occur at a place and in a fashion that is determined by the family

- Communication is regular between NTFC and family throughout this process

- Communication is ongoing between NTFC and service staff throughout this process

- Investigation takes a strength based approach to support the family, rather than react in a punitive fashion

- Good principles are consistent throughout the organisation, rather than being dependent on individual case workers abilities and stress levels

- Workers are required to work flexibly, and recognise the complexities of families lives and things can change

- The child being investigated is present at the meeting so that access is also provided

- Staff are highly skilled in engaging with clients and families

- Staff understand the background and history of the families and communities they serve

- Staff have a working knowledge as to how achieve successful outcomes for the child and family that may have a different world view

- Access is flexible, is family driven, and provided to immediate and extended family

- Staff recognise the obstacle of being based in a building, and improve their ability to work with clients and families in their setting.

- When children are in 'Out of Home' team, that communication channels stay open, including speaking to learning centre staff before or after going to see clients and families

- Joint Case Management is just that

- NTFC recognise that services are involved in providing case work to the client and family and therefore should be constantly informed as to plans for the child, both in the long term and also on a daily basis if necessary

Staff engaging in an appropriate fashion with the family, on a regular basis, and the instigation of a collaborative approach that works together with relevant agencies in a respectful way – i.e. adhere to the Protocols Between NT Family And Children's Services (FACS) and Central Australian Community Organisations

ATTACHMENT 1 – INTEGRATED SERVICE APPROACH TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

ATTACHMENT 2 – SAFE FAMILIES PROGRAM

ATTACHMENT 3 – CASE EXAMPLES

APPENDIX 2

Tangentyere Council Safe Families Program

Introduction and Context

The social contexts faced by disadvantaged Aboriginal children in Central Australia are complex and multi faceted and place vulnerable children at risk of becoming habituated into lifestyles that limit their opportunity to participate in, and access the wealth, success and healthy life that most non Aboriginal young Australians accept as an inalienable right.

In Alice Springs there are a considerable number of Aboriginal children under 15 years of age who are identified as highly marginalized, vulnerable to acts of violence or sexual abuse, of becoming habituated to harmful substances, likely to come to the notice of police and/or statutory welfare and likely to experience interactions with the criminal justice and/or mental health systems. A smaller number of those at greatest risk can be observed in and around the CBD area of Alice Springs into the early hours of the morning, frequently heavily affected by substances such as alcohol and/or inhalants.

The Safe Families project was conceived as a result of concerns raised by the Alice Springs community, including, senior Aboriginal leaders, Government Departments and a number of existing youth service providers concerned for the well being of this group of children. Community concerns centred on a lack of safe, supportive accommodation options for high risk children under 15.

The model for the Safe Families Project evolved through a series of community consultations and discussions with Aboriginal elders, community groups and service providers with an interest in the provision of a safe and appropriate crisis accommodation services. A core group of youth sector members provided valuable support and direction to the development of the model. Those involved in the various stages of consultancy agreed a service for children under 15 years of age was urgently required within the town.   In the discussion and workshop sessions it was unanimously agreed the proposed model should address issues in such a way as to not only remedy the immediate problems, but address longer term issues whilst maintaining respect for the cultural integrity of Aboriginal family systems.

The overall project management is the responsibility of Tangentyere Council. Tangentyere Council is an Aboriginal community controlled resource agency, delivering housing, essential services and programs to 18 separately incorporated Housing Association communities in Alice Springs, and the Central Australian region. The Tangentyere Council Executive is made up of a representative from each Town Camp, meaning that our bosses are our direct clients. As a result they identify and approve the development of services to address immediate needs on the ground. Residents of the Housing Associations are culturally remote from many services in town and suffer from high levels of poverty, grief and social stress and inadequate resources (including access to communication systems such as mail & telephone services; transport, decent housing or education/training or employment opportunities). As a consequence Tangentyere Council has a range of services to assist Town Camp communities in Alice Springs and communities in remote areas. These services and the associated interagency partnerships are used to establish and maintain plans for community improvement and are designed to support Alice Springs and remote community initiatives in the areas of public health, housing, employment and training, youth affairs and early interventions.

The Safe Families program was endorsed with great enthusiasm by the Tangentyere Council executive who recognized that many of the children needing the service were from Town Camps and that as an organization and leaders of their communities they have a responsibility to take a leading role in the development and operation of critical services to improve the lives of children to grow up strong and healthy – physically, emotionally and in their culture.

The community partnership between Tangentyere and other government and non government service providers recognized children could not be assisted in isolation from their families, that families are intrinsic to the lives of children and needed to be central in the development of the program model. The partners recognized Aboriginal families are the experts on ways to re-engage and reclaim responsibility for the care of their children. They agreed the response needed to be based within existing and successful frameworks of care within Aboriginal families and culture to have any real long term outcomes for both children and their families. It was identified as essential that family structures required support to build upon the family's strengths to maintain strong, positive, safe family and community relationships, which could ensure the long term care and protection interests of children and carers converge.

Throughout the consultations it was acknowledged that for some children, the provision of consistently adequate support and care from immediate family is not always an option. However the provision of care and support from within the Aboriginal community is of paramount importance in terms of fostering and maintaining family, community and cultural connectedness. Aboriginal cultures are entrenched in models of extended kinship care, and these cultures guide the service responses and development for Safe Families. This is a direction laid down by the grandmothers who informed the program's development and who expressed their fear for the future of their grandchildren, while providing a strong solution to the problem. The grandmothers identified that what was needed was the identification of a 'safe families' program within the Aboriginal community that provides support and care to children, ideally extended family members. It was acknowledged that, for many years, families have been providing this type of care and support on an informal basis, often without being adequately resourced to do so. They acknowledged that to address the disadvantage experienced by the targeted client group a concentrated and collaborative partnership response by families, the community, funders and services providers was required.

The collaborative case management work achieved by the youth sector in Alice Springs over a number of years reinforced the conviction that only an integrated approach would close the gaps in service delivery and re-direct part of the funds allocated to crisis accommodation services to the preventive end of the service continuum. The program is aimed at targeting the risk factors contributing to protective concerns experienced by 'at risk' Aboriginal children, rather than establishing a program which is responsive only to the symptoms of homelessness. Safe Families over time is designed to build the capacity of parents, families and communities to address broader issues which contribute to children's experience of living in cycles of perpetual crisis, neglect and homelessness.

Safe Families Program Description

Safe Families was developed to address the lack of safe, supportive options for young people (7 - 14 yrs) who had been identified as being at risk.

Safe Families model, was developed by Tangentyere Council, local Aboriginal people and local service providers over a period of 8 months in 2003. Planning identified the need to develop an integrated service response with the following features:

- Early intervention - aimed at building the strength of parents, families and communities to prevent and to deal with crises as they emerge.
- Family placements - where young people at crisis are placed in a stable environment with extended family where possible;
- Supporting Existing Kinship networks and community "safe houses"
- Crisis accommodation- when other options have been exhausted
- Comprehensive Case Management
- Parent and Family Support

Referral - Children And Families Identified For Service:

Many young people who are clients of the Safe Families receive little or no meaningful support from immediate family. While the reasons for this are multifaceted and complex, the following factors have been linked with family breakdown and the inability of some families to provide adequate care within Indigenous communities:

- The impact of past assimilationist and protection policies regarding Indigenous communities
- Severed links to family, resulting in the loss of opportunity to observe and develop positive parenting skills.
- Dislocation from land, language and community and therefore loss of knowledge relating to role, identity, cultural obligations and responsibilities.
- Conflict between families
- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Inadequate and overcrowded housing
- Domestic Violence
- Substance Misuse
- Ongoing grief and trauma relating to the loss of family members
- The over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system
- Poor health
- Inadequate and inappropriate education systems
- Unemployment
- Sexual abuse

Children referred for service present with multiple complex presentation issues including:

- Do not have a safe family environment and thereby experience ongoing placement disruption resulting in homelessness
- Are on the streets at night.
- Engage in juvenile offending
- Engage in substance abuse.
- Have already experienced physical and sexual assaults and are at risk of further assault.
- Are witnesses and/or victims of violence
- Experience family conflict
- Experience inferior standards of living
- Are not engaged in education or training
- Are often malnourished and experience poor long term health outcomes
- Do not develop into strong and healthy adults and parents.
- Identified as 'at high risk' of suicide.

The Safe Families Model:

The model has been designed to address both the acute shortage of emergency/crisis accommodation and longer-term safe accommodation options for marginalized and disadvantaged Aboriginal children.

It was identified that short term safe accommodation is one part of an overall response that maybe required while work is being undertaken with families to address broader concerns related to parenting, education, financial management, substance abuse, family violence and health.

The program model consists of:

1. Accommodation Options

a) Kids Safe House
    A short-term crisis accommodation house operates within an intensive casework model and is staffed by Aboriginal people and senior elders from the local Aboriginal community

    The placements at the short term crisis accommodation service is designed to provide a brief window of opportunity for Family Workers and Youth Services to

    -   Connect children back to safe living environment within their family structures, utilising family mapping procedures to determine the appropriate people to care for children by.
    -   Identify and recruit extended kinship carers
    -   Deliver intensive support to families so they can provide or resume care of / for their children.
    -   Provide intensive support processes to children and make appropriate referrals to service providers for additional supports identified as necessary to maintain the integrity of placements and the wellbeing of the young person.
    -   Develop strong links/with Aboriginal support networks for children and their families.
    -   Identify opportunities for children to reconnect to family and cultures

b) Existing 'Safe Houses' within the community.

Grandmothers and Aunties have identified that the existing kinship care network requires support. Service providers and community members are aware of those houses within the community that provide a place of safety and care for young people and children. Often they take a burden beyond their resources. Grandmothers and Aunties identified that they did not want to become formal foster carers or be part of the system, but they did require basic assistance with food, bedding and clothing.

These carers did not want to become embroiled in family arguments about child payments, but did want to provide for the safety of the children and young people who were seeking them out.

The Safe Families program identifies these 'community safe houses' and provides support through a brokerage fund. Family workers (see below) are to support these carers and provide links and assistance to support the extended kinship network

c) Family Houses

Safe Families has 2 houses identified for families who are at risk of homelessness. Planning for Safe Families identified the needs of families who are suffering sorry business, single fathers and other families at risk of homelessness. The Family Houses are semi-supported accommodation, with families provided with living skills support over a 3 month period while longer term accommodation is sought. An agreement with Territory Housing was to provide for priority housing for these families.

d) Town Camp Safe Houses - a future development

A future development of Safe Families is to establish identified Safe Houses for children and young people within Town Camp communities. While the aim is to create universal safety within Town Camps, it has been identified that houses such as these could be a critical step. The vision is to employ local people from the Town Camp to staff the houses, providing a point of community education and a focus for community safety.

2. Family Strengths Based Case Work

Aboriginal family support workers are a core part of Safe Families. These workers participate in collaborative joint case management with other service provider partners using a Strengths Based Framework. Participatory Case Planning includes:

a) Identify and address areas of concern where the issues facing children and their families may result in the removal of children onto statutory child protection orders.

b) Connect children back to safe living environments within their kinship network, utilizing family mapping geno grams to identify culturally 'right way' placements that meet their physical and emotional wellbeing needs

c) Deliver an intensive case management model to monitor and support extended kinship care placements to ensure placements remain intact and highly functional in the interests of the child/ren.

d) Provide targeted parenting programs that build on family strengths and capacity to provide care and support to children by providing parenting programs in areas such as
   i. Domestic and sexual violence
   ii. Alcohol use.
   iii. Child abuse & neglect.
   iv. Drug / substance abuse.
   v. Grief, loss and trauma
   vi. Health issues.
   vii. Education issues.
   viii. Financial issues.

e) Support fathers to take responsibility for their children
   i. Develop and provide training and support in men's programs that assist in better access and care arrangements for children.

f) Support mothers to take responsibility for their children
   i. Develop and provide support training in women's programs that assist in better care arrangements for children.

g) Identify and support the development of 'safe houses' on town camps within Alice Springs.

h) Maintain collaborative relationship with other agencies, organisations and departments.

i) Assist in the development of new knowledge for working with Aboriginal children, their families and their communities.

j) Assist in the ongoing development of culturally relevant assessment/client information tools for use with Aboriginal families.

The Partnership

The success of Safe Families depends on strong partnerships at both the funder and the provider level.

The partnerships have a primary objective of improving outcomes for young people in Alice Springs who are 'at risk' or experiencing crisis. However, the partners recognise that those outcomes will not be achieved without a holistic approach to the issue – an approach encompassing not only the individual experiencing crisis, but the individual's family and community – and which recognises the importance of the circumstances and environment in which crises arise.

The partnerships aim to integrate the contributions – whether financial, service delivery, service planning, service review, etc – of each of the parties and sets out the roles and responsibilities of each of the funding agencies and the service providing organisations.

Two partnership are formalised through a standard MOU with partner bodies. The first will be with the funders and the second with service providers.

Representation from funding partner bodies is as follows:

Tangentyere Council	Manager Social Services & Coodinator Safe Families Project
ATSIC	The Regional Manager, Central Australia
AHL	Manager, Central Australian Region
DHCS	Services Development Officer (FACS)
Territory Housing	Director Operations South

Representation from service provider partner bodies is as follows:

Tangentyere Council	Manager Social Services & Coordinator Safe Families Project
ASYASS	Manager
FACS	Program Manager, Central Australia and Barkley
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress	Coordinator Youth Team
Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Corporation	Coordinator
Reconnect Programs (GYC, NPY Women's Council, Waltja)	Coordinators

Management

The overall project management is the responsibility of Tangentyere Council.

Other advisory and accountability structures include:

- Reference Committee inviting representation from ASYASS, Tangentyere, Stolen Generations, Reconnect, Gap youth Centre, Waltja, Congress Youth Team, the NT Police Department, Family and Children's Services, and community (consumer) reps – quarterly meetings to monitor project development, implementation and operation
- Town Camp Reference Committee: sub committee of Tangentyere executive – quarterly meetings
- Oversighting committee (funders) –– 6-monthly meetings or at the request of any party to ensure program and financial accountability

Staffing

Safe Families seeks support from resources managed by other agencies. Tangentyere Council will seek an MOU with Congress and Reconnect to provide youth case management services to young people who are accessing the Safe Families Project. Additional support will be sought from a variety of organisations such as Life Promotion for suicide prevention education, Centrelink, Good Beginnings, Education and Health services. Existing resources and youth initiatives within Tangentyere Council and ASYASS will also support the service.

Action and Intervention Research Methods

Safe Families has two goals: : *the first* is to provide a service which supports families and ensures the safety and well being of children in a culturally relevant service model; *the second* is to develop new ways of working with Aboriginal families.

To achieve this, a combination of Action and Intervention Research methods will be utilised. Action and Intervention Research Methods are designed to develop data derived from the careful tracking and recording of case work. This data is analysed, synthesised and fed back into the development of the service, casework and operation. At the same time as case work is improved by this process, effective and efficient ways of operating Safe Families will also be identified.

Safe Families has been designed in such a way that the Action and Intervention Research methods component is central. This proposal includes the ways in which the elements of these research methods are built into the construction of Safe Families and its operation such that the analysis, synthesis and feed-back of information is a continual process, intercepted by two monthly formal review discussions. These review discussions will be overseen by an external consultant through site visits.

It is anticipated that the Action and Intervention Research phases will be part of Safe Families for the first three years of its operation, with a review then taking place about its continuance. In that time the consultant will prepare annual reports to accompany the reports provided by Safe Families to the funding bodies.

It Is Anticipated The Use Of Action And Intervention Research Methods Will Result In:

- new knowledge about how to conduct family work in the context of Aboriginal communities and cultures
- new knowledge about the ways to engage in work with Aboriginal children, their families and community
- conceptual models to understand family life in Aboriginal communities
- new practice skills and techniques
- effective ways to build cultural programs

Principles

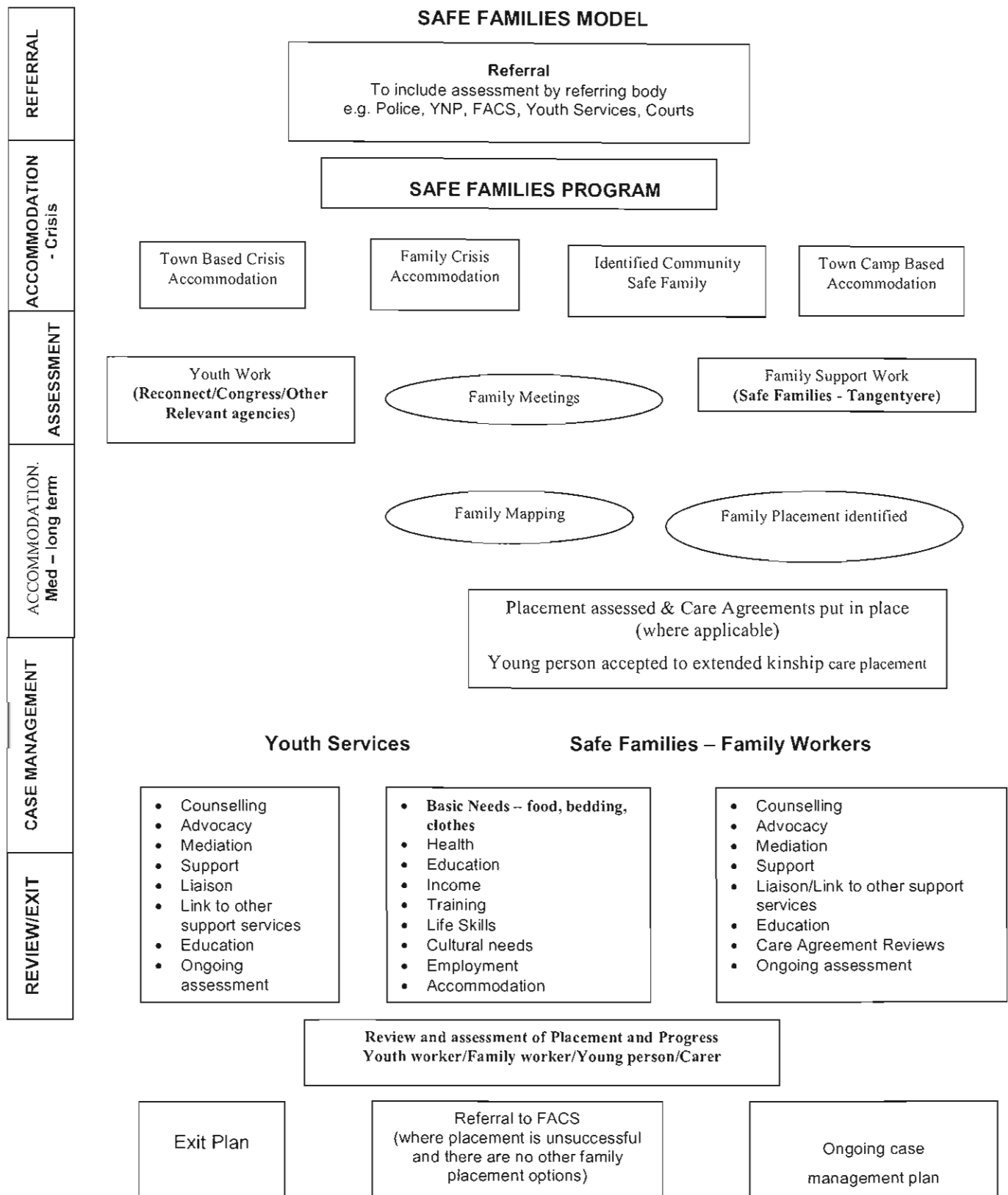The underlying principles of Safe Families are:

- Aboriginal cultures exists within Aboriginal society and Safe Families will respect and maintain cultures
- Aboriginal communities aim to strengthen language and cultures and Safe Families will assist in this process
- Indigenous people must have their say in what happens to Indigenous young people
- Aboriginal young people exist in between cultures and need both Indigenous and Western skills, language and education to negotiate these cultures.
- Family and community care is a preferred option to institutionalised care.
- That family and the Indigenous community should become the responsible parties for the care and nurturing of their children.
- The Indigenous people should be supported in the provision of care for their families.
- Ongoing support is needed to enable successful and supportive outcomes for safe family placements.
- Indigenous workers are required to enable Safe Families to deliver culturally safe services to young people and their families.
- Appropriate programs / workshops are needed as educational tools for young people and families to fully understand the best way to address their problems.
- A strong focus on case management is required in order for agencies and Organisations to deliver appropriate services.
- Youth service providers Government and non-Government agencies need to work closely together in addressing the issues of young people and their families.
- Safe Families will provide a comprehensive and professional service and will carry the responsibility of developing new knowledge and ways of working

Safe Families Vision Statement

Safe Families is committed to fostering and preserving the cultural integrity of Aboriginal family and community connectedness.

Safe Families recognizes Aboriginal cultures have successful models of extended kinship family care and that family is intrinsic to the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of all children.

Safe Families seeks to support families to preserve their traditional obligations for the care and nurturing of children, ensuring their children grow up strong, safe, resilient and healthy in their transition to adult hood.

SAFE FAMILIES MODEL

Left side vertical labels (top to bottom):
- REFERRAL
- ACCOMMODATION - Crisis
- ASSESSMENT
- ACCOMMODATION. Med – long term
- CASE MANAGEMENT
- REVIEW/EXIT

Referral
To include assessment by referring body
e.g. Police, YNP, FACS, Youth Services, Courts

SAFE FAMILIES PROGRAM

| Town Based Crisis Accommodation | Family Crisis Accommodation | Identified Community Safe Family | Town Camp Based Accommodation |

Youth Work
(Reconnect/Congress/Other Relevant agencies)

Family Meetings

Family Support Work
(Safe Families - Tangentyere)

Family Mapping

Family Placement identified

Placement assessed & Care Agreements put in place
(where applicable)

Young person accepted to extended kinship care placement

Youth Services   ### Safe Families – Family Workers

Youth Services		Safe Families – Family Workers
• Counselling	• **Basic Needs -- food, bedding, clothes**	• Counselling
• Advocacy	• Health	• Advocacy
• Mediation	• Education	• Mediation
• Support	• Income	• Support
• Liaison	• Training	• Liaison/Link to other support services
• Link to other support services	• Life Skills	• Education
• Education	• Cultural needs	• Care Agreement Reviews
• Ongoing assessment	• Employment	• Ongoing assessment
	• Accommodation	

Review and assessment of Placement and Progress
Youth worker/Family worker/Young person/Carer

| Exit Plan | Referral to FACS (where placement is unsuccessful and there are no other family placement options) | Ongoing case management plan |

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ATTACHMENT 3: CASE EXAMPLES

Case 1:

Case 2:

Case 3:

Case 4:

.

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INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE

SOCIAL INCLUSION - AUSTRALIA

ALICE SPRINGS COMMUNITY HUBS - CLOSING THE GAP

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF ALICE SPRINGS COMMUNITY HUBS

EDUCATION FOR LIFE PROGRAM

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND TOWN CAMPS

An Integrated Service Approach to Social Inclusion

Bringing Alice Springs together

Tangentyere Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Eradicating extreme poverty continues to be one of the main challenges of our time...
The Millennium Development Goals set timebound targets, by which progress in reducing
income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion — while promoting
gender equality, health, education and environmental sustainability — can be measured.
They also embody basic human rights — the rights of each person on the planet to health,
education, shelter and security... "

United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon[1]

An integrated Service Approach to Social Inclusion: Bringing Alice Springs Together, is an
evidenced based approach to achieving social inclusion. It draws on international and national best
practice in an effort to eradicate poverty, achieve universal education and create social, cultural
and economic inclusion for residents of the Alice Springs Town Camps, homeless Aboriginal
people and remote area visitors to Alice Springs – the three target groups of the Alice Springs
Transformation Plan.

Social inclusion and poverty eradication needs a generational approach, and a long term
commitment to fundamental change. The proposed model combines two core strategies – the
first is to create locational community driven response to social and economic inclusion, and
the second is to work towards a high standard of universal education. The strategic arms of the
approach are:

1. Integrated Service Hubs – Community Hubs. (Described in detail in Section 4.)
2. Universal Education – Education for Life. (Described in detail in Section 5.)

Through the Alice Springs Transformation Plan (ASTP) iThe Australian and Northern Territory
Governments have made a joint commitment to make fundamental and lasting improvement to
the lives and opportunities of the residents of the Alice Springs town camps, and for homeless
Aboriginal people and visitors in Alice Springs.[2]

Tangentyere Council has worked for over 30 years to facilitate social inclusion and equity with
people living in the 17 Town Camps (Housing Associations) in Alice Springs. For much of this time,
the battle has been fought against a tide of poverty, prejudice, exclusion and poor public policy.
The new focus and stated commitment of Government to improve the lives of those living in Town
Camps presents an opportunity for real change.

SECTION 1   INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE

Section 1 provides a brief overview of international best practice as a basis to addressing poverty
and social inclusion and creating sustainable and long term community change.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals and UNESCO's Early Childhood Care and
Education programs, provide valuable benchmarks for service delivery standards and outcomes.
The best practice of the World Health Organisations Community Based Initiatives Program, and the
Harlem Children's Zone, are presented as effective measures in implementing these benchmarks.

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1   http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml
2   http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/SA/INDIGENOUS/PROGSERV/AS_TRANSFORMATION

SECTION 2   SOCIAL INCLUSION AUSTRALIA

The national and Territory context is discussed. The establishment of community Hubs/Centres, similar to the model proposed here, is being used in both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged communities.as a way of creating social inclusion and improving family and child wellbeing.

This is in line with the principles outlined by the Social Inclusion Board:

> In a place-based approach, the characteristics of the community and the location can be brought together in an integrated "person and place" approach that focuses on outcomes for people. In this context, the community and its needs should be in the centre of any development - involving the community in planning, selecting and designing and governing their physical and social infrastructure can be just as important as the facilities and services themselves. Flexible spaces and multipurpose facilities can meet diverse community needs, support networks through community events, meetings and gatherings; and support the delivery of new, unforseen or occasional services.
> Building Inclusive and Resilient Communities; Australian Social Inclusion Board June 2009

SECTION 3   ALICE SPRINGS COMMUNITY HUBS – CLOSING THE GAP

Over the past 10 years, two Town Camps (Housing Association) have benefited greatly from a best practice approach to social inclusion and community development. Section 3 outlines the achievements of two existing Community Hubs operating on Town Camps (Housing Associations), and their success in addressing social inclusion, community safety, educational engagement and improving a range of social and health indicators.

The Centres respond to all Strategic Platforms/building blocks of Australian Government's Closing the Gap initiative:

1. Early Childhood
2. Economic Participation
3. Governance and Leadership
4. Schooling
5. Healthy Homes
6. Health
7. Safe Communities

Decribed in detail in Section 3, the Community Hubs provide programs and a service location for:

1. Integrated service delivery (providing a soft entry point to over 70 organisations into the Town Camps)
2. Comprehensive early intervention
   - Early Childhood Development & Education
   - Education linkage and support - primary, secondary
   - Adult Education programs
   - Child and Family Safety & Domestic Violence
   - Substance Misuse - early response, education and linkage to treatment
   - Aged care and disability support
   - Medical and health care education, screening and linkage to clinics

- Social and Emotional Well Being

- Youth programs (including Youth at Risk Programs)

- Economic and financial counselling

- Employment and Training

3. Targeted case management
4. Community Safety Planning & Crisis intervention
5. Social and cultural meeting place
6. Resource Centre
7. Local Governance and Leadership
8. Employment & Economic opportunities

The achievements of the Hubs over the past 10 years are measured against the overarching aims of the Closing the Gap objectives, the benchmarks of Australia' Social Inclusion Board and the Millennium Development Goals Outcomes include:

- Increased family and community Safety/Decrease in Family Violence

- Significant decrease in Inhalant Substance Abuse

- Decreased alcohol abuse

- Significant Increased education engagement of children and young people – with highly improved numeracy and literacy

- Significant increase in adult educational engagement and achievements

- Increased engagement in early childhood education

- Increased economic opportunities (including local employment and local micro-enterprise)

- Reduced contact of young people with the Criminal Justice System

- Improved Health Management

- Local Leadership Development and Governance

Professional testimonies from education, health, social service, legal and other professionals are presented as part of the evidence base of the important role the centres play in creating social inclusion, and equity.

"Women whose safety has been at risk have been able to use case workers at the Community Centres to arrange for safe methods of evacuation... After commencing work at both Hidden Valley and Larapinta Valley, the Alice Springs Women's Shelter noticed an overwhelming increase in the number of referrals from these town camps. In particular, we saw many women self refer who had never before sought support from the Alice Springs Women's Shelter services. This has had an impact on the safety of multiple women and children. Of course, this has a flow on effect of ensuring that women and children have access to a greater number of services in Alice Springs."
Alice Springs Women's Shelter

"...Absolute strength of the Centre is that it provides a strong conduit between home and school. The knowledge of the workers in the Centre about family dynamics and the needs of the children is extremely helpful."
Heather Tubbenhauer Principal Sadadeen Primary School

SECTION 4   FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF ALICE SPRINGS COMMUNITY HUBS

This section descibes the first of the two major strategies of the integrated Service Model – a locational community driven response to social inclusion.

Based on the overwhelming success of the existing Hubs and the benchmarks for international and national best practice, Tangentyere is proposing that Community Hubs/Centres be established for the benefit of all residents (permanent, homeless and visitors) of Town Camps.

Based on demographics, existing capital infrastructure and need, the new Hubs can be developed over 2 - 5 years. Some Hubs will cater to more than one Town Camp. To cater to the populations of 15 Town Camps, 9 new Community Hubs, and expansion of operations of a 10th Community Hub is needed.

The Community Hubs provide a major link to mainstream services and opportunities within Alice Springs, while at the same time supporting and respecting cultural diversity.

The program can use existing capital infrastructure within the Town Camps (Housing Associations). This infrastructure is currently not being used as Hubs due to the difficulty of acessing sufficient funding to staff them. Each Hub can be fully operational at an annual operational cost of $409,368/ annum per Centre (not including minor capital works), which covers staff, other operating costs, data management and an external evaluation. The Hubs will together cater to at least 2000 adults and children, making the annual investment per person of $2,047 per annum.

> "… as an RTO we have valued this partnership and the inputs and outputs of the centre… Many advantages for learning, social enterprise, sense of purpose, safety, self esteem building. … We are looking at opportunities to do more delivery on the town camps but of course it's contingent on facilities."
> **Batchelor College**

SECTION 5   EDUCATION FOR LIFE PROGRAM

This section describes the second of the two major strategies of the Integrated Service Model – creating Universal Education.

The long term future for children and families lies in the education of our children. This requires not simply access to what is currently available, but instead a new approach that responds to the cultural, social and economic reality of our children.

The Education for Life program is an exciting and ambitious plan to bring education to all children living in Town Camps. It aims to see every child not only engaged in school from early childhood, but accessing the very best of the education system, using International and national best practice and evidence. It is a program that aims for Universal Education.

This proposal looks towards the celebrated Harlem Children's Zone, to lift the bar to a new level:

President Obama described The Harlem Children's Zone as:

> "An all encompassing, all hands on deck, anti-poverty effort that is literally saving a generation of children." [3]

The Harlem Children's Zone includes intensive early childhood education, parenting education, allied health and social support, secondary schooling, mentoring and individual education plans and college support to young people, tracking children from pre-birth to college.

The proposed Education for Life has a strong focus in early childhood education. The program uses the standards and approaches of the HCZ and combines these with the experience that

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3   www.hcz.org

Tangenteyre has gained in delivering alternative education initiatives over the past 20 years. Core program standards include:

- Starting from birth (parenting engagement and education for early childhood development)

- A six day a week, all year round program – ensuring kids receive the required school readiness support, homework support and extra-curricula activity opportunities that are critical to learning and maintaining school engagement

- A high staff/teacher ratio

- Individual education support plans

- High quality and broad curricula that provide opportunities for children (seeing children as able rather than challenged)

For our children to bridge the gap and to reach the standards of education enjoyed by other Australians, they need an education program that extends beyond the standard educational framework, and brings schooling into their family lifestyle.

Specialist Early Childhood Educationalists, and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) are core to Education for Life. The program includes the following:

Stream 1: Early Childhood

- First steps – conception to 2.9 years (parenting and early childhood development)

- Little Deadlies – 2.9 years to 5 years (comprehensive early childhood education)

- Transition Support – 6-8 yrs (mainstreaming to primary school)

Stream 2: Mainstream Engagement and Retention (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary)

- school readiness

- parenting engagement

- education plans

- mentoring and support

Stream 3: Wrap Around Support Services Reducing Risk

- Allied Health Professionals

- Specialist Teachers

- Extended School Hours Workers

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A LONG TERM VISION

The investment in comprehensive integrated and educational services within our community is the only long-term solution to social inclusion, Closing the Gap and transforming Alice Springs into a town of ability that includes all people. By 2020 nearly half the population of Central Australia will be Aboriginal. A high proportion of this population is living in poverty. Unless we invest heavily into Universal Education and effective locational integrated services, the future will be bleak.

We must aim for universal education and we must aim to eradicate poverty. Our children are smart, able and deserve the best that the future can offer.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Internationally and Nationally there is an ongoing challenge to bring about real change in the social and economic development of those who are most disadvantaged in our communities.

The United Nations, World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995) and the Millennium Summit (2000) set global benchmarks, policies and principles for social inclusion and the importance of poverty reduction, employment, universal education, cultural rights in achieving real social change.

In Australia, commitment has been made to Social Inclusion and Reducing Indigenous Disadvantage at the highest level of Government.

The National Indigenous Reform Agreement, Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage, is a commitment to achieving lasting improvements in key social, health and economic indicators for Indigenous Australians. The agreement identifies key targets, service delivery principles and priority areas. It recognizes seven key Strategic Platforms:

1. Early Childhood
2. Economic Participation
3. Governance and Leadership
4. Schooling
5. Healthy Homes
6. Health
7. Safe Communities

The Alice Springs Transformation Plan (ASTP) is a further initiative where "The Australian and Northern Territory Governments have made a joint commitment to make fundamental and lasting improvement to the lives and opportunities of the residents of the Alice Springs town camps, and for homeless Aboriginal people and visitors in Alice Springs.

The three broad strategies of the ASTP are:

1. Deal with Social Issues
2. Transform Town Camps
3. Reduce Homelessness

There is a focus on reducing homelessness through better coordination of services and the creation of additional facilities." [1]

Turning Policy and Vision into Reality

Tangentyere Council welcomes the intent by the government to establish long term, sustainable improvements in the lives of Indigenous Peoples.

The focus of the ASTP on those living in Town Camps (Housing Associations), those who are homeless and visitors to Alice Springs is critical to the future 'transformation' of Alice Springs and to bring about social and economic inclusion for all Alice Springs residents. How this vision is put into practice, and how the resources are strategically implemented to support and include these target groups however will determine whether real change will occur.

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[1]   http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/SA/INDIGENOUS/PROGSERV/AS_TRANSFORMATION

An integrated Service Approach to Social Inclusion: Bringing Alice Springs Together, is an evidenced based approach, bringing international best practice to Alice Springs, in an effort to eradicate poverty, achieve universal education and create social, cultural and economic inclusion for residents of the Alice Springs Town Camps, homeless Aboriginal people and remote area visitors to Alice Spring.

The proposal has two core arms:

1. Integrated Service Hubs – Alice Springs Community Hubs

2. Universal Education – Education for Life

   Comprehensive Early Childhood Education and Development

   Comprehensive Educational Engagement and Support

Tangentyere has an intimate knowledge and unparalleled understanding and experience of the Housing Associations (Town Camps) of Alice Springs. For 35 years we have worked to attain services, opportunities and equity to address the devastating poverty and exclusion faced by our people.

Tangentyere has developed a range of highly regarded family, youth and social services and community safety initiatives in our ongoing efforts to address safety and social well being for people living in Town Camps and the broader Alice Springs region (see http://www.tangentyere. org.au). Tangentyere remains the biggest employer of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory (outside of Government) and possibly nationally. Our enduring goal remains to achieve social justice for our people.

It is without question that waves of visitors, inadequate housing levels, social policy resulting in drinkers being pushed into town camps, lack of infrastructure and endemic poverty have continued to make our efforts an uphill struggle. This does not however diminish our successes. It is now time to build on our experience, to expand on the successes and learn from our failures, so that we do not lose all that is good, and so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Nothing but the Best

Tangentyere is promoting An integrated Service Approach to Social Inclusion, in an effort to bring Alice Springs together. This evidenced based approach builds on our experience and introduces international best standards.

Tangentyere wants to bring Alice Springs services into Town Camps and residents into town services; through Integrated Service Hubs; comprehensive Early Childhood Education and Development; Educational Engagement and Support Services into mainstream primary and secondary institutions; and post secondary vocational support into further education and employment. This requires a whole of life approach – working with children, parents, families and communities, and systems. Both the systems and the families need support to connect, build relationships, and develop the confidence and ability to succeed with one another. The approach will close the gap between the systems and the community, between poverty and wellbeing, between ill health and health.

In 20 years time Tangentyere aims to see the first children graduating from the first part of the life journey – into either further education or employment. These young people will have been supported comprehensively by all service agencies and will feel fully included in the life and opportunities that Alice Springs and beyond can offer.

Tangentyere is seeking the level of commitment and resources that is really required to effect any long-term comprehensive change in Alice Springs. This plan ambitiously seeks to eradicate poverty, create universal education and create pathways to employment that will bring about

community safety and well being in the long term. This is a generational approach requiring at least a 20-year commitment from Government if we are to see the real transformation.

The Town Camps (Housing Associations) in Alice Springs are some of the most impoverished communities not only in Australia but also in the world. But at the same time they are socially and cultural rich and people living in these communities have strength and skills and voices that must be heard and included. Real change requires an approach and commitment beyond anything we have seen before.

Over the past 15 years Tangentyere has paralleled much of the HCZ in philosophy and approach, however resources have never allowed a comprehensive program to be implemented. Closing the Gap requires the highest standard of services to be afforded to the most disadvantaged in our community. In this way we will 'transform' Alice Springs into a place of social, economic and cultural inclusion and equity – a place of health and belonging for all residents.

CLOSING THE GAP ON SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF SAFETY, STRENGTH AND ABILITY

SECTION 1

INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE

Eradicating extreme poverty continues to be one of the main challenges of our time...
The Millennium Development Goals set time bound targets, by which progress in reducing income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion — while promoting gender equality, health, education and environmental sustainability — can be measured. They also embody basic human rights — the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter and security... "

United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon[1]

International Best Practice

There is an established link between the 'social capital' and health of community, and the social infrastructure that opens up opportunities for participation. Social exclusion, and "locational disadvantage" are recognised as critical in the relationship between health and place. [2]

"Increasingly evidence shows that social cohesion and social capital is critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development." [3]

The United Nations and the World Health Organisation have long been promoting the importance of community decision-making and the agency of local peoples, in addressing poverty, health and wellbeing. In September 2000, The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted at the United Nations Millennium Summit, in an effort to dramatically reduce poverty, to remove inequality, and to improve the health and education of the poor.[4]

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

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1   http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml
2   Baum F and Palmer C (2002) Opportunity Structures: Urban landscape, social capital and health Promotion in Australia;
     Health Promotion International, Vol 17, No. 4, 351-361; Oxford University Press
     Australian Social Inclusion Board June 2009; Building Inclusive and Resilient Communities;
3   Social Capital Formation as a Strategy to Promote Social Cohesion- examples from Post apartheid South Africa.
     Glenda Wildschut Director: Leadership support and Development Centre ttp://www.un.org/esa/socdev/sib/egm'07/
     documents/GlendaWildschut.pdf
4   http://www.undp.org/mdg/basic

To address the MDGs, The World Health Organisation Community-based initiatives (CBI) program, promotes "an integrated bottom-up approach to socioeconomic development, including health, aiming at achieving a better quality of life for communities."[5]

> "There is clear evidence that community-based initiatives offer added value in bridging inequity and have positive implications for health. The most salient aspects of this approach are the organization, mobilization and enhancement of community capabilities... bottom-up socioeconomic development models that rely on full community ownership and intersectoral collaboration."[6]

Integrated Intersectoral collaboration (access to a range of service to a community) is being achieved around the world through the implementation of Community Centres and Community Hubs. These Hubs are the vehicles for strengthening social capital and participation[7]. Such centres are being established internationally and across Australia, in both impoverished and mainstream communities. The needs of communities vary greatly, however the importance of building social capital is common to them all. The Hubs promote local empowerment and relevance by engaging local people to be both decision makers and participants in building the social economies in their communities. They provide a gateway for mainstream services to access communities and to build trust. Using the ability of local people to identify and address local issues is the key to effective and long terms solutions to serious social disadvantage.

Early Childhood Care and Education is also internationally recognised as fundamental to future wellbeing of the individual and the community. There is unquestionable data that indicates that the health, social and economic outcomes of communities are strongly influenced by early childhood experiences, development and opportunity.

UNESCO (Unites Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) is a leader in international best practice, and "advocates for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes that attend to health, nutrition, security and learning and which provide for children's holistic development." UNESCO also identifies the need for the "Non-Formal Education (NFE) sub-sector" to complement formal systems, by integrating parenting, education and early childhood awareness into community adult and youth programs.[8]

Leading the way in 'whole of life/whole of community' integrated programs is The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ). The HCZ is internationally recognised for its success in bringing fully integrated services for children and families from birth to college:

> The HCZ pipeline begins with The Baby College, a series of workshops for parents of children ages 0-3. The pipeline goes on to include best-practice programs for children of every age through college. The network includes in-school, after-school, social-service, health and community-building programs.

> For children to do well, their families have to do well. And for families to do well, their community must do well.

> HCZ also works to reweave the social fabric of Harlem, which has been torn apart by crime, drugs and decades of poverty.

> The two fundamental principles of The Zone Project are to help kids in a sustained way, starting as early in their lives as possible, and to create a critical mass of adults around them who understand what it takes to help children succeed.[9]

The Harlem Children's Zone's founder, Geoffrey Canada, speaks about the chaotic and ineffective services that were being offered in the community, prior to the HCZ. While there were a wide range of service present across Harlem, they were ineffective and poorly integrated. He effectively by-passed mainstream service provision and developed an integrated service approach by

5   http://www.emro.who.int/cbi

6   World Health Organisation; http://www.emro.who.int/cbi

7   Farrell, A., Taylor, C. and Tennent, L. (2000) Community Hubs: Their capacity to enhance social capital and service provision for families and young children; Centre for Applied Studies in Early Childhood QUT, Brisbane Australia

8   http://www.unesco.org/en/early-childhood

9   www.hcz.org

sourcing his income privately through New York and beyond. In 2009 the HCZ worked with a budget of $48M. Its success is now being recognised by the US Government, who are looking at expanding the model as best practice.

President Obama described The Harlem Children's Zone as:

"An all encompassing, all hands on deck, anti-poverty effort that is literally saving a generation of children." [10]

Tangentyere recognizes parallels in the experiences of the the Harlem Children's Zone and the Alice Springs Town Camps. While there are significant cultural differences between the two places, issues of poverty and social exclusion are very similar.

Tangentyere has established integrated service Hubs to address chaotic service delivery, however the education revolution that is being achieved through the Harlem Children's Zone provides a strong foundation to the Education for Life program proposed by Tangentyere.

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10   www.hcz.org

SECTION 2

SOCIAL INCLUSION - AUSTRALIA

Australia

In its Principles for Social Inclusion the Australian Government has outlined key approaches in an effort to reduce disadvantage; increase social and economic participation and to give people both a greater voice and a greater responsibility over what is happening in their lives.[11]

Approaches

1. Building on individual and community strengths
2. Building partnerships with key stakeholders
3. Developing tailored services
4. Giving a high priority to early intervention and prevention
5. Building joined-up services and whole of government(s)
6. Using evidence and integrated data to inform policy
7. Using locational approaches - Working in places where there is a lot of disadvantage, to get to people most in need and to understand how different problems are connected;
8. Planning for sustainability - Doing things that will help people and communities deal better with problems in the future, as well as solving the problems they face now.

The Australian Social Inclusion Board has identified the importance of a place-based, integrated service approach as key to social inclusion.

> The integration of different resources and capabilities allows a community to respond to a changing environment, deal with crises and recover, innovate and capitalise on economic and social opportunities...

> In a place-based approach, the characteristics of the community and the location can be brought together in an integrated "person and place" approach that focuses on outcomes for people. In this context, the community and its needs should be in the centre of any development - involving the community in planning, selecting and designing and governing their physical and social infrastructure can be just as important as the facilities and services themselves. Flexible spaces and multipurpose facilities can meet diverse community needs, support networks through community events, meetings and gatherings; and support the delivery of new, unforseen or occasional services.[12]

The board reinforces the need to "Engage locals and use local resources, expertise, knowledge and skills where possible.[13]

The Australian Government is developing Child and Family Centres across Australia in 36 locations at an average cost of $8M per centre. These centres are planned to address social exclusion by focusing on locational, integrated, strength based approaches as defined by the Australian Social Inclusion Board.

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11   Principles for Social Inclusion; Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2008
12   Building Inclusive and Resilient Communities; Australian Social Inclusion Board June 2009
13   Building Inclusive and Resilient Communities Australian Social Inclusion Board June 2009

The National Indigenous Reform Agreement Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage speaks clearly about the importance of: "working in partnerships based on mutual responsibility and respect"; and the need to: "collaborate and partner with interested parties by directly incorporating their advice in the development of options and identification of the preferred solutions"

Closing the Gap Service Delivery Principles include:

Indigenous engagement principle:
Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services.

Access principle:
Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.

Closing the Gap also outlines The Priority Areas for action which include:

Focusing on Local Need/Place Based Approaches – enabling initiatives to be delivered in a manner appropriate to needs in a particular location;

Strengthening Indigenous Capacity Engagement and Participation – promoting a strong and positive view of Indigenous identity and culture; and strengthening individual, family and community wellbeing and capacity as a necessary impetus to improved access to and take-up of services (National Indigenous Reform Agreement: Closing the Gap).

The importance of social and cultural equity, local voice and priorities, joined up services, and evidence base are critical to successful long term solutions. The Community Hubs address all seven strategic building blocks for Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage. The two strategic arms of Tangentyere's Social Inclusion initiative is underpinned by the principles of both the Australian Social Inclusion Board and the Closing the Gap Reform agenda.

Northern Territory

"What is required is a determined, coordinated effort to break the cycle and provide the necessary strength, power and appropriate support and services to local communities, so they can lead themselves out of the malaise: in a word, empowerment! "

Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred"[14]

Devitt, Hall and Tsey (2001) for the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health, analysed the health status of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, and identified that inequality, social injustice, dispossession and economic disadvantage continue to be central issues in continued devastating health outcomes. hIt is recognised by these experts that "The health of Aboriginal Territorians will improve when they achieve greater levels of real control over their circumstances of their lives and their communities."[15]

The prevailing service structure within the Northern Territory is silo driven (reflecting the rigidity of Government bureaucracies and the funding framework). While there are services that cross the whole-of-life spectrum, these are not delivered as integrated services, and historically have not been delivered to address need. As a result there is a history of very poor services delivery to the most disadvantaged communities across the Northern Territory

The Housing Associations or Town Camps of Alice Springs reflect the experiences of many communities and suburbs of high disadvantage across the Northern Territory. Despite the unquestionable poverty and need, services have historically found it difficult to engage with residents in the Housing Associations for a number of reasons including fear, language and cultural barriers and policy. Services are not coordinated to respond to the family or individual in a holistic manner. As a result the history of service delivery has been piecemeal, unreliable (hit and miss),

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14   Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred" Northern Territory Government Board Of
        Inquiry Into The Protection Of Aboriginal Children From Sexual Abuse 2007
15   2001, Devitt, J, Hall, G and Tsey, K Underlying Causes, CARPA NEWSLETTER: Nov. 200115

poorly coordinated and difficult to access. This has led to and contributed to the severe exclusion and inequity experienced by residents of the Housing Associations. This exclusion is also faced by people living in remote area, people living in public housing, in suburbs of high poverty and low

service access, and people who are homeless. These communities of people are all facing social exclusion as a result of poorly coordinated and accessible services.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are directly relevant to the Northern Territory. With high levels of poverty, disease, poor educational and employment outcomes, and an ongoing need to seriously improve child and maternal health, the MDG's can be adapted to set the baseline achievements that we all should be working towards in the Northern Territory. Most of the needs are particularly relevant to Aboriginal communities, however they affect all members of our community who are facing serious disadvantage.

Critical to achieving these goals is that solutions and direction are community driven and owned. "Mr Fred Chaney, in retiring from the National Native Title Tribunal, was asked why successive governments have failed so comprehensively to turn the story of Aboriginal deprivation around...

> "... one of the things I think we should have learned by now is that you can't solve these things by centralised bureaucratic direction. You can only educate children in a school at the place where they live. You can only give people jobs or get people into employment person by person. ... **the lesson we've learned is that you need locally based action, local resourcing, local control to really make changes.**
>
> But I think governments persist in thinking you can direct from Canberra, you can direct from Perth or Sydney or Melbourne, that you can have programs that run out into communities that aren't owned by those communities, that aren't locally controlled and managed, and I think surely that is a thing we should know doesn't work." [16]

While we have witnessed millions of dollars being poured into new programs, there has been little change to the way these programs are being devised and delivered. The chaotic service approach is being compounded by an ever-increasing number of service providers, few of whom have a relationship or ability to work from a bottom-up approach.

The importance of community ownership in addressing issues of poverty and safety were expressed by Aboriginal people to The Board Of Inquiry Into The Protection of Aboriginal Children From Sexual Abuse 2007. To achieve change, people identified the need for:

- Dialogue
- Empowerment
- Ownership
- Awareness
- Healing
- Reconciliation
- Strong family
- Culture
- Law[17]

The Inquiry highlighted the absolute importance that local people are engaged at all stages of program development and delivery. A key recommendation of the Inquiry was:

> "The establishment of multi-purpose family centres or "hubs" in remote communities and regional centres to provide an integrated holistic approach to working with families. These will be a focal point for the provision of a range of local and visiting programs and services including prevention programs, child and family services, specialist services (e.g. SARC)

16   Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred" Northern Territory Government Board Of Inquiry Into The Protection Of Aboriginal Children From Sexual Abuse 2007
17   Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred" Northern Territory Government Board Of Inquiry Into The Protection Of Aboriginal Children From Sexual Abuse 2007

and public education programs. They will also be a focal point for reporting and action,

strengthening and incorporating positive aspects of culture, to assist local workforce development and provide male and female workers "gender security".[18]

Integrated Service Approach – Government

In response to the Inquiry, the Northern Territory Government has recognized the importance of community Hubs and is establishing the model in remote communities as 'Safe Places."

As part of the Australian Government Family Support Package, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA) and the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families (NTDHF) have committed funding to establish and operate 20 Safe Places in 15 remote communities across the Northern Territory.

... Safe places are more than crisis accommodation services, their primary function within the community is to serve as a hub for family violence education and intervention...

The Safe Places will work closely with Police, night patrols and clinics as well as provide regular activities and community education programs related to strengthening community safety and families."[19]

Closing the Gap - Tangentyere Community Hubs

Tangentyere's Community Hubs have been operating successfully in two Housing Associations in Alice Springs for the past 10 years. The Hubs have resulted in widespread improvements in, education engagement and outcomes, reducing family violence, reducing inhalant and alcohol abuse, addressing social exclusion, and the key indicators for Closing the Gap.

In response to the desperate need for integrated, whole of life, service delivery, the Hubs were developed with, and by, local community people. The intergenerational model reflects community life and engages all ages and all family members. The involvement of families at all levels of Hub development, planning and delivery means that the solutions are theirs, the success is theirs and people are invested in a successful future. The Hubs provide critical case management, community safety planning, and program delivery to address gaps and needs as identified within each community.

The Hubs are consistent with international best practice delivering the model prescribed by the United Nations and the World Health Organisation to address the Millennium Development Goals. The Hubs "address integrated socioeconomic development and the social determinants of health through community empowerment and intersectoral coordination."[20] The Community Hubs engage all approaches advocated for by the Australian Social Inclusion Board

As with the Harlem Children's Zone, the Alice Springs Community Hubs have been working across the silos to address the complexity of issues facing impoverished Housing Association (Town Camp) communities. The Hubs engage an integrated service delivery approach, looking at whole of life/whole of community strategies

The model is relevant not only to Housing Associations (Town Camp communities) but other suburbs and areas identified within Alice Springs as being populations of high need, high disadvantage and with geographical barriers to services (e.g. Larapinta; The Gap).

Section 3 provides a detailed review of the - Tangentyere Community Hubs model and current practice and achievements.

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18   Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred" Northern Territory Government Board Of
      Inquiry Into The Protection Of Aboriginal Children From Sexual Abuse 2007
19   www.nt.gov.au
20   World Health Organisation, Community Based Initiatives Program

Alice Springs – Long term change

Tangentyere is proposing the extension of Community Hubs to all Alice Springs Town Camp communities, as a effective locational solution to social exclusion.

Secondly, Tangentyere is seeking to implement an Education for Life program, modeled on the Harlem Children's Zone, to bring Universal education to all children living in Town Camps.

Achieving transformation requires a whole of life approach – working with children, parents, families and communities, and systems.

Tangentyere proposes the development of the Hubs for all Housing Association communities as well as those suburbs within Alice Springs that are identified in need of such a Hub.

Section 4 presents the development plan for Community Hubs.

Section 5 presents the Education for Life program.

These parallel approaches together will achieve social inclusion by addressing poverty, education and equity.

SECTION 3

ALICE SPRINGS COMMUNITY HUBS - CLOSING THE GAP

Two Alice Springs Community Hubs in the Housing Associations (Town Camps) in Alice Springs have led to significant improvements in social capital - shown most directly in increases in early childhood and primary school engagement and outcomes, improved access and social inclusion to mainstream services, and decreases in serious social harm including violence, alcohol and substance abuse, and criminal justice engagement. Led by the community, the Hubs have become places of community strength, voice and vision.

"10 years ago the kids were not going to school – many were sniffing or watching their big brothers and sisters sniffing. The community started an intergenerational school - bringing families into the centre to learn together in the same space – and the parents were fully involved in the education of their children. The kids learnt in the classroom, the adults in a room next door, learning art and a range of adult classes. Programs for youth at risk were run out of the demountables. The families owned the programs and together built the Hub. We invited in other programs and services, building relationships between the community and Alice Springs. Over the past 10 years the families have taken agency in their lives, through the resources and services at YALC. It has been incredible to watch confidence grow, belief develop and people knowing that they can change their lives. We are in a new phase now. After nine years being at YALC the kids are now going to the mainstream local primary school.... It has been a great partnership and a great success. The art classes have turned into an aspiring locally run enterprise. Now we want to make sure we can support the kids through their life at school. We want to focus on early childhood education and the adults are wanting to take their education and art enterprise to the next level." YALC Coordinator

Background

Alice Springs Housing Associations (Town Camps) were originally planned as legitimate suburbs of Alice Springs, and were designed to meet the needs of the varying Aboriginal language groups/ clans who began living in Alice Springs over 30 years ago. As part of the planning of the Housing Associations, Community Facilities were included to become a central Hub for community development and community life. For the first 15 years there was some use of the facilities however, a focus on obtaining leases and basic infrastructure, along with lack of resources and lack of expertise, did not allow Tangentyere to advance the centres during this time.

Approximately 15 years ago Tangentyere began a more strategic approach to community development and the broader social determinants of health.

As was found in Harlem, Tangentyere has found that while there are programs and services available that span the birth to adulthood range within the broader Alice Springs region, these services often do not join up, are under-resourced and are difficult to access in any coordinated way for people living in the Housing Associations. This results in poor continuity, systems barriers to consumers, under servicing, over-servicing and a chaotic service approach (as described earlier).

For the Housing Associations the most effective response to bridging service delivery gaps has been the establishment of Community Hubs.   These Hubs have acted as a soft entry point for services – increasing their ability and quality of service delivery and increasing access to residents in the Town Camps.

Part 1: Alice Springs Community Hubs – how they began

Tangentyere first began integrated, intergenerational, community driven programs through the Detour Program (later to become Irrkerlantye Learning Centre). This was followed by the Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre (YALC), a community hub operating in the Yarrenyty Arltere Housing Association (also known as Larapinta Town Camp). Following its success the Hidden Valley Community Centre was established in 2005. These centres have seen a striking improvement in social capital, participation and access. A third centre, based at Karnte but providing a hub for both Karnte and Anthepe Town Camps began operating on a part time basis in November 2009.

The Detour program was the first comprehensive intergenerational program delivered to Housing Association residents and was devised as a means of engaging children into school who were living in the most desperate poverty, alcohol abuse and disadvantage on the White Gate (Irrkerlantye) Community. Living with no housing infrastructure (as they had no legal tenure) and no access to any service support outside of Tangentyere, the Detour Program was established. Run by the group of families connected to Irrkerlantye Housing Association (White Gate), the program became independently operated as the Irrkerlantye Learning Centre. Irrkerlantye engaged generations of children and their families into structured education, many for the first time, and has continued to provide important adult education, a recognised Art Centre enterprise, school bridging programs and community development to the families connected to the service.

YALC was developed at the request of the Yarrenyty Arltere community using the same intergenerational model as the Detour Program. YALC was originally established to address the immediate needs of young people engaged in serious inhalant abuse and caught up in the Criminal Justice system. At the request of young people and their families, and with the support of the Housing Association, the Hub was established. This was the first Community Hub to be established within a Housing Association. Despite serious resource challenges, YALC reinforced the success of the integrated, intergenerational approach to engage children, adults and families – with a focus on education, family violence prevention, inhalant substance abuse, alcohol misuse, health, social and emotional well being, and other social service supports.

At that time Yarrenyty Arltere was the main Housing Association facing chronic inhalant abuse amongst young people and was struggling under enormous violence and alcoholism. Having the Community Hub within the Yarrenyty Arltere Community, allowed the staff to provide direct support, and respond to the aspirations of the families and the needs of children. The staff at the Centre developed an intimate knowledge of people suffering from enormous violence and stress and there became an ability to track and support these families and to build a sustainable response to a future of safety for the children. Working with the strong members within families has been a key approach, building on their abilities and providing them with the resources and tools to make a difference. All social indicators including education, health, engagement in the criminal justice systems and family violence improved for the community. For the group of families originally targeted by the centre, it has broken a four-generation history of inhalant substance abuse, with the current generation of children attending school. Through the Hub economic opportunities through education, employment and enterprise have been provided for the future. The success has been dependent on the ownership and direction of the centre with and by community members.

> "When I first came here it was one murder per fortnight. That's how bad it was and now I can walk anywhere and I feel safe. It (YALC) has given everybody an education. Not just kids adults as well."
> **Daniel Forrester, President of Yarrenyty Arltere Housing Association**

While there have been great successes at YALC, staff and families know that the road ahead is still long. Children are finding it difficult to stay engaged in secondary schooling, and there continues to be issues of alcohol and inhalants for some people. There is an ongoing need for staff and families to be vigilant and to keep working together to sustain and build on their achievements to date.

The success of Yarrenyty Arltere Leaning Centre highlighted the fact that children and families who were at risk in other Housing Associations were largely unseen and were socially and culturally excluded from effective support. A child at risk was known at Yarrenyty Arltere, a family with unwanted visitors, young people sniffing, a person with serious health or nutritional needs, women facing violence – all of these people could be supported through both early intervention and response. Without this service embedded within the community, these issues could not be addressed in a sustainable way. It was evident that to succeed in generational change, to build communities of strength, and to succeed in addressing violence and substance abuse, that *services and relationships had to be developed within the community.*

The focus was to establish another Hub in the largest Housing Association, with the highest numbers of children and young people, Hidden Valley. Unsuccessful through Government funding, in 2004 the Myer Foundation provided funding to "Advancing the development of a grass roots community development model in Town Camps"

The Myer Foundation funding supported the wages of a local indigenous resident to work with a part time coordinator for Hidden Valley. (The funding was also used to support a landmark community development initiative at MPWETYERRE Housing Association - supporting this community to become a Dry Area)

In 2005 the Hidden Valley community Centre opened on a part time basis with support from ASYASS youth workers and the coordination of Tangentyere services (Playgroups & Youth Services). In 2006 the Commonwealth Department of Health and Families granted funding to the centre. In 2005, the Northern Territory Government announced improvements to the centre to assist in the development of the early childhood education facilities. These upgrades were undertaken in 2009.

As with YALC, The Hidden Valley community centre operates as an integrated intergeneration centre. Its programs differ from those provided at Yarrenyty Arltere, however the underlying focus on early childhood development, education, family violence and substance abuse and community development is the same.

The Community Centres are an existing resource that can deliver some of the most important social outcomes for people living in Housing Associations. Both YALC and Hidden Valley Community Centres have proven the ability and importance of hubs to coordinate service delivery, engaging regularly with over 60 other community services spanning health, education, children and families, youth, income, social and emotional well being.

Prior to these facilities operating, much service delivery was hit and miss - providers were fearful of entering the Housing Association and there was confusion and distrust of the system that was failing people. Residents were not using mainstream services; often they did not know that services existed. People living with alcohol and violence and poverty, and who are culturally excluded from western systems face huge access barriers. The Hubs became a point of access, safety and opportunity being located within the social and cultural life of people was critical to effective service engagement.

> We are attempting to help promote suicide safer communities and assist with mental health education. Without the assistance of the community Centre Staff it would be extremely difficult if not impossible to engage with the residents. For an outsider, no matter how good their intentions are, town camps present an intimidating atmosphere. The community/ Learning centre's provide an introduction to outsiders and also by association allow the residents to know you are there for bona- fida reasons. They also present a safe neutral environment for engaging locals in meetings or workshops.
> **Life Promotion; Mental Health Association of Central Australia**

> I have always found that working in partnership with staff at these centres has been a crucial factor in the successful engagement of individuals and families; and the key to the effectiveness of my work over time.
> **Social Worker/ Counsellor Congress Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program**

The centres provide a social hub for the community and respond to both the immediate and long-term needs of families. They have a powerful ability to respond to family violence, education, child protection, substance misuse, health, and well-being and financial management within the community. They do this in a way that is empowering and builds on the strengths and celebrates the abilities of residents.

The Centres respond to all Strategic Platforms/building blocks of Australian Government's Closing the Gap initiative:

1. Early Childhood
2. Economic Participation
3. Governance and Leadership
4. Schooling
5. Healthy Homes
6. Health
7. Safe Communities

The Community Hubs are arguably the most successful social and community development program to operate within the Housing Associations in Alice Springs.

The true efficacy of Community Centres will only be seen in the long term. With only 3 years of full operation, Hidden Valley is seeing the sustainable changes in community culture around education, employment, and family safety now emerging. These Hubs need to operate for at least a generation before their long-term impact can be celebrated. During this time they need to ensure that they operating as Best Practice, and meet the standards and goals set by the UN and the WHO.

> "The pragmatic view we take is that it will require at least a generation for any real benefits to be achieved."[21]

The Hubs Close the Gap between the residents, the mainstream services and the broader Alice Springs community

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21   Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred" Northern Territory Government Board Of Inquiry Into The Protection Of Aboriginal Children From Sexual Abuse 2007

Part 2: What do the Hubs Do?

Community Centres are a Hub of the Community. They work with local residents to create communities of strength and opportunity in the long term. The aims of the Alice Springs Community Hubs include:

- Social inclusion across all generations

- Coordinated and integrated service delivery to residents

- Access and equity - Improving social and economic determinants affecting health and wellbeing

- Providing whole of life/whole of community support

- Cultural Safety and Social relevance

- Intergenerational and Community driven & directed

- Reduced poverty - Improved economic status of families and individuals with long term aim to eradicate poverty

- Universal Education – aiming to have all children of school age in education

- Comprehensive Early Childhood education and development for all 0-6 year olds, with pathways to mainstream education

- Increased family and community Safety/Decrease in Family Violence

- Decreased alcohol and other substance abuse

- Improved Health

- Improved Employment

- Reduced Overcrowding

- Community Stability

- Reduced contact with the Criminal Justice System

The Hubs work with a family strength based approach and provide:

1. Integrated service delivery
2. Comprehensive early intervention
3. Targeted case management
4. Community Safety & Crisis intervention
5. A social and cultural meeting place
6. Resource Centre
7. Local Governance and Leadership
8. Employment & Economic opportunities

1. Integrated Service Delivery

The centres provide a coordination Hub for a wide range of service deliverers. Over 70 Government and Non-Government services access the centres to facilitate their work. The services include Child and Family Services, Youth Services, Legal Services, Police and Justice; Education; Early Childhood; Training and Employment; Financial; Health (see table 1). As was the case in Harlem, Alice Springs has many service deliverers, struggling to provide services to the most disadvantaged. The Hubs have been able to deal with some of chaos and 'hit and miss' approach that often occurs on Town Camps. It also assists in coordinating and addressing issues of duplication as well as gaps. The Hubs assist with improved access to mainstream services, continuity of service delivery and integrated service support. They significantly improve the quality of work undertaken by service providers.

The Integrated Service Hubs create social inclusion, and decrease systems abuse. They are culturally safe and improve social capital, connectedness, access and community confidence. The centres provide a soft entry point for external service, and support residents to participate in the whole of Alice Springs community. They act as a conduit to build relationships. They Close the Gap

"It's difficult to engage with town camp residents at times. Building relationships takes time and the staff of YALC spend the time to establish these trusting relationships... having a community centre there provides us with a space to go to first and check in with the staff about residents needs related to our work. We have attended cook ups so that residents can meet us and become familiar with us so that they might then engage about some of the hard subjects like mental health worries and suicide risk or bereavement. The functions that are coordinated through the centre such as the art exhibitions and the film nights are a great way for outsiders to visit the town camp and engage with residents and see some of the work that is being generated through the community centre."
Life Promotion Program Coordinator; Mental Health Association of Central Australia

The Hubs empower both residents and providers. They break down fears and assist both providers and residents to build confidence, knowledge and power.

'It helps us work with other mob' (other services)
YALC Resident

'We get support for different things, money problems, with lawyers, getting jobs'
YALC Resident

'It's easier to call police when they are needed'; YALC Resident
'it used to be harder for old people';
YALC Resident

"It has been important to my work to be able to touch base with centre staff to be able to get an idea of what other factors might be impacting on families, and who within the family might be able to support any work that I might be planning to do. There was also a big OHS advantage of being able to check in with staff at the centre prior to visiting some households or people. In this way I could avoid volatile and potentially dangerous home visits to families in stress who were likely to react violently to me turning up unexpectedly"
Counsellor, Congress Social and Emotional Well Being Service

Table 1: Service Integration – List of Services that Residents engage with through the Community Hubs of Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre (YALC) and Hidden Valley Community Centre (HVCC) (NB this list is not an exhaustive)

SERVICES	YALC	HVCC	SERVICES	HVCC	YALC
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES			EMPLOYMENT		
ASYASS	√	√	Tangentyere CDEP	√	√
Tangentyere Safe Families	√	√	Tangentyere Job Shop	√	√
NT Families and Children's Services	√	√	EDUCATION		
Reconnect Youth Service	√		Gillen Primary School		√
Central Australian Youth Link-Up Services	√	√	Anzac High	√	√
Deadly Treadlies	√		Sadadeen School	√	√
Red Dust Role Models	√	√			
Ketye (Playgroups) Tangentyere	√	√	Centre for Appropriate Technology	√	√
Alice Springs Women Shelter	√	√	IAD	√	√
Sexual Assault Referral Centre	√	√	Deadly Mob-computer café	√	
Bushmob	√	√	DEST: Tutor program		√
Akeyulerre	√	√	Yipirinya School	√	√
Tangentyere Youth Activities Service	√	√	Irrkerlantye Learning Centre	√	
NPY Women's Council	√	√	Centralian College	√	√
Waltja	√	√	Batchelor College	√	√
Children Services Support Program (parenting)		√	Alice Springs High School	√	√
Congress Youth Team	√	√	NT Education Department	√	√
After Hours Youth Drop in Centre	√		Clontarff Football Academy	√	
Alice Springs Hospital	√	√	**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**		
CA Aboriginal Alcohol Programs Unit - CAAAPU	√	√	Centrelink (pilot program)		√
Drug and Alcohol Services Association Alice Springs	√	√	Tangentyere Council Financial Counsellor	√	√
NT AIDS and Hepatitis Council	√		Banks (various)	√	√
Clinic 34 Sexual Health	√	√	**LEGAL**		

Congress Under 2s Well being program	√	√	Alice Springs Police	√	√
Centrecare		√			
Congress School Clinic	√	√	Central Australian Family Legal Unit	√	√
Positive Behaviour Support Unit, Mental Health	√		Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service	√	√
Dentists	√		Correctional Services	√	√
Congress Chronic Disease	√	√	CAYLUS Inhalant Retailers program		√
Alukura Women's Health Service	√	√	Juvenille Diversion Unit	√	
Congress	√	√	**Alice Springs Court**	√	√
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL WELL BEING			COMMUNITY OUTSTATIONS		
Congress Social and Emotional Well Being	√	√	Intjartnama Petrol Sniffing Program		√
Life Promotion Program	√	√	Imampa Outstation		√
Funeral Service Providers	√		Ernabella Outstation		√
Family Wellbeing – Tangentyere	√	√	Ntaria Outstations		√
			Ipolera Outstation		√
RECREATION			**PATROLS**		
Desert Park	√	√	Tangentyere Wardens		√
Incite Arts	√	√	Tangentyere Day Patrol	√	√
Town pool	√	√	Tangentyere Night Patrol	√	√
AGED AND DISABILITY SUPPORT			School Based Police Program		√
Hetti Perkins		√			
Tangentyere -Aged and Disability Program	√	√			

Interagency Networks

The Hubs are engaged in a number of interagency networks including:

Child Welfare Coalition; Young People at Risk Interagency Case Management;

Central Australian Young People Issues Network; Child and Youth Safety Committee

Town Camp Education; Central Australian Youth Justice;

Life Promotions Steering Committee; NT Family Pathways Local Network

The centres encourage interagency networking and coordination to identify areas of need and to develop partnerships between relevant agencies.

A number of different agencies working together and communicating regularly about their individual programs and how they contribute to the "whole" intergenerational program.
Principal Gillen School

the Community Centres are like central meeting and information places where visitors can access general information about services and about the town camp itself without intruding on town camp residents private homes.
Universal Access Project Officer, Early Childhood Policy and regulation

The Hubs create connection within families, between families, with service agencies and with the broader Alice Springs community in such a way that healthy relationships emerge, and confidence and ability is built for all involved.

2. Comprehensive early intervention

Early intervention services are a primary focus of the Hubs. Establishing preventative programs that work towards long term change is a priority. Families identify programs and staff facilitate the delivery by a range of services. Early Intervention targets the whole of life and includes:

- Early Childhood Development & Education*

- Education - primary, secondary and adult

- Child and Family Safety & Domestic Violence

- Substance Misuse - early response, education and linkage to treatment

- Aged care and disability support

- Medical and health care education, screening and linkage to clinics

- Social and Emotional Well Being

- Youth programs (including Youth at Risk Programs)

- Economic and financial counselling

- Employment and Training

- Men's and Women's programs

Early Childhood Development & Education (Playgroups)

Early Childhood Development & Education was originally provided by the Toy Library and is now provided by the Tangentyere Ketye Program.

While the Ketye program operates on 6 Town Camps, only YALC and HVCC have a support Hub for the program. Keyte provides the first (and for most town camps residents the only) critical entry point and structured education to children aged 0-5 years. Due to limited resources, the program operates twice a week for 3 hours. The program also supports parents in their parenting skills. This program however is currently not comprehensive enough to bridge the gap and meet the needs of children living in the Housing Associations.

*Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is considered the key early intervention for the long term health and well being of the community. A comprehensive Early Childhood development program is well overdue for the Housing Associations. Tangentyere is seeking to establish comprehensive early childhood development program for all children living in Housing Associations, through the Community Centres (see Below)

> The Community Centre Co-ordinators are important links between Town Camp families and community services. They know all the families and what's happening within the town camps and outside in the wider community.
>
> ... the Community Centre co-ordinators have been very helpful and professional in providing information about the services they offer in each town camp. Their prompt follow-up with information and their attendance and active participation at meetings to discuss better ways to deliver educational services, highlights their commitment to supporting children and families to access educational services
> **Universal Access Project Officer; Early Childhood Policy and regulations; DEET**

Primary Education

Both centres have a strong focus on engagement and successful learning outcomes for education. For the first phase of YALC's operation was the provision of an on-site school for children, catering to children from aged 5 to 16 years. At that time, these children were totally excluded from the schooling system. Local schools explicitly stated that they were unable to accommodate their needs. Most children were seriously affected by violence and inhalant substance abuse. Children had both been users and had witnessed abuse across generations in their families. The YALC School began a partnership with Gillen Primary School and the NTED. The YALC school program painstakingly worked to engage children who had never before been engaged in any schooling. After the first 5 years of operating and building both confidence and ability, YALC focused more on primary education and introduced gradual exposure and transition to the mainstream primary school. In 2009 the satellite program at YALC was closed, with a strong transition and support program now operating. This has been an outstanding success of YALC, which now sees children and families who were previously disengaged and actively excluded from the education system, now fully engaged.

Gillen School has had a long and rewarding relationship with the Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre over a period of some nine years. Gillen School has been responsible for overseeing the primary schooling component of the Centre's educational program and through this we developed a close working relationship with the Centre's staff. The YA staff were extremely helpful in assisting with student welfare and engagement, nourishment for the children, transport, home liaison and a myriad of other issues.
David Glyde Principal Gillen School

Hidden Valley has not operated a school but has focused heavily on school engagement with local primary schools. Over the past 3 years they have established strong relationships with the education department and the Sadadeen Primary School, supporting children and their families to successfully firstly engage and secondly successfully maintain their educational life.

Hidden Valley Community Centre is an extremely valuable resource for our school.

a. We have close contact with the Centre around the needs and wellbeing of students and their families.

b. They provide a vital link between families and the school encouraging them to become involved in school activities

c. Families are encouraged by the Community Centre workers to make lunches for their children. These are delivered to school and kept in the school freezer for distribution.

d. In time information about the movement of families between houses and other locations

e. Follow-up with students and their families regarding behaviour.

...Absolute strength of the Centre is that it provides a strong conduit between home and school. The knowledge of the workers in the Centre about family dynamics and the needs of the children is extremely helpful.
Heather Tubbenhauer Principal Sadadeen Primary School

The last sixteen months I had been employed by the Education Department as a Project Officer with (Indigenous Priority Program Unit), my project was working with all Town Camps around Alice Springs. The team visited Town Camps regularly and it was impressive to see the partnership that Larapinta and Hidden Valley Community Centre had with schools that the students attended,,, The Coordinator is a very valuable position and working with the team it gives the School and Town Camps families the same goal to work together on achieving the best educational outcomes for our students. It would be great if all Town Camps employed Coordinators and built relationship within the Alice Springs Community.
Aboriginal Islander Education Worker at Sadadeen Primary School.

Adult Education & Social Economies

When I 'm at home I'm thinking bad things in my head; but in the art room I feel better and I think about what to make instead
YALC Resident

Both centres run a range of adult education classes in partnership with a range of Registered Training Organisations. Programs have included Community Maintenance for young men; Living Skills, Art & craft; Driving; Literacy & numeracy; Computer; hairdressing, Multi Media. In addition education classes in relation to health, family safety and other target areas are provided.

For the past 10 years YALC has operated an Art Program, provided by Batchelor College, as one of their core adult education programs. The program engages all generations. Through a long standing partnership with Batchelor College (and an incredible commitment shown by them as a training provider), the centre used Art as a vehicle to engage adults and young people who are otherwise drinking or abusing inhalants. Its primary purpose was to heal people who were damaged by years of grief and alcoholism. By bringing people together in a safe place, to express themselves and connect in a healthy way, the art program was an important social and emotional well being program. The program operated as an adult education program, an art enterprise development program, a well-being program and a social cohesion program all in one.

The art and the program have developed to be a celebrated art enterprise receiving local and national recognition for the art it is producing. The annual art and film night has been a way of inviting all of Alice Springs to come and celebrate the achievements of the artists and the community, bridging the gap between the Housing Association and the Alice Springs community.

By bringing adults and young people together in positive social engagement, creating art and creating pride through exhibitions, this program bridged a gap of social inclusion, and has been critical in strengthening the social fabric of the community. In 2010 the Yarrenyty Arltere Artists move from being an adult education program to an independent art and social enterprise program.

'Art programme has really helped the women'
Resident

… as an RTO we have valued this partnership and the inputs and outputs of the centre… Many advantages for learning, social enterprise, sense of purpose, safety, self esteem building. … We are looking at opportunities to do more delivery on the town camps but of course it's contingent on facilities.
Batchelor College

Community Safety program

Both YALC and the Hidden Valley community Centre have developed community safety programs to directly address issues of family violence. These program have engaged a number of agencies to work with the community to increase community safety through access, education and life skills.

> The Alice Springs Women's Shelter has had relationships established with both the Larapinta and Hidden Valley Town Camps over a number of years. At both Centres we have run a women's program which aims at building relationships with women who may become at risk of domestic or family violence. At Larapinta Valley, through the Learning Centre, we were able to run a successful safety program with the children. This looked at safety as a whole, from community to family, to personal safety.
> **Alice Springs Women's Shelter**

As part of this program at Hidden Valley, together with the Alice Springs Women's Shelter they have run a Family Violence Awareness program over the last three years with great success. A weekly women's session provides the women with a weekly 'time out'. This also allows the ASWS and the centre to discreetly talk to women who may be experiencing difficulties at home and offer support and advice in an environment that is safe and relevant to women.

Social and Emotional Well Being

The Hubs in essence are places of well being. They allow people to remove themselves from stress, to quietly, within their cultural life, slowly address the many areas of disadvantage that they face. Within a place that honours their strengths, they are able to build their life skills, and create opportunities for the future of their children. Through the Hubs people are taking responsibility for their future.

The level of grief and trauma and depression within the community can not be understated. The Hubs provide programs, and access to services, that support mental health and social and emotional well being. It is this foundation that is critical in achieving success in other areas of life.

The Hubs coordinate prevention programs with Central Australian Life Promotions who promote suicide-safer communities and assist with mental health education. They also facilitate counselling, family support and community work from Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Social Emotional Well Being Service.

Both centres have engaged the Tangentyere Community Well Being Program. This program is a structured group program, providing skills and social and emotional support to address life issues including domestic violence, parenting, communication and trauma.

> It helps to overcome the language barrier and shyness of residents by having a person who can help to facilitate the conversations. It allows for collaborative projects to occur ... It allows for good referral pathways to occur. We have contacts and information related to suicides that occur in the town camps that we might not have in the other camps.
> **Life Promotion Program Coordinator; Mental Health Association of Central Australia**
>
> It is the daily programs however that provide the fundamental support in building skills, positive connections, confidence and wellbeing. The Art program at YALC for example has been the primary wellbeing program, supported by the education, counselling and groups sessions.
>
> By providing people who have lived with years of trauma and chaos, a place where they can each day sit quietly, in peace and dignity, express their strengths and be accepted, is powerfully healing.
> **Leonie Sheedy, YALC Coordinator**

Health

For the past 10 years Tangentyere has made many attempts to create partnerships with Government and health service providers to increase community based health care delivery, as advocated for by the World Health Organisation in their platform for public health, *The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986)*[22].

> "Health promotion represents a mediating strategy between people and their environments, combining personal choice with social responsibility for health to create a healthier future" (WHO 1986).

Local health providers have actively resisted a move to community based services, advocating strongly for the traditional medical centre/clinic model.

The Hubs have worked actively to promote access to services at clinics and the hospital.

> they have been great with bringing children to Paediatrician appointments and assisting families who are experiencing difficulties to get to these appointments.
> **Paediatric Care Planner, Children's services, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress**

Where possible the Hubs have forged good relationships with the few programs that offer outreach community services, outlining both the ability and importance of community based health promotion and primary health care.

A strong partnership between the outreach child health team at Congress and the Hidden Valley Community Centre has highlighted the benefit of Hubs in their ability to support education and health promotion. The success has been due to a commitment by staff of both organisations.

> Great resource to find Mothers and children on my Program…Staff great resource to assist with sorting some of the issues experienced by the families as they know them very well and we can work together to sort some of the health or social problems for families…Great with healthy meals for the kids on our Program or playgroups to get them involved in… They will assist with keeping an eye out for families or children of concern for us and notify our team if review is needed… Great place for mothers and kids to go just for timeout or to mix with others.
> **Paediatric Care Planner, Children's services, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress**

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22   Tangentyere Family Health Plan

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Other Early Intervention Initiatives

The above are examples of only a few of the many early intervention initiatives that operate at the Hubs. Other Early intervention programs operating at the Hubs include (but are not limited to):

- Adult education (targeting both adults and young people at risk): RTO's providing certificates in horticulture, Drivers licence , First Aid, Literacy & Numeracy, Living Skills, Hairdressing, Horticulture , Art & Craft, Family & Community Services, Community Maintenance, Work Readiness

- Family Well Being Course

- Agency education sessions (legal, substance abuse, health, community safety, social and emotional wellbeing)

- Youth At Risk programs including school holiday programs

- Youth programs including film courses, dance and music

- Culture and Family activities– country visits

- Parenting Programs

'The centre has been really helpful in stopping the sniffing'
YALC Resident

"There is less stealing now"
YALC Resident

'It's good for the kids to come to school, and also the older people can also come to learn'
YALC Resident

3. Case management

The Centres provide individual and family case management. YALC has operated with a male and a female case worker for the past 5 years. HVCC has recently received funding for a male case worker to complement their female case worker/coordinator.

To address poverty and associated grief, family violence and substance misuse requires intensive ongoing support for individuals and families who are affected. Creating opportunities for employment and life skills also requires intensive support. Many residents are culturally isolated from the mainstream community and have significant cultural and language barriers. The case work ranges from assisting people to make a phone call to getting birth certificates, driver's licences, arranging job network support, facilitating educational linkages, to facilitating substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation, family violence support, counselling, trespass and restraining orders, and a range of other needs required to create safety and life opportunities.

> "I have no hesitation in suggesting that the quality of representation which our Service is able to provide to our clients from Larapinta Valley is greatly enhanced by the information and support that the case Workers provide."
> **Solicitor: The Criminal Division of the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service**
>
> Women whose safety has been at risk have been able to use case workers at the Community Centres to arrange for safe methods of evacuation.
> **Alice Springs Women's Shelter**

The Case Work staff provide advocacy, cross cultural support in engaging with mainstream services and assist with systems access and engagement. They coordinate a range of service needs for individuals and families in an effort to address whole of life needs.

There is a wide spectrum of need within the communities, from people who are employed in the mainstream workforce to people who are devastated by grief, family violence and alcohol. The Hub is able to cater to this spectrum.

> A senior elder accesses the centre regularly. He is literate in written English, and advocates with a variety of organisations including government bodies, for his community. He has his own transport, and provides support for his immediate family, and at times for his wider family. This man requests assistance from staff to assist with banking transactions, replacing his driving licence at the MVR, completing forms, proofreading letters, and liaising with a host of services.
>
> Residents who are independent, feel that through discerning use of the centre, limited support can still provide significant difference to their lives.
> **YALC Case Worker**

The following family case study is an example of the complex work undertaken by the case workers:

FAMILY CASE STUDY

Joy (not her name) is a 72 year old woman who has lived at Yarrenyty Arltere Housing Association since the 1970's. She has four surviving children, two of whom live in their own houses at Yarrenyty Arltere. Joy and her late partner also raised four other children whose parents passed away when they were young. Joy has 32 grandchildren and great grandchildren. Eleven grandchildren live at Yarrenyty Arltere. Joy is the primary carer for five grandchildren, three of whom are under the guardianship of the Minister. Four grandsons are in prison, and the other grandchildren live outside of Alice Springs. Her house is heavily overcrowded and is further burdened when family members from outside town visit. Joy is a cultural woman who rarely speaks English.

Joy's family has an extensive history of loss and grief. Alcohol and volatile substance misuse, unemployment, low levels of education and ongoing violence effects all family members. This family was seriously excluded from service networks within Alice Springs.

YALC has developed a strong relationship with the family, providing a broad range of case work support, including engaging children and adults into education. Support has involved some things considered simple, such as assistance to make a phone call to a service provider. The case worker staff have created links with other service and have had an important role in advocacy.

The family uses the centre as a place of safety, and support. Recent work has involved advocating with the Community Justice Centre to address violence related to 'payback'. Assistance has included finding safe accommodation for people at risk, advocating with police and patrols, and engaging FACS/NTFC to ensure the safety of children under guardianship of the minister. To address adult family violence, case workers have supported men and women including access to; a male counsellor and legal support; the domestic violence unit of the police; a women's support worker. Interagency meetings with family have been undertaken to develop safety plans and behavioural support, resulting in behavioural shifts away from violence.

The children have required significant support including; advocacy with NTFC; school engagement; liaising with the mental health youth team; engagement in sport and recreation programs; dealing with safety concerns; and supporting a young boy to ensure he meets the requirement of his youth diversion program.

The children have successfully progressed from the YALC School to mainstreaming at Gillen Primary. Case staff assisted Joy to engage the children in secondary education. Support from Tangentyere Aged and Disability Services was brokered to assist Joy.

This extended family has demonstrated extraordinary resilience to overcome extreme disadvantage. While they still face great challenges, they have worked through YALC to improve their lives, and create an environment where elders are respected, and the younger generation can achieve goals that have been unobtainable for those older than them.

YALC Case Worker

4. Community Safety & Crisis intervention

The Hubs have proven to be critical in assisting community and family safety. Since the establishment of YALC, the Housing Association (Town Camp) of Yarrenyty Arltere has become one of the most stable in Alice Springs. Just over 10 years ago, Yarrenyty Arltere had the reputation of extreme violence with high visitor numbers and serious issues of community safety.

> "When I first came here it was one murder per fortnight. That's how bad it was and now I can walk anywhere and I feel safe.
> **Daniel Forrester, President of Yarrenyty Arltere Housing Association**

The safety of the community has been addressed by the range of interventions facilitated through the Hubs including; a strategic and coordinated approach to unwanted visitors; young people engaging in high levels of inhalant abuse and their associated volatile behaviour; reporting of violence; education and community safety planning; male support programs and the protection of women and children.

YALC has assisted the Housing Association to become stable and safe. Prior to YALC this was the place that young people and older people came to 'sniff'. There were high movements of people, high levels of substance abuse involving visitors and high levels of associated violence. The management of unwanted visitors has had a dramatic impact on community safety. In 2007 (7 years after YALC began) the Tangentyere Mobility Study found Yarrenyty Arltere Housing Association to be amongst the most stable of all Housing Associations with amongst the lowest number of visitors. Over the course of the 12 months study, Yarrenyty Arltere showed a permanent resident population of 92% with only 8% of the population being visitors.[23]

By having Hubs located with the Housing association they are able to respond to immediate crises within the community. Staff are able to support residents to contact police confidentially assisting family members who are otherwise frightened to make reports of violence or petrol sniffing. They offer a level of protection from retribution and payback, with individuals knowing they can quietly inform centre staff of serious safety issues. Centre staff assist people to take agency in their lives and to learn new ways to address violence and create safety.

Because the centre operates as a social meeting place, people are continually coming in and out of the centres. This allows people to create opportunities to quietly and confidentially seek support when required.

A range of services are involved in the Community Safety plans developed by the Hubs. The Alice Springs Women's Shelter, Police, Inhalant strategies through CAYLUS, patrols and FACS, are all contacted to assist in crisis intervention and maintaining community safety.

> Our ability to successfully build these relationships which continue to be ongoing, would have been impossible without the structure of community centres at both of these Town Camps. It was absolutely vital to program delivery to have these facilities on the ground which could foster introductions to Town Camp members, act as a safe place for discussion and ensure that clients of concern could continue to be monitored privately and confidentially. Women whose safety has been at risk have been able to use case workers at the Community Centres to arrange for safe methods of evacuation.
>
> After commencing work at both Hidden Valley and Larapinta Valley, the Alice Springs Women's Shelter noticed an overwhelming increase in the number of referrals from these town camps. In particular, we saw many women self-refer who had never before sought support from the Alice Springs Women's Shelter services. This has had an impact on the safety of multiple women and children. Of course, this has a flow on effect of ensuring that women and children have access to a greater number of services in Alice Springs.
> **Alice Springs Women's Shelter**

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23   Tangentyere Mobility Study, 2007

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Community Safety - Interagency Case Study

Before the Hidden Valley Community Centre was opened, Family Violence in the community was extremely high with assaults being witnessed weekly. There was very little reporting to police during or after an assault and nearly all families believed that it wasn't their business to interfere. It was also noted a number of young women becoming involved in their first serious relationships with young men, and the unhealthy patterns they were falling into. The Women's Shelter was also noting that given the high number of assaults this was not reflected in women using the Shelter for support. Thus began a partnership between the Hidden Valley Community Centre and the Alice Springs Women's Shelter.

The Women's Shelter came to the centre once a week and began with the support of the centre staff to deliver workshops to young women about healthy relationships. Mothers, aunties and grandmothers were encouraged to join in to support the young women. This provided an opportunity for the shelter to develop relationships with all generations. It also allowed us to informally open the dialogue, to discuss some of the barriers to accessing other services. The shelter provided an education worker and a counsellor for each session. This enabled a session to run, and importantly that support and safety plans for individual women in need could occur. This support provided, so that the women were able to access the service without anyone else knowing.

Over time workshops covered young peoples healthy relationships as well as other aspects of Domestic/ Family Violence e.g. police stated that when they received reports of Domestic Violence and attended no-one would speak up about what had happened and who was involved. This led to a number of sessions about how to respond to violence, reporting to police and sharing stories from other communities. Within a number of months it was observed that when an assault occurred people would ring the police instead of turning away and pretending not to notice.

Over time the frequency of violent incidents has reduced. The number of young women remaining in unhealthy relationships has reduced. One young woman who had been repeatedly abused by her new partner even refusing medical treatment after he had stabbed her, ended her relationship with the support of her mother and Aunties and the information and support they received from the Shelter and the Centre Staff.

Over three years the program with the Women's Shelter has moved to a semi-formal education program. Discussions are held over the relevant issues that are current, such as Domestic Violence Orders, or those at risk. The shelter and the women have a chance to meet and build and maintain relationships.

The Coordinator has noted a dramatic decrease in the number of Family Violence incidents. In the most recent incident the woman locked herself in the centre for protection, the husband calmed himself down, he didn't assault her and the police had already been called by other family members. When police arrived several people spoke to them including both the husband and wife. The story four years ago would have been very different.

Hidden Valley Community Centre Coordinator

5. A social and cultural meeting place

The social fabric of the communities is strengthened daily by the social and cultural interactions at the Centres. As places of safety, they allow people to meet in neutral areas, away from family conflict, and participate and engage in positive activities.

Programs and activities take place each day. The Hubs operate as dynamic areas of social strength, ability and engagement. They provide programs in a way that respects and supports people's cultural life and social reality. They are culturally safe.

With programs and planning always occurring with the community, there is an ongoing ownership and empowerment of people surrounding their future and their lives. They Hubs contribute to a stronger sense of social responsibility and cohesion.

'It has helped both families come and work together, it supports both families' (talking about the healing of a long term family rift in one of the communities);
YALC Resident

'Some people used to just go to the pub, now they come to the school';
YALC Resident

'Now all of Larapinta come together for meetings';
YALC Resident

'People feel safer now';
YALC Resident

We like the centre, for doing paintings and with the kids. Safe place for people to sit down.
HV Resident

Before the centre we didn't do much just sat at home."
HV Resident

'It supports the kids, keeping them busy and happy'
YALC Resident

We get a chance to go out bush'
YALC Resident

6. Resource Centre

Due to overcrowding and endemic poverty most houses do not have basic resources such as phones, and at times power. Educational resources and quiet spaces for homework and other hobbies and activities are also hard to find. Most families do not have resources such as computers and some do not have the basic resources for storing cold food and cooking a meal.

The Hubs provide a place of safety where all people are able to access basic resources.

One of the most valued resources at the Hubs is the phone, and case worker staff to assist in making linkages with outside agencies. Being able to connect with the outside world is fundamental to social inclusion.

People come and use the Hubs as places to sit, paint, read, connect, cook and share. The social, educational and hobby activities and resources assist to build people's skills, confidence and opportunity. These resources provide people with the fundamental tools to build upon and express their strengths and abilities.

7. Governance and Leadership

Both through local employment and local governance, the Hubs provide important leadership development. Local men and women work at both Hubs, assisting with activities, maintaining the grounds, liaising with community and assisting with program development. Community members, who are not paid, also become involved in activities, giving them an opportunity to mentor, assist and contribute in positive ways to their community and families.

Local Leaders

The President of the Governance committee for YALC is a 25 year old woman. She and her husband were both chronic inhalant sniffers as young people. She was first a participant at the centre as a teenager. Later she and her husband both stopped sniffing. She became actively involved as a leader, assisting with program development and building her ability to be a spokesperson and advocate. Her confidence has grown and she was awarded the Northern Territory Young Achievers Award in 2007.

Her partner has also emerged as a strong leader. He is employed as a support worker at YALC and his work includes grounds work, visitor talks, security, mentoring young people, and arts program work. Through the centre he produced a film about his story.

Last year their son completed Grade 6 at the main campus of Gillen Primary School after doing his first 6 years at YALC. In his graduation 'speech" he stated: " I want to be a community leader." This year their son will attend High School.

The Hubs provide many opportunities for people to become involved as decision makers, role models, leaders and participants. Both Hubs operate with local Governance committees, made up of residents who meet regularly to decide on the programs and direction of the centres. This is critical in ensuring the Hubs are responding to the needs of community. It is also critical to supporting people to take agency in their lives, to have confidence to make decisions and to know that these decisions are supported. In this way, people learn to be leaders, learn about success and learn about the steps that need to be taken to follow through and achieve their goals. Residents assume responsibility to build a stronger future and the community shares in the successes of the Hubs.

'It's good that people can come down and do work at the centre'
YALC Resident

Now I start a job there and it really helps me to look after my kids, and its good being busy doing painting and helping cleaning up at the centre."
HV Resident.

8. Employment & Economic Opportunities

Poverty eradication requires a whole of life approach to a broad range of social and structural determinants. Within this poverty eradication can only occur by building a suite of economic opportunities for people. Many people living in Housing Associations are culturally excluded from existing employment streams and many live with serious health and emotional issues that challenge their capacity to enter mainstream employment. For many, receiving income through Centrelink can be a major challenge.

Employment and Economic development requires comprehensive educational opportunities from early childhood through to adulthood, income management support, training, and real employment opportunities that are consistent with people's cultural and social life.

The Hubs are at the early stage of this development. Through local employment opportunities, training, education and financial management, the Hubs provide the foundation for employment and economic development. The Hubs have developed relationships with Job Network providers, Centrelink and the financial counsellor at Tangentyere Council, to assist people with financial management.

The existing employment streams within Alice Springs limit opportunity for people living in the Housing Associations. The development of employment streams that are based on cultural knowledge and expertise would increase legitimate workforce options, and provide a structural response to addressing poverty in the future.

Micro-enterprise

Through the art program, YALC has created the Yarrenyty Arltere Artists. This micro-enterprise offers economic development for residents, that is culturally relevant. The artists (including children) have developed unique products that are being nationally recognised and celebrated. The annual art show at Yarrenyty Arltere, and the DesertMob exhibition have become two important annual public events where residents can showcase their talents and connect with the broader community with pride and celebration. The artists are involved in all aspects of marketing, sales, exhibition and distribution. Through this they build the skills of basic business, understand the money story connected to the enterprise and create an economic pathway towards independence and out of poverty.

Our Art Room is for:

    Feel strong and proud

    Keep strong

    Share each others company

    Make us strong for our thinking and our bodies

    Think about what to make instead of thinking bad things –

    Learn together slowly

    Share stories

    Own this place

    Work to make money

    Have a place to feel comfortable

    Make us healthy by doing stuff in the Art Room

    Feel good to work together with family

YALC Art Centre participants – adults and children

Part 3: Hub Outcomes - Meeting Best Practice & Closing the Gap

The Hubs have been a success and have performed well against community needs, national and international standards. They have been successful in improving core social indicators including improved education, improved access to services, decrease in violence, increase in community stability, decrease in criminal justice engagement etc. There is still great need in all areas, however the Hubs are showing a significant ability to Close the Gap.

Table 2: Achievement of the Hubs against overarching aims

Community Hub Outcomes
Social inclusion across all generations
Access and equity
Creating coordinated and integrated service delivery to residents
Addressing social and economic determinants affecting health and wellbeing
Providing whole of life/whole of community support
Cultural Safety and Social relevance
Intergenerational and Community Driven & Directed
Increased family and community Safety/Decrease in Family Violence
Decreased alcohol and other substance abuse
Increase in children of school age participating in education and improved numeracy and literacy outcomes
Improved engagement in early Childhood education and development, with pathways to mainstream education
Improved Health Management
Improved Employment and Economic opportunities
Reduced Overcrowding (in some areas- particularly Yarrenyty Arltere)
Community Stability
Reduced contact with the Criminal Justice System for young people (particularly Yarrenyty Arltere)

Despite requests Tangentyere has been unable to source funding for an external evaluation. The above evidence comes from local evaluation and assessed by program numbers, feedback from residents, stakeholders and evidence from staff. Tangentyere would welcome funding for a rigourous evaluation of the centres.

Table 3: Performance of the Alice Springs Hubs (YALC and HV) against The Australian Social Inclusion Board's Aspirations and Approaches; [24]

Aspirations	YALC and HV Hub Outcomes
Reduce disadvantage	Successful
Increase social civic and economic participation	Successful
Give people both a greater voice and a greater responsibility over what is happening in their lives.	Successful
Approaches	
Building on individual and community strengths	√
Building partnerships with key stakeholders	√
Developing tailored services	√
Giving a high priority to early intervention and prevention	√
Building joined-up services and whole of government(s)	√
Using evidence and integrated data to inform policy	√
Using locational approaches - Working in places where there is a lot of disadvantage, to get to people most in need and to understand how different problems are connected	√
Planning for sustainability - Doing things that will help people and communities deal better with problems in the future, as well as solving the problems they face now.	√

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24   Principles for Social Inclusion; Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2008

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Table 4: Performance of the Alice Springs Community Hubs against the MDG's

MDG	YALC and HV Hub Outcomes
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Yet to Be Achieved – this is a long term goal, however some improvements are occurring
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	Substantial improvements in primary education access and sustainability
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	Improved Gender equality and empowerment through community safety programs, service access and program delivery at the centres
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	Improved access to early child health checks and health services
Goal 5: Improve maternal health	Improved access to maternal health and education
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Coordinated response to communicable diseases outbreaks such as Tuberculosis, rotavirus; Improved access to sexual health care
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	To Be Achieved – Not Core business – however improvements in overcrowding, poor sanitation and environmental health is part of the broader community impact of the Hubs
Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development	N/A re broader international goals Applicable and being improved in terms of local governance and poverty reduction

The Hubs of Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre and Hidden Valley Community Centre are making improvements against their overarching aims and against both national and international standards of best practice.

Despite this there is still much to do to reduce and ultimately eradicate poverty, and with it, the connected issues of violence, alcohol abuse, disease, early death and grief.

The entrenched disadvantage and poverty will take a number of generational cycles before fundamental change occurs. There is clear evidence that the Hubs are creating significant shifts in community inclusion, access and quality of life. Every main social indicator is improving and the Hubs provide a structure and model that can support people to further these changes and create a future of opportunity, where their ability can be celebrated.

SECTION 4

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF ALICE SPRINGS COMMUNITY HUBS

The Alice Springs Women's Shelter has not been able to establish these relationships on any other Town ... We recognize the high risk that women and children experience on many other Town Camps, however the safety of staff members delivering these services cannot be considered until established Centres are in place.

To maximize the safety of all and to ensure improved access to services, we feel that a community centre on each town camp is necessary. One of the differences we can identify between Hidden Valley and Larapinta Valley are the staffing levels. Larapinta Valley appears to be able to function more consistently given there are a greater number of employees based at this community centre.
Alice Springs Women's Shelter

To create sustainable and real change across Alice Springs, Tangentyere proposes the development of new Hubs within the Housing Association of Alice Springs. Tangentyere also encourages the Government to consider Hubs for other suburban areas of Alice Springs including Lyndavale and The Gap.

Community Hubs for Housing Associations

There is an immediate need to establish Community Hubs for all Housing Associations in Alice Springs. Depending on demographics, need, and location, some Associations may share a Hub. The Hubs require adequate staff to cover coordination, case management (with a family strength based approach); and local employment entry points in liaison & centre support.

There are currently 3 Community Hubs supporting 4 Housing Associations. There is a need to cater to the remaining 12 Housing Associations through strategic Hub Development. This will not require Hub development on each Housing Association, but a strategic development based on location, language groups and populations.

There should be centres on all the large camps, or clusters of camps. The camps remind me of remote settlements. The ones without centres are like small outstations where nothing happens. The ones with centres make clear progress over time. The residents of Larapinta remember when it was too dangerous to go out at night back in the previous millennium. There has been substantial improvement... The other town camps do not have the range of services, nor the capacity to develop them. The centres play a crucial role in community development.
Blair McFarland, Coordinator, Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service

Existing Infrastructure

The Community Hub development is supported by the existing infrastructure within the Housing Associations. There are 14 existing Community Facilities within the 17 Housing Associations. In recent year 4 of these have received upgrades.

Table 3: Community Facilities currently existing on Housing Associations

Housing Association	EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE - COMMUNITY FACILITIES	Proposed Hub
Anthelk Ewlpaye (Charles Creek)	1 + 1(clubhouse)	Yes
Nyewente (Trucking Yards)	1	Yes
Mpwetyerre (Abbotts)	*1(upgrades)	Yes
Lhenpe Artnwe (Hoppies)	1	Yes
Inarlenge (Little Sisters)	1	Yes
Ilparpa	1	Yes
Ilperle Tyathe (Walpiri)	1	Yes
Akngwertnarre (Morris Soak)	1	Yes
Bassos / Mt Nancy	1	Yes
Ewyenper Atwatye (Hidden Valley)	*1 (upgrades)	Existing
Yarrenty Arltere (Larapinta Valley)	*1(upgrades)	Existing
Karnte	*1(upgrades)	Existing
Anthepe	1	Supported by Karnte
Anhelke (Namatjira)	nil No Infrastructure	To be supported by Nywentye
Ilyperenye (Old Timers)	1	To Be supported by Ilparpa
Aper Alwerrknge (Palmers)	nil	To be supported by Mt. Nancy
Irrkerlantye (White Gate)	nil No Infrastructure	To be Assessed – possible outreach from HVCC
TOTALS	14	

> It would be good to develop centres on all the other town camps using the lessons gleaned from YALC and Hidden Valley Centres. A broader funding base that supported the employment and training of Aboriginal family workers would be great.
> **Counsellor, Congress Social and Emotional Well Being Service**

Development Plan

Tangentyere proposes the following development plan based on population, levels of young children and young people, stability and infrastructure readiness:

Year 1-2:

Existing Hub support;

1. Karnte - staffing complement and funding increase to meet minimum staffing needs for full time Hub operations
2. Yarrenyty Arltere – commitment to stable and coordinated funding arrangements to decrease administrative demands. Independent Evaluation to be funded and undertaken.
3. Ewyenper Atwatye (Hidden Valley)– as per YALC

New Hubs to be established for:

1. Anthelk Ewlpaye (Charles Creek) Hub - catering to Kunoth and Scruttons Community
2. Nyewente (Trucking Yards) Hub - catering for Anhelke (Namatjira)
3. Mpwetyerre (Abbotts) Hub
4. Lhenpe Artnwe (Hoppies) Hub

Community Hubs Assessment & Community Development Plans:

- Ilyperenye (Old Timers)

- Aper Alwerrknge (Palmers) and Bassos   - To be assessed for support through outreach and inclusion with Mt Nancy in year 2 development

- Anhelke (Namatjira) - Needs assessed through outreach and inclusion with Nyewente

- Irrkerlantye (White Gate) – to be assessed against existing support provided by Irrkerlantye Learning Centre. May be supported through outreach and inclusion with Ewyenper Atwatye (Hidden Valley)

- Capital works upgrades for Inarlenge, Ilparpa Ilperle Tyathe and Lhenpe Artnwe

Year 3-5: New Hubs established at;

1. Inarlenge (Little Sisters)
2. Ilparpa
3. Ilperle Tyathe (Walpiri)
4. Mt. Nancy Hub - also catering to Basso's and Aper Alwerrknge (Palmers
5. Akngwertnarre (Morris Soak)

Minimum Staffing needs:

Staffing levels for the Hubs have been determined based on population base and stability (i.e. visitor numbers).

Hubs catering for a population of over 100, will require minimum staffing of a coordinator, two community development/case worker positions, and two identified local employment positions for Centre support and community liaison

Hubs catering for a population of 40 – 90 will require a staff complement of a coordinator, one community development/case worker position and one local identified employment position for support and liaison.

Ilparpa, Nywentye, Karnte, Mt. Nancy and Hidden Valley will be assessed for additional outreach case workers for the satellite Housing Associations that they are supporting. This will be assessed in year 1.

> Would be fantastic if every camp had a Learning centre for the families or mothers and kids to attend. There is a huge need for education with hygiene, cooking, and playgroups for kids and mothers to socialize to prevent some of the social isolation of young Mums in the camps. A great space for timeout from DV or anything that is unsettling in the home. Also a neutral ground where we can also educate around the above issues. It would be wonderful if every camp had one.
> **Paediatric Care Planner, Children's services, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress**

> I have been most impressed by the evident rapport and trust which my clients and their families have with the Centre workers. The importance of this can not be overstated. These town campers are, it seems to me, profoundly alienated and marginalised, and to have an open and supportive relationship with even one 'outsider' can be of critical value in accessing essential (and in many cases life-saving) services and facilities which are largely taken for granted in our community.
> **Alice Springs Lawyer**

Working together

The Hubs will become a coordination and connection point for services to residents and residents to services. Government and non-Government Services will be invited to utilise the Hubs to improve their access and quality of service provision.

Tangentyere services will be able to be coordinated in a more effective way to deliver to residents. Existing living skills programs, Job Network, aged care and disability support, patrol services, safe family, youth programs, Tangentyere artists and others will revise their service delivery to utilise the Hubs to improve service outcomes.

The Hubs will seek support from Centrelink to expand its successful case management pilot project at YALC, and Hubs will be able to seek further financial management programs.

The Hubs will seek stronger partnerships with health organisations such as Congress and Health and Family services to increase community primary health and health promotion to residents.

Community Safety plans for each community that the Hubs are servicing will be developed along with comprehensive community development plans with local people. Service agencies will be invited, as they are at the existing Hubs, to part of realising these plans.

Risks

The greatest risk will be ability to recruit and retain quality staff. The extended time frame for implementation will allow this to be monitored and managed. Annual review of program implementation will report on risk and development.

Performance indicators

Indicator	Standard	Measure
Partnerships with key stakeholders	Australian Social Inclusion Board	Type of service; nature of partnership/engagement
Building joined-up services and whole of government(s)	Australian Social Inclusion Board	Type of Services; coordination in services delivery; program partnership
Using evidence and integrated data to inform policy	Australian Social Inclusion Board	Collection of data on agreed indicators; use of data in program planning and development
Planning for sustainability	Australian Social Inclusion Board	Sustainability measures within program delivery
Improved Numeracy and Literacy	Closing the Gap	As measured pre and post program implementation – External Evaluation
Improved access and engagement in Early Childhood Education	Closing the Gap	As measured pre and post program implementation External Evaluation
Improved employment and economic outcomes	Closing the Gap	As measured pre and post program implementation External Evaluation
Improved Health outcomes	Closing the Gap	As measured pre and post program implementation – External Evaluation
Reduction in poverty Improved financial safety and management	United Nations Millennium Development Goal	Support to engage in financial and income service support; (how many, how often, age, gender); employment measures.
Improved educational engagement	United Nations Millennium Development Goal	how many, where to, age, gender; reports from consumers, community and service providers
Access of mainstream services by residents	ASTP goal	Numbers of consumers; numbers and types of services access; location of access
Cultural Safety	United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples	Program supports & promotes cultural integrity

Social Indicators (dealing with social issues and transforming Town Camps – ASTP)

Key Social Indicator	Measured by
Increased family and community Safety/ Decrease in Family Violence	Community Safety Plan in-tact; reports from consumers, community and service providers
Decreased alcohol and other substance abuse	alcohol and other drug support services (how many, age, gender); reports from consumers, community and service providers
Increased education engagement of children and young people	Pre and Post assessment;
Reduced contact with the Criminal Justice System	Reports from consumers, community and service providers
Improved Health Management	Regular attendance and access to health related support services: reports from consumers, and service providers
Local Leadership	Reports from consumers, community and service providers
Reduced mobility	Pre and Post assessment

Funding

The Tagentyere Community Hubs initiative creates 9 new Child and Family Centres and additional services to make a tenth centre fully functioning.

The financial investment required (excluding capital) is of $4M or $409,368 per Centre/annum. The Australian Government is establishing Child and Family Centres across Australia at an annual operating budget of $1.5M ($8M per centre)

The Hubs will together cater to at least 2000 adults and children, making the investment cost per person of $2,047. This will be saved immediately through improved service access, improved service delivery, social and economic outcomes.

SECTION 5

EDUCATION FOR LIFE PROGRAM

The Education to Life program aims to eradicate poverty, and to create universal education and pathways to employment that will bring about community safety and well being in the long term, to all residents living in Alice Springs Town Camps (Housing Associations). This is a program that spans conception through to adulthood.

Part 1: Leaders and Advocates in Education - Background

Tangentyere has led all major educational shifts to create access to Education for disadvantaged children in Alice Springs for 30 years. Education has always been a priority of Tangentyere, led by key Executive members who were passionate about ensuring quality education for their children. Despite this commitment, it has often been difficult to gain support for a vision of universal education for children living in Alice Springs.

Tangentyere first led the establishment of Yipirinya School, which was founded in 1979 by Elders of the Housing Associations (Town Camps). Starting firstly on Town Camps before moving to Tangentyere Council, a school site was developed and opened in 1988. Yipirinya School is a successful independent school providing primary and some middle schooling to children across Alice Springs[25].

In 1997, to address the education needs of both primary and secondary aged children, Tangentyere began the Detour program. This intergenerational learning program evolved into Irrkerlantye Learning Centre, servicing a targeted group of families, providing education to children and adults and engaging communities of children who had never before accessed education. Irrkerlantye is now an independent program.

In 2000 Tangentyere began Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre (YALC). YALC has had outstanding success, also bringing a community of children, who were fully disengaged from education, into education and into the mainstream system. The success was based on the intergenerational model, which promoted and supporting parents to be fully involved in the education of their children, and at the same time providing education for parents. By providing wrap-around service support, YALC put into practice international best practice that is recognised as critical to school engagement and success.

For over 10 years Tangentyere has been providing Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programs to families living in the Housing Associations of Alice Springs. However limited resources has resulted in a very limited program. For this whole period, Tangentyere has advocated for comprehensive early childhood services understanding this to be the long term key to the future of all residents living in Housing Association. Meetings with Federal Government Ministers, senior Government bureaucrats, repeated funding requests and Inquiry submissions were all unheeded.

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25   http://www.yipirinya.com.au

An Integrated Service Approach to Social Inclusion

In 2005 Tangentyere Council, DEST, DHCS, Alice Springs Quality of Life and DEET worked together to formulate a comprehensive education program for children living in the Housing Associations. The proposal included 13 elements:

1. Bus Services
2. Nutrition and Health Education
3. Social and Emotional Well Being
4. Clothing
5. Parenting Support
6. School readiness – early childhood education, parenting and bridging programs
7. After School Care and Holiday Program
8. Alternative Education and Summer Schools
9. Homework Centres
10. Weekend Support Programs
11. Getting Schools ready – welcoming and responsive
12. Home-School Liaison
13. Research and Evaluation

The model was comprehensive, recognising that it is what happens outside of the standard schooling hours and teaching weeks, that heavily disrupts children's ability to engage in school.

The plan was developed with local educationalists, and leading Indigenous education advocates including the late Ngarte (Minster) E. Rubuntja who was one of the founding members of the Yipirinya School. The model identified barriers, maintained a focus on mainstreaming and school readiness and included the flexibility to respond to children with higher needs. The model addressed the whole of life needs of children both within the educational system and the preparation and out of school hours support that is critical for education to be successful. It was estimated that the program would support up to 400 school aged children (including early childhood) and parents/grandparents on Town Camps. Funding application was unsuccessful.

In 2009 Tangentyere Council, in partnership with NT Department of Education (NTDET) and the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), commissioned an independent educational consultant to undertake a project to develop an Alice Springs Town Camp Education strategy, to be aligned to the Alice Springs Indigenous Education Strategy:

"The Alice Springs Town Camps Education Project was initiated to provide a platform from which partners form Government and Non-Government Organisations, principally Tangentyere Council, the NT Department of Education (NTDET) and the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), could work together to build from existing programs to produce measurable improvement in enrolment of Town Camp Children and Youth in schools; then from this consistent attendance in school, vocational and higher education programs and the engagement of parents and carers"[26]

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26   Geoff Sloan (2009) T he Alice Springs Town Camp Education Project,

The Alice Springs Town Camp Education Project presents a review into the literature, findings from key stakeholders, and an education platform aligned with existing Education policy. It recommends a 3-stranded approach to education:

Strand 1: Successful Learning – enrolment, attendance, outcomes, parents

Strand 2: Tracking people and progress - data

Strand 3: Partnerships – strategy steering group; key service providers

The Successful Learning strand approaches education in four phases, outlining key curriculum outputs for each:

- Early Childhood – Ready to Learn

- Primary School – Success from the start

- Middle School - Respect me

- Secondary school – Learning to be an Adult

Using an international body of evidence, the report stresses the need to focus primary effort in early childhood education, stressing, "Zero is too late." The project also stresses the importance of parental involvement in successful educational outcomes. In preparing children for school, the project recommends that:

> "To…enable readiness for school, projects should be developed, implemented and delivered 'on camp' wherever possible."[27]

To this aim, the project recommends ongoing support and extension of the existing Hubs (centres) on Town Camps, as an important vehicle to achieving sustained educational outcomes.

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27   The Alice Springs Town Camp Education Project, 2009, Geoff Sloan

An Integrated Service Approach to Social Inclusion

Part 2: Evidence and Best Practice

Many different studies show family poverty adversely affects children's health, intellectual capabilities, academic achievement and behaviour[28]

Research

International research and practice indicate that for children to enjoy a successful education we need to focus on both children and schools.[29] [30] Ready Children and Ready School are two approaches widely adopted in platforms for education, focusing on both Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) and School preparedness[31][32]

Children's readiness for school is widely agreed to depend on five factors[33]:

1. Physical well-being and motor development
2. Social and emotional development
3. Approaches to learning
4. Language development
5. Cognition and general knowledge.

The importance of school being ready for children is fundamental to educational success.

It is the "responsibility of schools to be ready for children: to offer them a supportive environment that enables them to blossom and learn effectively"[34]

Inaccessible schools, high student to teacher ratio; broad aged classrooms; poorly trained teachers, poor approaches to dealing with language differences between home and school; and poor learning resources are all related to school readiness. [35]

Ready schools situate Indigenous culture at the centre of curricula, value the skills that Indigenous children bring to school and employ Indigenous staff[36]

The School Readiness of Australian Indigenous Children: A Review of the literature by McTurk et al.[37] is one of the most comprehensive reviews of International and Australian literature relating to school readiness, assessment, risk and protective factors and interventions, and its implications for Indigenous Children in Australia. The review found the following evidence of Risk and Protective factors relating to successful educational outcomes:

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28   Arnold, C; Bartlett, K; Gowani; S, Merali; S (2007) Is everybody ready? Readiness, transition and continuity: Reflections and moving forward WORKING PAPERS IN Early Childhood Development; Bernard van Leer Foundation
29   Arnold, et al (2007)
30   Winter, Suzanne M, Kelley, Michael F (2008) Forty Years of School Readiness Research: What Have We Learned? Childhood Education
31   UNESCO policy brief on Early Childhood, (Dec 2008) What approaches to linking ECCD and Primary School; McTurk___ , N; Nutton, G; Lea,T; Robinson, G; Carapetis, J. (2008); The School Readiness of Australian Indigenous Children: A Review of the literature; Charles Darwin University; Menzies School of Health Research; www.HZC.org.au
32   Forty Years of School Readiness Research: What Have We Learned? Childhood Education, 2008 by Winter, Suzanne M, Kelley, Michael F
33   Arnold, et al (2007)
34   Arnold, et al (2007)
35   Kage, Y; (Dec 2008) What approaches to linking ECCD and Primary School UNESCO policy brief on Early Childhood; Division for the promotion of basic education.
36   McTurk_, N; Nutton, G; Lea,T; Robinson, G; Carapetis, J. (2008); The School Readiness of Australian Indigenous Children: A Review of the literature; Charles Darwin University; Menzies School of Health Research
37   McTurk_, N; Nutton, G; Lea,T; Robinson, G; Carapetis, J. (2008); The School Readiness of Australian Indigenous Children: A Review of the literature; Charles Darwin University; Menzies School of Health Research

Child Risks

- Low Birth rate

- Dietary Deficiencies and under nutrition

- Hearing Problems

- Parental tobacco and alcohol consumption

- Parental education especially maternal

- Abuse

- Single parentage

- Poverty

Protective factors include:

- Early Childhood Education and High quality care

- Mobility – while this can impact on healthcare and education it develops resilience and independence that can assist with transition

- Reading at home

- Learning rich environments

- Secure attachment to a stable carer

- Development of communications between schools and families

- Local Indigenous staff

- Community Ownership of programs

- Home visit health programs – (reporting an internationally successful model engaging specially trained indigenous teachers for ante-natal and post partum support)

- Parenting engagement and parenting education

- Inclusion of elders and extended family structures

- Community based early interventions

Evidence also indicates the need for sustained high quality education through school life, as there are high levels of disengagement for disadvantaged students as they progress through the school years,

> even as they stay in school, many children acquire – and nurture – negative persistent patterns such as under-achievement, or low enthusiasm for learning, since they simply move up the scale with whatever problems they may be encountering[38]

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38   Arnold, C; Bartlett, K; Gowani; S, Merali: S (2007) Is everybody ready? Readiness, transition and continuity: Reflections and moving forward WORKING PAPERS IN Early Childhood Development; Bernard van Leer Foundation

Cultural Diversity

The links between culture and development are so strong that development cannot dispense with culture... these links cannot be separated
Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO[39]

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2010 as International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. UNESCO is the lead agency.

Cultural diversity is a driving force of development, not only in respect of economic growth, but also as a means of leading a more fulfilling intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life. ... Cultural diversity is thus an asset that is indispensable for poverty reduction and the achievement of sustainable development.[40]

It is easy to forget that Central Australia is made up of discrete Aboriginal Nations with distinct languages and cultural practices. In managing the influx of these various nations to Alice Springs over 30 years ago, the elders established Town Camp communities for these nations based on geographical location. This was a successful and important social control plan that supported the co-existence of nations in one area. As a central service area, people from the region have been moving in and out of Alice Springs since it ceased be a restricted area for Aboriginal people. While there has been some movement and mixing of nations within Town Camps, each Camp or Housing Association remains strongly aligned to its Aboriginal nation identity, with related families and language groups still primarily living together. Aboriginal customs and lore are still alive, and are integral to the identity and everyday life of people.

"Indigenous people not only live across a very different range of geographical settings ... but also experience a range of different lifestyles within these communities ... awareness and understanding of the complex and often delicate nature of the social and cultural issues at play within and between these communities is critical if Aboriginal learners are to achieve equitable educational outcomes" [41]

Building on the Alice Springs Community Hubs

When reviewing the risk and protective factors for successful education, the Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre and the Hidden Valley Community Centre have been responding to each of these factors through their intergenerational, integrated service approach.

The Hubs provide:

- Learning environments

- Assist families to create and maintain stable and safe attachments with their children

- Actively assist in communications between schools and families

- Employ Local Indigenous staff

- Ensure Community Ownership of programs

- Facilitate community early childhood health programs

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39   Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO 2010; Message from Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, "2010, International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures" http://portal.unesco.org/culture
40   UNESCO 2010;
41   Clancy and Simpson, 2002: 54-5 in McTurk et a. (2009)

- Provide active case management supporting child health and well being through referral and support

- Facilitate and provide Parenting engagement and parenting education

- Include elders and extended family structures

- Promote community based early interventions

- Provide adult education building the education of mothers and fathers

- Address poverty

Research across the board indicates that the engagement of parents in a child's education is a strong indicator for successful educational outcomes[42]. Ensuring parents are confident and comfortable in their child's learning environment is critical. YALC made this the core of their intergenerational program – engaging parents in the education of their children, while at the same time educating parents in a range of skills and knowledge. The mainstreaming of the children was reliant on strong parental involvement. The relationship between Sadadeen Primary and the Hidden Valley Community Centre has also highlighted the critical role and success of Hubs in supporting families and children with education. The engagement of parents has had a direct impact on retention and outcomes.

However the Hubs have also reported major gaps. Early Childhood Education is poorly lacking and there has been difficulty in maintaining school retention once children reach the secondary schooling system. Hubs have also found that supporting family engagement in education and mentoring students within the system requires resources that they do not have.

The Hubs however provide the foundation upon which Education for Life plans to build. They are similar in innovation and vision to the Harlem Children's Zone. Harlem Children's Zone, is an internationally model that would complement and expand upon the achievements of the Hubs, bringing an innovative education approach to the lives of children in Alice Springs.

Best Practice: Harlem Children's Zone - *A "Whatever it Takes" attitude to community transformation*

Education for Life will establish comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Education across the Housing Associations of Alice Springs. It will build on the work of the Hubs to expand pre-conception to Adult education and support. Education for Life is an evidenced based initiative, incorporating the vision and approach of the internationally renowned Harlem Children's Zone.

While there are significant cultural differences between Harlem and the Town Camps in Alice Springs, issues of poverty, education, health and social inclusion are very similar. The Harlem Children's Zone is an internationally recognised unique project that was established to provide a whole-of-life, whole of community approach to eradicate poverty and bring universal education to the children of Harlem.

> "The Harlem Children's Zone Project is a unique, holistic approach to rebuilding a community so that its children can stay on track through college and go on to the job market[43]

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42   Forty Years of School Readiness Research: What Have We Learned? Childhood Education, 2008 by Winter, Suzanne M, Kelley, Michael F

43   www.HZC.org.au

The Harlem Children Zone in a comprehensive education program spanning birth to college. It includes; Parenting College; Early Childhood Education, Primary School, Middle School, High School programs, College support program, and student support for children attending public schools in the catchment. The following is a very brief overview of the program, which is producing strong educational outcomes (e.g. 100 percent of the third-graders at HCZ scored at or above grade level in the statewide math tests).

The education program is performance based, setting the highest standards for teachers and students. The child-teacher ratio is set to ensure that each child receives individual support to meet their needs.

The parenting program or "baby College' is a 9 week parenting workshop for expectant parents and parents raising a child up to three years old. This is followed up with an Early Childhood program that actively includes and expects the involvement of parents in the education of their children.

The Early Childhood program, Harlem gems, has two components:

> " Harlem Gems is an all-day pre-kindergarten program that gets children ready to enter kindergarten. Classes have a 4:1 child-to-adult ratio, teach English, Spanish and French, and run from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m...
>
> The Get Ready for Pre-K program brings in students before the start of the pre-kindergarten program school year. The six-week summer session runs for extended hours during weekdays like the regular Gems program, helping children acclimatise to the new schedule and readying them to start school"[44]

The Primary to High School education components are provided through the Promise Academy. The Elementary (Primary Schools) began operating in 2004 and 2005 respectively. Students are provided with intensive support, with at least 2 and often more teachers in each class depending on need. Students come from the Harlem Gems and from the broader community, being allocated a place based on a lottery system (giving everyone the same chance to enter the school). Understanding that many children come with no previous education in literacy and numeracy, the school systems provides a curriculum and ratio of support to ensure educational outcomes.

The Middle School began operating in 2004 and the High School in 2008. Throughout their schooling life, students are provided with one on one mentoring support. There is a commitment to individual time with children and each child from primary to college has an individual education plan. The system has strong academic performance aims, and recognises the need for wrap-around support services including child and community health support.

The education programs include a focus on Arts and Media, Fitness and Nutrition, Employment and technology. The hours of school operation is longer than the mainstream, and includes school holiday and after-school program initiatives. The HZC provides an academic mentoring program to their students and to students within the broader community:

> In 2009, 700 middle-school students were in the system, each with an assigned staff person who worked with public-school staff to monitor the student's academic and developmental progress. Each student has an individualized plan and the case managers find assistance for them when necessary[45]

The HZC also provides a College Success Office to support those students, many of whom are the first in their families to attend tertiary education, to overcome the many challenges in succeeding in their college life.

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44   www.hcz.org

45   www.HZC.org.au

Health and community hubs delivering integrated service support to the community support the above academic streams.

> "The Objective is to create a safety net woven so tightly that children just can't slip through" The New York Times Magazine[46]

Part 3: Education for Life program – Tangentyere Council

The Education for Life program is based on evidence and best practice, incorporating the ambitious Harlem Children's Zone model and responding to the protective factors critical to successful education.

The Education for Life program spans conception to adulthood. It is an intergenerational model that focuses on both Ready Kids and Ready Schools.

Education for Life demands the best of children, families, educators, community, service providers and government.

To bridge the gap, and to create successful Universal education for all children through to adulthood, Education for Life has the following underlying premises;

- Disadvantaged children are able to perform at the highest academic standards

- Children must receive the very best in educational systems.

- Education programs must expect more, provide more and provide wrap around services to address risks

- Education is a whole of family affair

Education for Life will model the following components of the HCZ:

- Education from Birth – Parenting education & early childhood development tracking (First Steps)

- Extended hours education progam (Best all year Round)

- Comprehensive early childhood education with advanced curriculum (Little Deadlies)

- Individual Education Plans

- Intergrated social service support

- High staff=student ratios

The Education for Life program aims to within a generation achieve:

- Universal Education to all children living in Housing Associations and broader Alice Springs

- Academic outcomes that meet national standards as a minimum

- Adults who are ready to enter the workforce and/or tertiary education

- A network of western educated and community responsible adults, supporting children in education

- Adults who are strong in culture, identity and language

46   www.HZC.org.au

The broader outcomes will include improved health, social and emotional well being, social inclusion and empowerment.

While much is spoken of the failings of our families in relation to alcohol and violence, little is celebrated of the ability in our community to parent and care for our children. Education for life recognises the strength of Aboriginal parenting. From birth the extended kinship provides a wealth of physical, language and emotional input, supporting cognitive development, fine and gross motor development, and social development. Babies and children are highly stimulated, and kinship parenting encourages children to explore in a supported environment. Due to issues of poverty, cultural exclusion and social stress, our children are unable to benefit from these strengths, within mainstream Alice Springs. Education for Life will incorporate the very best of Aboriginal and Western parenting and education.

Partnerships - Steering Committee

The Education for Life Steering Committee will invite representation from NT Department of Education (NTDET), and the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). Places will be available for parent representation; Tertiary Education provider; Primary School Principal; Secondary School Partner and the Alice Springs Transformation Committee.

The Steering Committee will be convened quarterly. On-site visits will be included in the functions of the committee. The Director of Education for Life will provide quarterly reports to the committee. The Director of Education will convene the Committee for Life.

The Steering Committee is part of the Partnership strand recommended by The Alice Springs Town Camp Education Project

Hubs

To ensure community ownership, family engagement, and integrated service delivery, the Education for Life program will run through the Alice Springs Hubs.

Over the past 10 years YALC and HVCC have identified and coordinated the wrap-around services critical to successful school engagement. The intergenerational model of the Hubs involves the community at every stage, ensuring that they are the catalysts for change, by being personally invested in the success of their children.

The Education for Life program will consolidate and streamline some of the existing core program areas, and introduce new services to fill the large gaps that currently exist in early childhood education and development, and education support services.

As recommended by The Alice Springs Town Camps Education Project, each Hub will be outfitted with Computer and IT areas for access and use of students, recognising that most students will not have the financial or home environment to support these resources which are critical to education, access and inclusion.

> There are calls in the literature, chiefly via consultations with Indigenous communities for an integrated approach to early child health and education, incorporating prenatal, parenting and preschool components within 'hub' centres (NTDE, 1999: 11; Ball, 2003: 7; SNAICC, 2004a: 60-2; Walker, 2004: 57; Cleary, 2005: 7-8).[47]

47   McTurk., N; Nutton, G; Lea,T; Robinson, G; Carapetis, J. (2008); The School Readiness of Australian Indigenous Children: A Review of the literature; Charles Darwin University; Menzies School of Health Research

Children are exposed to high level of violence and alcohol abuse, and they are also often surrounded by supportive extended family. Using a family strength based model, parenting engagement and high quality extended structured education programs, Education for Life aims to shift the daily living culture within the communities, to one of engagement and opportunities.

The Best All Year Around

The Education for Life program will operate as a six day a week, all year round program. For our children to bridge the gap and to reach the standards of education enjoyed by other Australians, they need an education program that extends beyond the standard educational framework, and brings education into their lifestyle.

There is both international and local qualitative evidence indicating the school engagement is seriously affected by what occurs outside of 'normal' school hours. Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre found that the absence of structured school holiday programs seriously undermined the ability of the centre to re-engage children after holiday periods. Each year they seek funding to provide a school holiday program to keep kids engaged and ready for school.

The Harlem Children's Zone provides full day programs and pre-term (holiday) education programs for students.

The extended school hours program will include: sport, recreation, dance, IT, homework sessions (using the Hubs as homework centres); music, and culture. Out of school hours workers will team up with specialist teachers to provide the extended school program to students. The Out of School workers will also focus on bringing children and young people into the mainstream sport and recreational life of Alice Springs.

The programs will be used as incentive program's for school participation and engagement. It is these activities that children will be keen to engage with. Children not attending school will not be able to participate in all program areas. The extra-curricula extended hours program will be presented as an award to students attending school. Reward based systems are proven to be the most effective in affecting behaviour change than punitive approaches.

The program will extend normal school hours to 6 pm each weekday and will include a Saturday program. The extended school program will have a strong health and nutrition focus. It will provide 6 days a week programs throughout the school holiday period, being supported by the Early Childhood Education teams.

Education for Life Program Streams

Stream 1: Early Childhood (0-8 years)

...despite the internationally accepted definition of early years as ages 0–8, (do) early childhood professionals and policy-makers almost always ignore 6–8-year-olds and consider early childhood development (ECD) as pertaining only to the pre-school years[48]

The Early Childhood Care and Development stream will include a 6-day a week program for 0-8 year olds, providing children with the highest level of intensive early childhood development.

The program will include a school readiness support program ensuring children are ready to enter the mainstream education system for their primary school years. During their first few years at primary school (until aged 8 years) children will be assisted through the critical period of transition.

48   Arnold, C; Bartlett, K; Gowani; S, Merali; S (2007) Is everybody ready? Readiness, transition and continuity: Reflections and moving forward WORKING PAPERS IN Early Childhood Development; Bernard van Leer Foundation

The Education for Life program focuses on three early childhood periods:

- First steps: Conception to 2.9 years
- Little Deadlies: 2.9 to 5 years
- Transition Support: 6-8 years

First steps: Conception – 2.9 yrs

Interactions during the first few years substantially shape a child's neural pathways[49].

Conception to 2.9 years will include the following components:

Structured Playgroups

Structured playgroups will provide essential cognitive and physical stimulation for children. Playgroups will introduce educational pathways in social, emotional, language, music and physical development, with a focus on English numeracy and literacy. Health and nutrition will be core components of the program, through partnerships with existing health providers and through the Multi-disciplinary education support team.

A staff child ration of 4:1 will be maintained ensuring children and parents receive intensive support.

Playgroups will operate from 8.30 am – 1 pm daily. The Playgroups will run all year around.

The program will focus on both baby care and toddler care. It will include active parenting support and education, providing information and skills to parents regarding child development. Grandmothers will be actively approached to participate as paid workers. Qualified child care staff with training in early childhood development will be core staff team.

An Active Outreach component will work within the community, encouraging and supporting families to engage with the playgroups, and providing in-home support for education.

From 1-5 pm parents will be supported to utilise the resources of the Hub if additional parenting support is required.

Local Young people will be targeted for training in childcare and early childhood development.

Ante-natal education and support:

Maternal Health is regarded as a major risk factor to educational outcomes for children, as are health related issues such as auditory problems. A qualified and experienced Health Promotion Specialist with experience in maternal health will be employed to provide family based maternal health. Two local Aboriginal health workers, a male and a female, will be employed to ensure first language education to families. First language health education is rarely available, creating huge gaps in knowledge and understanding of health related issues. To ensure that people are equipped with knowledge, and are being encouraged to take agency in their health and the health of their child, this team will provide the very best knowledge in the most accessible form. The team will engage both men and women. Working within each family, the team will provide education and referral to tertiary health services such as Congress and the Hospital.

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49   Arnold, C; Bartlett, K; Gowani; S, Merali; S (2007) Is everybody ready? Readiness, transition and continuity: Reflections and moving forward WORKING PAPERS IN Early Childhood Development; Bernard van Leer Foundation

Parenting program

The parenting program will include two components. A qualified counselor will deliver structured education sessions over 10 weeks, introducing parents to positive parenting techniques, and components of the more comprehensive Family Well Being program.

The Active parenting program will continue through the structured playgroups. Parenting skills will be developed in reading to children, introduction to English numeracy and literacy; positive parenting; role modeling; and cultural life. Reading at home will be encouraged as an important family engagement strategy.

Little Deadlies 2.9-5 yrs

The Little Deadlies program will provide an intensive and structured early educational program, in social, emotional, educational, music, cultural and physical development, with a focus on numeracy and literacy.

This program will operate from 8.30 – 5 pm Monday to Friday, and Saturday mornings from 9.00- 1 p.m

The languages program will include:

- Intensive English will be part of the core program delivered by the Early Childhood Educators and supported by a qualified TESOL teacher (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language or TESOL – previously ESL).

- An Aboriginal language primary language of the students will be taught

- A regional Asian language (Chinese, Indian, Japanese) will be taught in recognition of the future world economic and population base – students progressing to university will benefit from this exposure - this also begins the teaching of the broader economic and social world, encouraging interest and confidence to learn and engage into the future

Saturday mornings will offer a range of structured sessions in arts and culture – with introduction to dance & movement, sports, and music.

The staff: student ratio will be 4:1, led by a trained Early Childhood Educationist and supported by a local Early Childhood Support worker. This worker will be targeted from the immediate community, creating employment, local engagement and training platform to future employment.

Grandmothers will be encouraged to participate as tutors and teachers alongside Western Qualified Early Childhood teachers.

Parents will be encouraged to participate in the classrooms, and in the activities. They will be actively mentored in how to support their child through their education.

During their final 6 months of Little Deadlies, parents and students will begin their engagement with the mainstream school for the following year. The Transition support workers will work with the Early Childhood Education team to build a strong educational plan with parents and the primary school that the child will be attending.

Students and their families will be actively supported throughout their early childhood years (up until age 9) and until the end of their primary schooling.

Transition Support 6-8

There are currently no plans to begin a dedicated school as per the Harlem Children's Zone. The relationships developed with Gillen Primary School, Sadadeen Primary School and Yipirinya school present opportunities to develop an intensive primary school support program to sustain children in school and build on their educational successes from the intensive Little Deadlies program. The Transition Support program will include one on one education plans, family support, outside school hours programs, weekend and holiday programs to build a comprehensive educational platform for children.

The link between pre-school and school is recognized as a significant shift in structure, expectation, and lifestyle. Internationally the need to transition carefully has been recognized. An intensive one on one support system is part of the transition program. Children (and their families) coming into transition will be supported by a transition case worker. This individual education plan model is reflected in the Harlem Children's Zone program, where children and supported through individualized plans throughout their school life.

Education for Life Transition case workers will be employed for each Hub, to work with families and mentor children through their first years of primary school. These staff will be the critical link between the school and the community. They will ensure basic needs are met such as uniforms and healthy food. They will support the education of students and assist families to assist their children in their learning needs.

The Transition Support program will include the extended school hours program. A comprehensive extended hours school activity program will be developed and will include a weekend sports program for 5-8 year olds and holiday programs.

Stream 2: Mainstream Engagement and Retention

Primary School

The Primary School support program will be an extension of the transition program, and the Individual Education plan for students.

The Primary School support program will address the age related needs of students as they progress through school.

The program will include all aspects involved in the transition support program including one on one education plans, family support, outside school hours programs, weekend and holiday programs.

The Education for Life program will work with partner schools to include a social and emotional development program and cultural program into their core curriculum.

Middle School & Senior School

There are widespread anecdotal reports of children from disadvantaged backgrounds falling out of the secondary schooling system in the Northern Territory. Figures for retention and performance substantiate these reports.

In our opinion there is currently no adequate secondary schooling structure and system supporting the engagement, enrolment and ongoing educational success of our children in a comprehensive way.

In the first instance the Education for Life program for Middle School and Secondary School students will include one on one education plans, family support, outside school hours programs, weekend and holiday programs.

Education for Life will work with partner schools to implement the recommended education strands and outcomes as recommended in The Alice Springs Town Camps Education Project.

In the first year of the Education for Life program, a partnership with NTDET will be sought to comprehensively review the secondary schooling needs of our children, taking into consideration models such as the Harlem Children's Zone and other models of best practice.

Tertiary - Workforce

The Education for Life team will provide comprehensive support to students through their individual education plans in preparation for Tertiary study or workforce engagement.

Partnerships with Job Network providers and Tertiary Institutions will be developed further through the Hubs.

Students progressing to Tertiary study will receive mentoring, support through ongoing case management. Additional case workers may be required into the future to support this program area.

Stream 3: Wrap around Support Services Reducing Risk

Multi-Disciplinary Team

The Education for Life Program will again mirror the Harlem Children Zone program with the development of a multi-disciplinary team including health promotion educators and psychologists. The role of the health promotion educators has been discussed.

An educational psychologist will provide assessment, educational planning support and family intervention.

A psychologist specialising in family based therapy, but also qualified to undertake assessment work, will focus on the social and emotional needs of the child and family.

Between them they will run the parenting program.

Many children and families are suffering from extreme trauma and grief. The underlying emotional health stress within our community is rarely addressed.

The psychologists will focus on the whole of family in addressing the educational needs of children.

The Multi-disciplinary team will include the Transition and Engagement Support workers. These workers will provide outreach to families and will be responsible for the case work involved with one-on-one education plans. They will work with Early Education staff, primary schools and secondary schools in their support of students. Based within the allied health team, their case planning and support will integrate these critical aspects of educational need.

Specialist Teaching Unit and Extended Hours School workers

Children living in the Housing Associations often speak English as a second, third or fourth language. It is for this reason that Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL – the new ESL) must be an approach included in our Early Childhood Program. The Early Childhood Education program will focus heavily on English numeracy and literacy, exposing and teaching children to be fluent and proficient in English as one of their dominant languages.

Specialist teachers will be recruited in the areas of IT, dance, music, physical development and language. These teachers will provide children with access and exposure to broad curricula

all aimed at improving educational outcomes and providing children with the best platform of education and skills for their future.

Cultural educators will also be engaged to ensure access and inclusion in the curriculum of Aboriginal culture and first language.

The Specialist teachers will operate in the formal school hours program, as well as providing sessions fro the extended school program including weekends and school holidays.

Staff Complement

As with the Harlem Children's Zone, the Education for Life program will recruit and set standards for the best educators in the nation to join the team. A full professional staff compliment will include:

- Education for Life Director

- Early Childhood Educationalists - Specialists

  o The Early Childhood Program Coordinator (0-8) will be a qualified early childhood educationalist with additional training in the family strengths based approach.

  o Specialist Early Childhood Development workers will be employed for each Hub. Local early Childhood support workers will be employed within the community.

  o To ensure quality control and local employment, an early Childhood Development trainer will be employed to train staff on-site, to mentor and oversight work practice across the Hubs. This position will work closely with the Program Coordinator.

- Multi-disciplinary team – psychologists, health & nutrition educationalists;

  o Education engagement and Transition support workers (male and female) case load of eight students and families plus grass roots engagement work

  o 2 child and family psychologists – 1 Educational psychologist and 1 specialist family and individual counselling– also providing assessment work

  o Health promotion and Education workers - focusing on maternal health education and support, but also providing family health education & referral

  o 1 nutritionist – ensuring strong food program, contributions from parents, education and monitoring across all sites

Specialist teachers

- TESOL program

  o Language staff specialised in teaching English, as a second language will be employed. One specialist per 3 Hubs will be engaged to work comprehensively with students and families (daily intensive education per Hub plus follow up tutoring, homework support and parenting support)

- Cultural Program – Elders & educationalists

  o Cultural program educationalists will be employed from within the community. These staff will provide cultural program content through the early childhood program. The

Education for Life program will liaise with partner primary schools to include cultural program content as part of making school ready for children,

o   Tangentyere will work in partnership with Akeyulerre to provide the cultural program delivery, engaging elders, and specialists within the Aboriginal community.

- Extra Curricula/Extended School hours and Holiday program

    o   1 Computer and IT teacher

    o   1 Music teacher

    o   1 dance teacher

    o   1 physical education teacher

    o   2 EFT Languages teacher (Aboriginal language/Asian Language)

    o   8 Extended school program workers (covering after school hours, weekend sessions and holiday programs along with the identified teachers, and support workers to also assist through school holidays)

(NOTE: the specialist teachers are all based on 1FTE as they will provide regular weekly sessions in each of the Early Childhood Learning programs, as well as after-school, weekend and school holiday programs for children through primary and secondary ages)

Ready Schools

It is widely accepted that for education to be successful, students need to feel welcomed and included in their schools, with a representation and regard for their culture.

The Education for Life program will work directly with schools, developing relationships, creating individual education plans and providing support within classrooms as requested. The relationship between students and their support worker will be built , within a school partnership, to assist the school-student relationship.

The Education for Life Director will develop relationships with both primary and secondary schools, to discuss how best the Education for Life program can support schools to be ready for their students.

The Education for Life cultural program will be available for schools to access as part of being ready for their students.

Tracking people and progress - data

The Alice Springs Town Camps Education Project recommended that Strand 2 of the education platform be Tracking people and progress – data.

The Hub Data Manager position (allowed for in the Hub Development costs) will also take responsibility in the first instance of tracking the data of all students in the Education for Life program.

The Data Manager will work with staff to develop data collection and management tools. The data manager will work with NT Department of Education (NTDET) and the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to develop and manage the tracking and data of students.

Evaluation

There is a desperate need at an international level to evaluate programs such as Education for Life. Funding for a rigourous ongoing external evaluation - has been included in the funding.

A survey of recent early childhood interventions and perusal of earlier reviews on Indigenous intervention has exposed the paucity of high quality, broad-scale evidence for effective programs.[50]

In addition to, and integral to program evaluation, is the assessment of child development and well being. It is critical that assessment tools that are sensitive and respectful of the cultural life of children are used as part of this program. while standards mainstream tools for assessing numeracy and literacy will be part of the educational programming, social and wellbeing measures will ensure cultural safety. It is considered that "mainstream assessment tools are not effective and undervalue Indigenous skills, values and developmental processes"[51]

Most assessment tools are normed on non-indigenous populations. It is imperative that evaluation and student development is assessed using culturally normed assessment tools.

The Education for Life psychologists and Early Childhood specialists will be integrally involved in ensuring quality evaluation and appropriate assessment methods.

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50   McTurk_ et al. (2008)
51   McTurk., et al (2008)

Part 4: Education for Life - HUB roll out

The child population across the Housing Associations varies. The Housing Associations with the largest numbers of children will be targeted first. Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre and Hidden Valley Community Centre, with established intergenerational Hubs and large numbers of children will be the first to be recruited. YALC is now entering a new phase of service provision with Early Childhood being the core focus. HVCC has recently had its infrastructure upgraded to provide for Early Childhood programs. Both have a history of educational support programs and are ready for program implementation.

Four other Hubs have been targeted for phase 1 introduction of the program. Staffing need has been determined based on population base. In the first year of operation however, staffing levels will be provided to meet minimum needs and estimated engagement for year 1 and 2. Growth has been anticipated with expected increased engagement after years one and two.

Phase 1 roll out will include Education for Life program based at Anthelk Ewlpaye (Charles Creek). This will become the Early Childhood program for 4 closely located communities of Anthelk Ewlpaye, Kunoth. Scruttons and Lhenpe Artnwe (Hoppies). Lhenpe Arntwe does not have an infrastructure intact for this program, however their social need is high. Anthelk Ewlpaye will cater to all children in that living area of Alice Springs.

Nyewente (Trucking Yards) has a high population of children and an existing Community Facility ready to become a Hub and Early Childhood Education Centre. This program will support children from Anhelke (Namatjira).

Mpwetyerre (Abbotts) has a relatively small population however the numbers of children is high. It has ready infrastructure for a smaller scale Education for Life program

Karnte/Anthepe are situated in geographically isolated areas with no public transport. The recent commencement of the Hub will be augmented by the Education for Life Program. These communities have high mobility and many children are currently disengaged from education.

The timeline for Phase 1 is expected to occur over a 2 year period, however this will be monitored against staff recruitment.

Phase 2 (time frame to be determined) will see the remaining Education for Life units staffed and operating. The roll out of the program will be dependent on recruitment of qualified staff. The wages and structure of the program is hoped to attract high quality people. Staffing and recruitment is a key issue in Central Australia.

HUB	Population	Anticipated Staff need	Yr 1 staffing	YR 2 onwards
Ewyenper Atwatye (Hidden Valley)	Very high	4 Early Childhood Workers 2 Engagement & transition workers	1 Early Childhood Specialist 1 Early Childhood Support Worker 1 Engagement & Transition support worker	Additional based on assessment of ongoing need, Yr 1.
Yarrenyty-Arltere (Larapinta Valley)	Very high	3 early childhood workers 2 transition workers		
Anthelk Ewlpaye (Charles Creek)/ Kunoth/ Scruttons/ Lhenpe Artnwe (Hoppies)	High when combined across 4 locations	2 Early childhood workers 2 transition workers		
Nyewente (Trucking Yards) & Anhelke (Namatjira)	High	2 Early childhood workers 2 Transition worker		
Mpwetyerre (Abbotts)	High for population	2 Early childhood worker 1 Transition worker	1 Early Childhood Specialist 1 Early Childhood Support Worker (Incorporating engagement and transitions support)	

HUB	Population	Anticipated Staff need	Yr 1 staffing	YR 2 onwards
Karnte/Anthepe	moderate	2 Early childhood workers 2 Transition worker	1 Early Childhood Specialist 1 Early Childhood Support Worker 1 Engagement & Transition support worker	Additional based on assessment of ongoing need, Yr 1.
Ilparpa & Ilyperenye (Old Timers)	moderate	2 Early childhood workers 2 Transition worker	Needs assessment Anticipated 1 Early Childhood Specialist 1 Early Childhood Support Worker (include. Engagement & transition support)	
Bassos / Mt Nancy/ Aper Alwerrknge (Palmers)	moderate	2 Early childhood workers 2 Transition worker		
Inarlenge (Little Sisters)	small	2 Early childhood worker 1 Transition worker		
Ilperle Tyathe (Walpiri)	small	2 Early childhood worker 1 Transition worker		
Akngwertnarre (Morris Soak)	small	2 Early childhood worker 1 Transition worker		

Staffing	Yr 1	Yr 2 (additional staff)
Education for Life Director – Education Specialist	1 EFT	
The Early Childhood Program Coordinator (0-8) Qualified early childhood educationalist	1 EFT	
Early Childhood Education Specialists	6 EFT	Estimated 5 EFT (additional)
Local Childhood Support workers	6 EFT	Estimated 5 – 7 EFT
Early Childhood Development trainer	need TBA	Estimated 1 EFT
Multi-disciplinary team		
Education engagement and Transition support workers	5 EFT	TBA on emerging need
Child and family psychologists (assessment, counselling, family work, transition support) Educational psychologist Family based psychologist	1 EFT 1 EFT	
Health promotion and Education team Health Promotion Specialist in Maternal Health	1 EFT	
Aboriginal Health promotions support workers	2 EFT	
Nutritionist	1 EFT	
Specialist teachers/Extended School hours and Holiday program		
Cultural Program – Elders & educationalists	2 EFT	
Language Specialists TESOL Aboriginal Language Teacher Asian Languages teacher	1 FTE 0.5 FTE 0.5 FTE	Estimated 1 EFT Estimated 0.5 Estimated 0.5
1 Computer and IT teacher	1 FTE	
1 Music teacher	1 FTE	
1 dance teacher	1 FTE	
1 physical education teacher	1 FTE	
Extended School program workers	6 FTE	Estimated 2 FTE

Funding

A full cost benefit analysis of this program should be undertaken prior to final impelementation.

As it stands the total annual costs of this program is $4.09M and represents an investment of **$10,229/child/annum** (catering for 400 children and young people and not including parents)

Currently the children and young people living in Town Camps face high risk of engagement in the child protection and/or criminal justice system, high levels of risk of engagement in substance abuse and high level risk of serious health problems. Many face the risk of poverty.

This investment will be repaid through decreased health costs, criminal justice costs, social service costs as well as benefits from contribution to economies and social life.

The current cost of incarceration ranges from $53,000-over 100,000 per annum per person.

The average cost of institutional care for petrol sniffers is $160,000 per person per year.

High Risk individuals can cost between 500,000 - $1M per annum of institutional one on one care.

SECTION 6

INVESTMENT

An integrated Service Approach to Social Inclusion: Bringing Alice Springs together

Social inclusion and poverty eradication needs a generational approach, and a long term commitment to fundamental change. The proposed model combines two core strategies – the first is to create locational community driven response to social and economic inclusion, and the second is to work towards a high standard of universal education. The strategic arms of the approach are:

1. Integrated Service Hubs – Community Hubs.
2. Universal Education – Education for Life.

The cost of the initiatives proposed are

	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3
HUBS	$2,844,880	$4,093,680	$4,093,680
Education for Life	$3,947,250	$4,235,040	$4,091,670
TOTAL	**$6,792,130**	**$8,328,720**	**$8,185,350**

The proposal will establish 10 Community Hubs and 11 Education for Life Centres. It will support our mainstream schooling system and create inclusion for all. The proposal will support up to 2000 people at an average cost per annum of $4,093/person. Given the depth of need, this investment will be re-paid in education, health, and economic outcomes.

The Australian Government is currently investing $8M per Family and Community Centre, in 36 locations across Australia, with operating budgets of $1.5M p/a.

Tangentyere's Integrated Service Approach to Social Inclusion will operate at a cost of $744,122 p/a per Community Centre/Education for Life Program.

A full costing can be provided upon request.

SECTION 7

IN CONCLUSION

An integrated Service Approach to Social Inclusion: Bringing Alice Springs together, aims to eradicate poverty in the long term, by creating social inclusion, high standards of early childhood education and educational support through life.

The demographics of Alice Springs is sobering. By 2020 nearly half the population will be indigenous. The levels of poverty facing Aboriginal people in the region will mean that the majority population will be living in poverty.

The only way to change the future for our children is to invest in a long term solution that is based on strength, ability and opportunity. We must set standards that are above and beyone anything we have sought before. We must expect the highest level of education and opportunity for our children, many of whom show exceptional ability.

The proposal will support over 2000 people who are living in the most impoverished conditions in our country. An investment of less than $5,000 per person per annum will achieve a generational change for these children and communities.

We must aim for high quality universal education and we must aim to eradicate poverty.

Tangentyere Council